

**IPSWICH SELECT BOARD**  
**Meeting of Friday, March 27, 2020**  
**Remote Meeting Via Zoom Video Conference**

Pursuant to Open Meeting Law M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §§ 18-25, written notice posted by the Town Clerk and delivered to all Board members, a meeting of the Select Board was held on Friday, March 27, 2020 at 1:00 PM via Zoom Video Conference.

Board Members present: William Whitmore, Chair; Linda Alexson, Vice Chair; Dr. Tammy Jones; Kerry Mackin; Nishan Mootafian

Also present: Anthony Marino, Town Manager; Eileen Page, Recording Secretary

Abbreviations used: FY20, Fiscal Year 2020; FY21, Fiscal Year 2021

With a quorum present, Mr. Whitmore called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

**Welcome/Announcements**

The Shellfish Advisory Committee meeting scheduled for April 7 has been canceled.

Crane Beach will be open Friday through Sunday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM to Ipswich residents in possession of a 2019 or 2020 beach sticker affixed their windshield. Dogs and horses are not allowed. Parking is only permitted in the lot, and not on Argilla Road. Town Hall remains closed to the public, but 2020 beach stickers can be purchased on the Town website.

**Citizen Queries**

None.

**Discuss 2020 Annual Town Meeting/Election Schedule**

Mr. Marino stated that according to MGL Chapter 30 § 9, the Town is able to post the Annual Town Meeting for a different date within FY20, because the official posting of May 12 had not yet gone to the public. Mr. Marino suggested that Annual Town Meeting be held on June 16, barring further quarantine restrictions related to COVID-19.

Tom Murphy (Town Moderator) suggested holding a meeting to vote only on finance articles that are required to be voted on by the end of the fiscal year, adjusting the necessary quorum to comply with social distancing regulations, and postponing other agenda business.

Mr. Whitmore noted that the Tri-Board Bean Counting meeting scheduled for April 4 has been canceled.

*Vote: Dr. Jones moved to postpone Annual Town Meeting and subsequent elections to be held at a date after May 12, that will be announced 30 days prior to the meeting, within FY20. Ms. Alexson seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call vote.*

**Discuss Summer Water Rates**

Ms. Alexson stated that because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, residents are home from work and school, which is necessitating increased water for hygiene and sanitation purposes. She proposed postponing the previously approved May 1 summer rate increase for at least one month and implementing water restrictions in an effort to delay the sharply increased costs to residents, and increase awareness of water use.

Vicki Halmen (Water & Wastewater Director) stated that implementing water restrictions may be prudent as the reservoirs are currently at capacity but not overflowing, as would be typical for a winter with sufficient precipitation. She stated that the summer rate is scheduled to begin on May 1 at \$16.88/100 ft<sup>3</sup>, and without the increase, about \$150,000 in revenue would be lost in June 2020. She stated that by not meeting the revenue goal by the end of FY20, budgetary projections for future years will have to be adjusted. Ms. Halmen reported that risks of deferring the rate adjustment would include the use of surplus to offset revenue loss in FY21 and running the risk of

unnecessary water usage increasing without a financial deterrent. As an alternative to not implementing the seasonal rate increase, Ms. Halmen suggested waiving interest fees on past due accounts, development of payment plans for residents, and/or deferring water liens.

Mr. Mootafian asked if the seasonal summer rate might be adjusted to June-November instead of May-October to help recoup monies lost without the increase. Ms. Halmen responded that it would not be helpful, as May 1 rates are June's revenue, and a deficit of \$150,000 would occur at the end of FY20 regardless.

Mr. Marino stated that two rate hearings would need to be held to reverse the approved rate increase. Jim Engel (Water/Wastewater Subcommittee) suggested that because the action would delay an increase versus imposing an increase, it might not require public hearings. Mr. Marino stated that he would discuss the matter with Town Counsel.

Ms. Mackin stated that she would support implementing water restrictions.

Dr. Jones stated that she would support water restrictions, but is cautious about putting the Water Department in a position where they have a deficit at the end of the fiscal year.

Ms. Halmen stated that she would present more concrete data on lost revenue at the April 21 Select Board meeting.

#### **Review/Update COVID-19 Response and Closures**

Governor Charlie Baker has ordered non-essential business to close until April. Mr. Marino stated that he has confirmed that interior and exterior construction related to housing can continue. At this time, Ipswich restaurants remain open for takeout orders only.

The Senior Center is fully staffed, and has been coordinating robocalls to seniors, and running the Meals on Wheels program.

Residents are encouraged to monitor the Town website and social media pages, as updates are posted as they become available.

Ipswich currently has five reported cases of COVID-19.

Ms. Mackin asked what the Town can do to make childcare more accessible during this time. Mr. Marino responded that while schools must remain closed, the Beverly Y has been approved as an emergency daycare for the children of essential personnel.

#### **Town Manager Report**

Town Hall remains operational, but is closed to the public. Business may be conducted online or over the phone. Drop boxes are available outside Town Hall (25 Green Street) and the Utilities Business Office (272 High Street) for residents who prefer to make payments in person.

#### **New Business**

Ms. Alexson reported that the Shellfish Advisory Committee has made a request that \$12,000 be allocated from the Shellfish Enhancement Fund to kickstart the green crab trapping program. Mr. Marino responded that it has been put on the April 6 meeting agenda.

The next Select Board meeting will be held on April 6 via Zoom Video Conference.

#### **Old Business**

None.

*Vote: Ms. Alexson moved to adjourn, and Dr. Jones seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call vote.*

The Select Board adjourned at 2:18 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by Eileen G. Page*  
03.27.2020