

Approved 4/15/20
TOWN OF WEST TISBURY
SELECTMEN'S MEETING
March 25, 2020 4:40 pm –
Phone conference call meeting

Present: Selectmen Skipper Manter, Kent Healy, Cindy Mitchell, Jen Rand

Also Present:, Russ Hartenstein, John Christensen, Tara Whiting- Wells, Kathy Logue, Omar Johnson, Tim Barnett, Will Sennott, Mike Bellisimo, Rich Saltzberg, Erik Lowe

Skipper called the meeting to order

Letter to the Governor re: the Construction Ban:

Jen said that the Town was being asked to sign onto a letter from both islands asking the Governor to support our construction ban. Cindy said we should sign onto this letter. A plea to the Governor should come from both islands. Skipper & Kent agreed. Omar said he was in agreement that we should send the letter. Ban is important to help mitigate the spread. Tim said he was in support of this letter

K. Healy motioned to sign the letter. C. Mitchell seconded the motion. A roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Letter from all towns requesting Assistance from the National Guard at the Hospital: Jen said that Senator Cyr's office had drafted a letter on behalf of the towns and the hospital requesting assistance from the National Guard and asking for assistance with a field hospital. She note that the Police Departments have said they don't feel that assistance is needed right now. Tim said he would rather move in that direction now than when it's too late. Omar said there were only two confirmed cases; it doesn't hurt to get things set up and in place now. Skipper asked if this was an Oak Bluffs issue. Tim said this should be an island approach, Cindy agreed it would be stronger if we did this together. She said that Oak Bluffs and Tisbury should be on board.

C. Mitchell motioned to sign the letter provided it was signed by all six towns. K. Healy seconded the motion. A roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Town Recreational Areas:

Skipper said the Board had voted to close town hall but people were using the playground and basketball court etc. Omar said he had discussed this with Jen, they agreed they didn't want to take away activities for single individuals or couples. Skipper said the requirements were for no

gatherings and many people were engaged in close contact playing basketball or whatever. Omar agreed we should be consistent.

Cindy agreed that we need to close it from groups. Omar said he had talked about this with the principal at the WT School; we would need to put up a sign and lock the courts.

C. Mitchell motioned to close all town recreational areas except Lambert's Cove Beach. K. Healy seconded the motion. A roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

John Alley Moment of Silence: Skipper said we have been so involved with the COVID crisis we have not acknowledged the passing of John Alley. He served in many capacities in town, there will be a time we can reflect further but for now let us have a moment of silence.

Emergency Management Director (EMD) Funding: Jen said that Russ had been working full time for the town as EMD for weeks now. He currently is being paid an annual stipend of \$16,000. Skipper asked how the stipend gets paid. Jen said quarterly. Skipper said it would be hard to compensate him directly and as a stipend position he wouldn't be able to be paid as an employee. Jen asked if he could be hired as a consultant. Kathy said he wouldn't be covered under workers compensation if hired as a consultant. Cindy said Russ is a key part of our response to COVID. Skipper said he needed a dollar amount, he suggested \$5k. Kathy said that doesn't begin to cover for three months work. Cindy agreed with Kathy she added that rather than us trying to figure it out let's ask the Financial Management Team to figure it out. She said the key piece is for the duration of the event. Work in three month increments. He should be compensated at the full time rate.

Cindy said she wanted to hear how the emergency response planning is going. She said there is a need for regular communication to public so they know these plans are in motion. She said they could be regular reports that go on our website. Kathy noted that code red is available, it might be a way to get the stay at home order and other important info.

Postponing the Election: *Kent recused himself because he is on the ballot.* Jen said the Legislature had passed into law a bill to allow the town to postpone the annual election. Tara said it was premature to postpone now. She said we have three weeks to decide and they have expanded early voting options. Skipper asked if it was realistic to think it could be done on April 16th. Tara said yes, there would only be a restriction on the number of people in a room. She said most town elections have about 300 voters, if lots of voters choose to vote absentee there is lots of room to spread people out. She said the Town can wait up to the week before to postpone. If we encourage more absentee voting that would help. Skipper said he thought we should decide sooner than later. Cindy asked what Jen thought. Jen said that the optics weren't good on this, we've asked everyone to cancel events with more than ten people and this would be in direct opposition to that request. Skipper said if things aren't going to be better then he thought we

should just get it over with on April 16th. Tara said she didn't think the Board should vote on it tonight. Cindy disagreed, she said the vote to postpone may well be in order. She didn't think April 16th is a reasonable date to shoot for. We need to show right now we are doing all we can to keep people from congregating. Keeping in mind the end date, would be in favor of postponing but not to a date certain. Skipper said he would be in favor of postponing to May 14th. Omar said he was in favor of postponing. Cindy noted that it didn't need to be tied to the Town Meeting May 12 date. She said we did that before we understood the scope of this. Tara asked if we can pick a date to let voters know. Cindy said she didn't think we can do that now.

C. Mitchell motioned to postpone the annual town election. S. Manter seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted CM & SM in favor, KH abstained.

Cemetery: *C. Mitchell motioned to allow the chair to sign cemetery documents. K. Healy seconded the motion. A roll call vote was unanimous in favor.*

C. Mitchell motioned to appoint Alan Gowell as cemetery superintendent. K. Healy seconded the motion. A roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Mike Bellissimo read a letter in support of the postponement of election.

C. Mitchell motioned to adjourn the meeting. K. Healy seconded the motion. A roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Adjourned 5:42 pm

Respectfully Submitted by Jennifer Rand, Town Administrator