

Selectboard Minutes 3/23/2020

Members Present by Zoom: Christine Werneke, Katie Mather, Roger Brown

Present by phone: David Sander, Bard Hill

Absent:

Others Present: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Larry Muldoon, Police Chief

Others Present by Zoom: Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin. Assist.; Connie Bona, Financial Dir.; Pete Gosselin, Highway;

Called to Order: 7:11 PM

1. Welcome by David.

2. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

I. Additions or Deletions to Agenda

Katie suggested that residents using the Water & Sewer system be reminded about the importance of flushing only toilet paper to keep the system working properly. It was decided reminder notices be posted on Front Porch Forum regularly and a post card for mailing will be looked into.

II. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

a) Consideration of approval of liquor licenses

Roger moved to approve liquor the license for Cumberland Farms, Bard seconded. All agreed.

b) COVID-19 Updates:

i. Municipal Operations Overview

Josh reported:

- that a page with COVID-19 information has been added to the Town's website. It can be found using the "about" tab. Also found there is information on municipal services such as what is open, what is closed, and how to access services.
- that the town offices are open by appointment only,
- that some workers are working from home including Planning and Zoning who are doing some appointments and coming into the office as necessary,
- that the library is providing some services by filling online requests,
- that the Fire Dept. will not issue burn permits until further notice,
- that the Police Dept. has set up protocols for officers to ensure a presence in town
- that Public Meeting law still requires one person to be at Town Center and that the law may soon change.

Bard stated that he appreciates the job everyone has done to make continued operation of the Town safe and possible, that social distancing is being done well, and suggested that the Library do story time by video to keep a "social" connection.

Josh continued his update with Continuity of Services reporting that Dept. heads were asked to provide. Information included worst case scenarios, providing information on

redundancies for employee positions should someone should become ill, responses included the ability for other employees to fill in and mutual aid from other towns or organizations.

The board decided it was not necessary to look at each department individually and that if anyone had questions they could contact Josh for answers.

Discussion included:

- that Monday night meetings continue each week to provide current information to the board,
- that the board be thinking ahead about any response, if any, they might want to provide when a Richmond resident is confirmed positive for COVID-19,
- that any response comply with HIPPA regulations
- that everyone share the gravity of the situation by encouraging others to stay home
- that reaching out to those that are at risk will be important
- that the Town of Richmond is pulling together as a team and that's important,
- that there are employees that are essential to the continued operation of the Town who may need to access their normal work space and that those who can work from home should,
- that every employee's circumstances cannot be known so allowing for workers to be paid if they have no internet access or are taking care of someone who is ill or any other reason is what should happen with a decision being made during each weeks meeting going forward,
- that any employee that is symptomatic should stay home,
- that employees may be asked to do work that does not fit their job description but may be necessary in these times,
- that working together we will get through this.

Pete reported:

- that his staff is sanitizing everything and would be dealing with roadway emergencies only,
- that he may create shifts for workers and reduce the number of workers on those shifts for social distancing,
- that each driver is currently assigned to a vehicle,
- that some work scheduled for April can be pushed back if it becomes necessary.

The discussion continued:

- with information that the Town Health Officer, Eric Wood, is working with Jen Rose Smith who has organized a volunteer document being shared on the Town's webpage. The idea is that people with needs can get help from people who have volunteered.
- that possibly the volunteer group could add a sign up for people who need to be checked in on
- it was suggested that adding Agewell and the Howard Center to the volunteer conversation could be beneficial as well as getting the word out about the volunteer sign up information to residents who may need assistance,
- with the possibility of creating a social phone tree to check on residents and sending out a post card with information on how to get help if you need it,
- that we need to consider this social distancing, not isolation.

ii. Bridge St. infrastructure replacement project

Josh reported meeting with the engineer and contractor this past week and construction is still set to begin on April 15th, stating that the contractor asked if they could start earlier due to things being shut down. We will have to find out if that is a possibility. There is a concern about what would happen if there was a stay home order from the Governor, Josh responded that the contractor felt once the project started social distancing wouldn't be a problem. The plan is to go forward with plan until we hear otherwise. Josh also reported that he had received information that there was some wiggle room in regards to the completion date if delays were COVID-19 related.

iii. Discussion of leave time

Josh asked: With regards to people staying home, how do we compensate people? For example, with the Library shut down, we were in uncharted territory so I decided to pay employees until we had time to figure it out. Since then, the library has opened for limited services including online lending. Some staff did not work that will get paid. Due to being part time with only a few hours a week most will not be eligible for unemployment.

The discussion included:

- continuing to pay employees in the short term,
- keeping track of which employees are working from home and their assignments,
- keeping track of which employees are not able to work from home and the reason
- the possibility there may be funds to reimburse the town for expenses related to COVID-19,
- that we need to track property tax payments and water & sewer payments that will be due May 15th,
- potential for hazard pay for those on the front line,
- the emergency leave act and family expansion will be looked into,
- that employees may be reassigned to do other jobs during this time.

It was decided:

- that Josh and Connie will monitor things to see what happens with the legislature,
- that with information changing daily we will need to keep up with it,
- that if Josh needs guidance he can contact the board, for now we will keep going with what is in place.

iv. Assistance for residents

This was touched on earlier, Josh added that the COVID-19 resource webpage is being updated in real time and will be added to as information is available. Resources include a information on Municipal services, volunteer or request assistance, a VT COVID-19 Resource List, and a summary of Richmond food take out options.

Josh also reported on information that in the Irene aftermath a nonprofit was set up through the food shelf to accept donations to help residents, that a board was set up that reviewed applications for support. It was agreed that the needs would be great this time and we should wait and see what happens with federal government because this would be a large undertaking to pursue.

v. Discussion of board/committee/commission meetings

It was decided that tele-meetings would continue each week and that information would be sent out to committees for virtual meetings. .

vi. Other COVID-19 related topics

It was discussed:

- that Open Meeting law would be changing
- that Freedom of Information Requests have been suspended in some places for lack of staff to fulfill any request.

III. Adjourn

Roger moved to adjourn, Katie seconded. All agreed.

Bard is vice-chair so he will take David's place at next week's meeting since he is unable to attend.