

**Board of Selectmen  
March 20, 2020**

**Present:** Mark P. Duffy, Chair; Richard C. Edwards; Kenneth G. Fifield; and Toni Bodah, Secretary.

Also present were: Police Chief John Ventura; Relf Fogg; Paul Romano (videographer); Robert Peterson; Don & Rosemary Stewart; Arlene Fogg; Amber Marcoux; Victor Vinagro; and Angie Nichols.

Mr. Duffy called the posted meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. and indicated the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the on-going pandemic situation. He then led all in the Pledge of Allegiance and turned the meeting over to Chief Ventura, Emergency Management Director.

Chief Ventura reviewed NH stats, with Rockingham County being the most affected. To date there have been 8 Executive Orders issued by the Governor's office, relating to utility discounts, foreclosures, take-out delivery of beer and wine, expansion of unemployment benefits—to name a few. Wakefield Public Safety has had no known exposure, and it has a very limited supply of personal protection devices. Chief Ventura referred to his participation in daily conference calls covering a variety of topics, including RSA 91-A. The Town of Wakefield is being pro-active as is the State overall. There have been issues with restaurants and bars complying with Executive Orders, but not in Wakefield. He anticipates the situation will get worse before it gets better. Testing capabilities are improving. The most important thing is to follow the rules. He will continue to update information on the website. The Emergency Management team meets once a week to discuss issues and concerns.

Mr. Duffy noted that other towns are closing public facilities. This Board should discuss mitigating risk to Town employees, while still offering services to the community. Chief Ventura believes we still have the ability to serve the community at Town Hall without shutting down. Mr. Fifield proposed a plan to limit person-to-person contact without shutting Town government down. The public could be directed to the connector entrance. At that point signage will ask that the proceed to the restroom to wash their hands. From there they can go to the conference room, where each department would have a box (with instructions) and where information can be left for the specific department, or where information could be left for public to pick-up. Town Hall employees could check these boxes periodically and distribute to relevant departments.

It was noted that the Gafney Library has offered use of their locked drop-box, located outside the connector entrance. Mr. Fifield stated that material dropped in that box would result in a mess of paperwork that would need to be separated. This use would not allow for Town departments to leave any written instructions for the public. Use of the conference room would allow the public to sit and complete paperwork if necessary. Chief Ventura suggested locating these boxes in the connector lobby rather than in the conference room. Discussion involved keeping access to Town Hall offices locked and having the connector lobby open to the public from 9a – 3p daily. The public should be directed to accomplish as much Town business as possible on-line. Mr. Duffy added that we need to encourage the public to stay home until the situation improves, adding that we must consider the safety of Town employees.

In response to Mr. Vinagro, Chief Ventura agreed that paperwork coming in to Town Hall could be sprayed with Lysol, for example; however, he stressed that this virus is spread more through social contact. He highly stressed the use of gloves.

Mr. Edwards suggested that the public restrooms should be cleaned on an hourly basis if we are to allow/encourage the public to use same. Chief Ventura stated that it would be sufficient to wipe door knobs, handles, etc. All staff present agreed this is already happening.

The procedure being considered is closing Town Hall offices, to eliminate person-to-person interaction, while allowing the public access to the connector lobby for use of drop-boxes. Mr. Fifield suggested designating 1 person to check those boxes and deliver as necessary, in order to minimize the number of staff in the common area. Ms. Fogg and Mr. Edwards noted it may be best for the Welfare Department to utilize the Gafney's locked drop-box given the confidential nature of her communication. It was noted that the Assessing Department also deals with confidential information. Manilla envelopes could be left for use by the public.

Mr. Stewart referred to the scheduled public hearing of the Zoning Board of Adjustment, for which various fees have been paid. Mr. Duffy stated that if public meetings are held, we must allow the public a location to listen to said meeting. The ZBA can still meet next week; however, the Board of Selectmen may decide to conduct some routine business without a meeting. Chief Ventura recommended suspending all non-essential meetings.

Mr. Duffy recapped the discussion: As of Monday, March 23, 2020, limit access to Town Hall by the public to the main connector lobby, where we will set up boxes for each department, while Welfare may utilize the Gafney Library's locked drop-box.

Mr. Edwards referred to various fees currently charged by Town Hall departments. The Town Clerk has asked whether the Board would waive, for the time being, the \$2 mailing fee associated with completing auto registrations by mail. There are other fees charged by banks, etc., over which the Board has no authority. In addition, there is a small fee involved when faxing information to the public (\$0.25 for each printed page). Chief Ventura noted that his department will take into account the present difficulty in registering/inspecting vehicles in terms of enforcement. **Mr. Fifield moved to waive the fees discussed in order to reduce person-to-person contact. Mr. Edwards seconded the motion, which passed 3-0.**

**Mr. Edwards moved to reduce person-to-person contact in Town Hall, to limit the public to the connector lobby (where boxes will be available for each department), from 9a to 3p daily, thereby allowing Town government to provide services, effective as of Monday, March 23, 2020. Mr. Duffy seconded the motion, which passed 3-0.**

Until further notice, access to public meetings/hearings will continue via the connector to the opera house only. The Board will consider revision of these guidelines during the first week of May, unless required to do so sooner. All Town employees may access Town Hall offices as necessary. Mr. Duffy thanked the community for sticking together and supporting each other.

Mr. Duffy announced that a Town Administrator has been hired! Dino Scala, a long-time resident known to many, who has a record of civic involvement, will begin his new adventure on Monday, March 23. All are encouraged to welcome Mr. Scala to his new position—from a safe distance, of course!

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Mr. Duffy noted that while the Transfer Station will remain open, everyone should take care of their own trash. However, if you require assistance, remain in your vehicle and wait for a staff member to approach. At present, we will continue use of scales/fees. The deadline for having your sticker in place will be extended for now.


There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Toni Bodah, Secretary

Approval of Minutes:

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Mark P. Duffy, Chair

  
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Richard C. Edwards

  
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Kenneth G. Fifield