

**Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for Tuesday, October 27, 2020
By Zoom Video Conference
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83012497485>**

5:00 p.m. Executive Session: Exception 3 - Collective Bargaining & Exception 2 - Salaries for Non-Union Personnel

A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair Maurice P. Handel. Those present were Matthew D. Borrelli, Marianne B. Cooley, Daniel P. Matthews, John Bulian, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. Also attending were Dave Davison, ATM/Finance and Katie King ATM/Operations. Recording Secretary Mary Hunt joined the meeting at 5:45 p.m.

Motion by Ms. Cooley that the Select Board vote to enter into Executive Session.

Exception 3 - To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation, if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.

and

Exception 2 - To conduct strategy sessions in preparations for negotiations with non-union personnel.

Second: Mr. Bulian. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

5:45 p.m. Informal Meeting with Citizens: No activity.

6:00 p.m. Call to Order:
The public portion of the Select Board meeting of October 27, 2020 was convened by Chairman Maurice Handel.

Mr. Handel announced this open meeting is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020 due to the current state of emergency from the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. He noted all public gatherings have been suspended as advised and directed by the Commonwealth. And, as such, suspending the requirement of the open meeting law to have all meetings in a public, accessible, physical location while encouraging and allowing members of all public bodies to participate remotely. Mr. Handel stated the meeting will not include public comment and the Needham Select Board and all attendees are convening by Zoom, as posted on the Town's website identifying how the public may join. He said all supporting documents used at this meeting are available on the Town's website www.needhamma.gov.

6:00 p.m. Certificate of Appreciation for Hillcrest Gardens:
Mr. Handel read a Certificate of Appreciation recognizing Joe Quinnan of Hillcrest Gardens for his 38 years of service to the Town of Needham.

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board sign a Certificate of Appreciation recognizing Joe Quinnan - Hillcrest Gardens for providing outstanding products and service to the Town of Needham and its residents for over 38 years! A silent supporter to the Town, you have esthetically enhanced countless events and celebrations. We thank you for your contributions to the community and wish you success, good health and happiness in your next phase of life.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

Mr. Handel expressed appreciation to Mr. Quinnan for his contribution of plants totaling approximately \$20,000 to the town for beautification.

The Board thanked Mr. Quinnan for his many contributions and wished him well in his next phase of life.

Mr. Quinnan thanked the Board for the incredible affection, kindness, and love shown over the years. He said he is grateful to the community and that he was privileged to work with so many wonderful people.

6:12 p.m. Appointments and Consent Agenda:
Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board vote to approve the Appointments and Consent Agenda as presented.

APPOINTMENTS

- 1. Council of Economic Advisors Lise Elcock (term ends 6/30/2021)**

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1. Water and Sewer Abatement Order #1297.**
- 2. Accept donation of various plants from Joe Quinnan, of Hillcrest Gardens to the Parks and Forestry Department of the DPW. The plants are valued at \$19,896.**
- 3. Ratify the authorization of two “shop/dine local” lawn signs to be placed around the Town Hall/Town Common and on the Avery Square Common.**
- 4. Approve request from Volante Farms to sell Wine and Malt beverages until 8:00 p.m. on Monday, November 23, 2020 and Tuesday, November 24, 2020.**

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

6:12 p.m. Uncontrollable Dog Hearing to be Cancelled:
Mr. Handel reminded the Board that at its meeting on September 22nd, the Select Board voted to continue this hearing due to the current health status of the animal.

He noted the Select Board received notice that the subject dog is deceased, and that the public hearing will therefore be cancelled without presentation of evidence.

6:13 p.m.

Rail Trail Mural Project:

Sara Shine, Director of Youth and Family Services presented a proposed mural project to cover up graffiti on a fence along the Bay Colony Rail Trail.

A PowerPoint presentation titled “Needham Bay Colony Rail Trail Mural Proposal” was viewed.

Ms. Shine explained the proposal, design elements, and showed renderings of the final product. She said she is hopeful to have the involvement of Needham’s youth and that the positive messaging of the mural will resonate with the community. Ms. Shine indicated the project will begin in a few weeks.

The Board thanked Ms. Shine for her work in spearheading the project.

Ms. Fitzpatrick pointed out a goal of the Select Board is to implement public art in appropriate locations and that the mural project is a great addition.

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board approve the mural project as proposed.

Second: Ms. Cooley. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

6:21 p.m.

Lived Experiences Project Presentation:

Anna Giraldo-Kerr and Nichole Argo Ben Itzhak, Co-Organizers, Lived Experiences Project presented the results of key findings from local stories of discrimination and bias collected by the Lived Experiences Project between July - August 2020.

Ms. Giraldo-Kerr explained the Lived Experiences Project began from an initial Facebook post and ensuing comments. She said 93 stories from 80 participants were gathered over two months-time, explaining how data was collected.

Ms. Argo Ben Itzhak explained the sample being reported is not representative of Needham’s marginalized communities, nor is it representative of the Town as a whole. She said the 7-week survey gathered initial information but may barely “scratch the surface” as many people are not active online, are fearful of contributing, or experience emotional pain when retelling their stories. She shared aggregate data and stories, asking the Select Board to listen to understand, not to try to solve the issue.

Ms. Giraldo-Kerr and Ms. Argo Ben Itzhak reported on the types of mistreatment reported and perceived causes of mistreatment, citing specific stories from participants. It was also noted that several stories in the sample survey emphasized positive behaviors and actions (by Needham police) in situations of potential bias.

Discussion ensued on the questions of how the incidents affected responders and what should have happened or could have happened. Ms. Argo Ben Itzhak told the Board the suggestions for change received from respondents focus on acknowledgement, awareness, training, community discussions, and policy change and norm signaling.

Ms. Giraldo-Kerr commented on the conclusions, and that racism and identity-based discrimination do exist in Needham. She highlighted that race was cited as the cause for discrimination, discrimination is programmatic and procedural in nature, and that microaggressions give the impression of a cultural element within the fabric of Needham.

Ms. Argo Ben Itzhak concluded further data collection is necessary for a fully representative report. She said this is an opportunity for Needham to bring stories forward by listening, acknowledging, and reflecting in order to repair the narrative so Needham can become the community it wants to be.

Mr. Handel said it is a challenge for people to see the world through the experiences of others. He said gaining an understanding is crucial and having the ability to be heard is very important.

Ms. Cooley clarified her understanding of the project, saying she initially thought the project would be in service to the Town's work, as laid out this summer. She said she now feels the project, as described, ran through the summer and is not going forward. She asked for clarification. Ms. Cooley said the stories are important.

Ms. Argo Ben Itzhak said the first report is a way to gain trust, however acknowledged there is a lot of work. She said while still fully committed to the project, resources and capabilities must be assessed. She said the next step would be to enter communities and ask for participation, requiring a lot of outreach.

Mr. Borrelli commented that Town policy is based on many things. He said one of the conclusions in the report is that there is systemic racism or that it is within the fabric of Needham. He asked to take a step back noting that if we want to start making these conclusions, we should have a valid survey that reaches more people to get a picture we can validate. Mr. Borrelli said there are two sides in any situation, cautioning he wants to make sure policies are based on concrete statistical data. Mr. Borrelli asked that positive stories also be shared.

Mr. Bulian agreed there are multiple fronts and the report is a start. He said he believes racism is everywhere and that it is cultural, going back to before the founding of the nation. He commented difficult changes will need to be made as a society, starting with education. He cautioned many adults, however, do not want to change.

Mr. Matthews said the timing of the stories is important and being an engaged listener is key. He said the environment is changing and we are determined to make progress. He commented it is important that the 30,000 Needham residents live and work together in ways that are better and fair for everyone.

Mr. Handel thanked the presenters for their work.

Ms. Cooley stated the stories allow patterns to be seen. She said it needs to be fixed, needs to change, and must change. However, she commented people must also understand there is no magic fix, and that all citizens need to feel successful in every way and be respected for their contributions.

The Board thanked Ms. Giraldo-Kerr and Ms. Argo Ben Itzhak for their presentation.

7:10 p.m.

Update COVID-19:

Tim McDonald, Director of Health and Human Services updated the Board on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said Needham is “in the green,” however he said he is quite concerned about the trend in cases, noting seven clusters cases since September. Mr. McDonald stated the cases stem from team, recreational, or social activities. He said the state of Massachusetts has recently surpassed 1,000 cases per day, surmising the number of cases in Needham will put the town into the “yellow.” Mr. McDonald cautioned the number close contact cases in youth is concerning and that exposure is stemming from social and athletic events. He stated the average youth COVID-19 case has 15 or more contacts, which he said is a very high number. He implored people to prioritize and limit their activities, as every new activity is a risk. He suggested youth not play more than one sport this fall in order to reduce the spread of the disease.

Mr. Bulian asked if adult behaviors should be modified?

Mr. McDonald said spread is not entirely from youth, but many people are associating outside their family unit, which is a cause for concern, particularly with the colder months ahead.

Mr. Matthews suggested we would not be nearly as bad off if there were consistent national standards for people to follow, noting inconsistent and politicized policies are creating a situation that does not work. Mr. Matthews said a consistent message encouraging patience and persistence based on science is required. He thanked the many residents who are following the rules, noting people are getting worn down. Mr. Matthews said time is a big factor in many ways, imploring youth to participate in one sport per season this year to minimize exposure to the disease. He suggested adults also limit their activity for the foreseeable future, as we will all be better off in the long run.

Mr. Borrelli said it was a positive step by the state for youth hockey to be shut down. He said he has heard people complaining about the lack of testing and asked Mr. McDonald where people could go, outside of Needham, to be tested?

Mr. McDonald said testing information is on the Town's website. He said the best locations can be found on www.stopthespread.com, noting locations in Framingham and Marlborough. He said the lack of quick, readily available testing remains a challenge. Mr. McDonald commented Needham athletic teams have submitted COVID safety plans, which he said are very good, but cautioned each additional activity people do, no matter how well-managed, increases the risk.

Ms. Cooley asked for the testing "turnaround time." Mr. McDonald said two to three days is the norm, but there are outliers. He commented on protocols for Halloween trick or treating, encouraged small family groups, and asked folks wear one mask, not two masks. He suggested people who are concerned about exposure to leave the light off, and people who are handing out candy to use small Ziplock bags to lessen the chance for transmission.

Mr. Bulian commented on Thanksgiving and asked Mr. McDonald for thoughts on how people should navigate the holiday. Mr. McDonald said state guidance suggests people consider staying within their family unit. He said in many cases, getting together with extended family will not be appropriate, but people must balance their own risk. He said public announcements will occur after Halloween and Election Day.

Mr. Handel surmised he does not believe the youth of Needham understand how dangerous the situation is for people.

Ms. Fitzpatrick said Town staff is contact tracing, noting it is difficult and overwhelming for staff as the number of cases grow. She thanked town staff for all their hard work.

7:36 p.m.

Town Manager:

Kate Fitzpatrick spoke with the Board regarding 2 items:

1. Small Cell Wireless Facilities Policy

Ms. Fitzpatrick reminded the Board that at its last meeting a public hearing was held to gather input for the Small Cell Wireless Facilities policy, noting the record was held open for seven days. She said a few additional comments were received, which were very much in line with public sentiment heard at the hearing. She commented the main request was a desire to have a prohibition on the location of small cell wireless facilities from schools and homes. Ms. Fitzpatrick commented that clear guidance is best so that everyone knows the rules. She noted in many parts of Needham, a significant distance between homes and a pole is not achievable. She said, based on special counsel advice, it is recommended the Board adopt the policy presented at the Select Board meeting on October 13, 2020.

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board vote to adopt the Small Cell Wireless Facilities Policy.

Second: Mr. Matthews. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

2. Town Manager's Report

Ms. Fitzpatrick reported on the reactivation of the Emergency Operations Center, now meeting weekly, to be prepared for any problems that may occur. She said new staff are being trained as part of the EOC in order to have more depth and avoid burnout. She said Mr. McDonald is the Incident Commander, as the pandemic is a public health emergency.

Board Discussion:

1. Committee Reports

No Committee Reports were made.

7:40 p.m.

Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting of Tuesday, October 27, 2020.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

A list of all documents used at this Select Board meeting is available at:

<http://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=99&Type=&ADID=>