

**TOWN OF WALPOLE
STAFF MEETING
MAY 21, 2020**

Selectboard Present: Peggy Pschirrer (Chair); Cheryl Mayberry; Steven Dalessio

Staff Present: Sarah Downing (Manager of Administration); Richard Kreissle (Manager of Finance); Ben Hoy (Recycling Director); Michael Rau (Road Agent/Highway Department); Justine Fafara (Library Director); Justin Cassarino (Recreation Director); Helen Dalbeck (Hooper Institute Executive Director); Michael Paquette (Chief, Police Department); Justin Sanctuary (Lt., Police Department);

Excused: Sandra Smith (Town Clerk/Tax Collector)

CALL TO ORDER: Mrs. Pschirrer called this Staff Meeting to order at 5:02 PM and welcomed everyone. The Selectboard and Staff are all in separate locations. This ZOOM meeting is being recorded.

Mrs. Pschirrer pointed out that we have not met in such a long time. She felt it would be good to see some people on the computer screen and/or just hear one another, talk together and find out how everybody is faring in this extraordinary time. It has been challenging. The Governor made no new changes today but maybe tomorrow his orders might change. The office is getting a lot of calls about when are the tennis courts going to be open, when will the pool be open and what is going on in Town. With the good weather people are out and about and starting to do more.

Mrs. Pschirrer announced that as of July 19th, Mr. Justin Cassarino will no longer be the Director of the Recreation Department. We all should congratulate him on his new, big responsibility as Assistant Principal of the Walpole Elementary School starting in July. He will have a mentor for a while. Mrs. Pschirrer thanked him for taking this challenge. Mr. Cassarino said he is looking forward to it.

Recycling Center: Mr. Ben Hoy had submitted a written report “COVID-19 Effects on Walpole Recycling”. He advised they are trying to keep the people outdoors. Some people will come in without a mask and some people have a problem with that. Everyone is adapting appropriately. Tomorrow they are going to the NH DMV to pick up free masks that were offered to NH businesses. Other than the COVID-19 situation, it has been business as usual.

- They have discontinued sorting aluminum 5 cent/15 cent deposits and plastic 5 cent/15 cent deposits. Glass bottles with a deposit are still being redeemed at Putney Road Redemption.
- Traffic is slightly more spread out throughout the week during the pandemic. Saturday is still by far their busiest day.
- There are no volunteers. Many of Walpole’s volunteers are eager to come back and many want to volunteer for the Reuse Center. Safety is their priority before welcoming them back. This has been very different for them with no volunteers.
- The Reuse Center is coming along. The floor should be poured next week. They are waiting until at least mid-June to begin construction.
- In the face of this pandemic, things are going along pretty well. He did not know what to expect. Probably 90% of people do wear a mask and they are keeping their social distance. It has been a balancing act of trying to meet the needs of the public, while keeping both the public and their staff safe from COVID-19.

Replying to a question from Chief Paquette, Mr. Hoy said they are waiting for the carpenter to come in June. There is no urgency for the Reuse Center since volunteers cannot work inside during this

pandemic; it's safety first. Chief Paquette asked if they will have security cameras for the building. Mr. Hoy said they would be interested in security cameras. During the business day, they will have a doorway and be able to see the Reuse Center from within the Recycling Center.

Finance Office: Mr. Rich Kreissle had submitted a written report dated May 21, 2020. He reported that with the Town Clerk (TC) increasing taking payments electronically due to being closed to the public (except by appointment), balancing the bank account dedicated to their credit card processing has been an added challenge. Deposits from the TC are comprised of some combination of cash, check and electronic payments. It is all more time consuming.

Mr. Kreissle is keeping up to date on moneys available to the Town through the CARES Act as administered by the GOFERR. CARES stands for: Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Stability Act. GOFERR stands for: Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery. The federal government has allocated funds to the states under CARES and these funds are further allocated to NH's municipalities via GOFERR. Walpole's allocation of these funds is \$91,428. This program runs through August 2020. If anyone has incurred costs, other than operational, bring this to his attention as the Town might be able to get reimbursed for them.

Earlier this month Governor Sununu announced a \$300 per week stipend for full-time first responders and \$150 for part-time first responders over an eight-week period. The announcement came without any guidance to municipal financial officers regarding taxability, NHRS applicability and other issues. The NHGFOA's (NH Government Finance Officers Association) online discussion page lit up like a Christmas tree with questions on these matters. Through this community and the assistance of the NH Municipal Association (NHMA), clarity was developed so the Governor's order can be implemented. Municipalities will get reimbursed through the CARES Act for the full amount expended so there is no effect on their operating budgets.

As the response to Coronavirus continues, Mr. Kreissle is sure there will be further programs that potentially affect the administration of the finances of the Town. Programs are always changing. This has been an interesting trip. Mrs. Pschirrer advised that if a department has been spending money that is applicable be sure to let Mr. Kreissle know so the Town can be reimbursed.

Highway Department: Mr. Michael Rau submitted a written report dated May 20, 2020. The Highway Department has been conducting normal operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Though they have made a few slight changes. The highway building is no longer allowing visitors, sale representatives, deliveries, etc. into the building until further notice without an appointment.

Crews have been practicing safe social distancing, as well as wearing masks when entering town and public facilities. Equipment and facility are cleaned daily and surfaces are sanitized regularly.

Mrs. Pschirrer reported seeing some work on Main Street. Mr. Rau said they have started prepping for the milling and reclaiming. They had to fix some catch-basin tops; it was nothing serious. Milling will be done right after July 4th. Arlington Paving will come in to do the milling. Expected time is about three days. They will start reclaiming a portion of the Old Drewsville Road to Gowdy's Farm as that road is destroyed. Arlington Paving will be doing this as well. It usually takes the Town the whole month of July to pave. Arlington Paving can do it for less than the Town can do it. Mr. Rau will be on site. It is business as usual. They are trying to stay safe. Some work was started on the Old Keene Road. They will be working on Maple Street in North Walpole in coordination with the Water Department. The

drainage will be replaced on that road; the cost is about \$5,000. Fuzzy Bros. will rip it up and take it away at no cost to the Town. They will take out most of the sidewalk; some will be put back in June. Pelow Paving will do Maple Street. It is a unique job. The dirt roads were graded.

Recreation Department: Mr. Justin Cassarino submitted the following written report dated May 21, 2020.

COVID-19

- Spring basketball and soccer clinics were cancelled;
- Tennis, pickleball, and basketball courts are closed to the public;
With VT opening more of their facilities, people are assuming our courts are open and are ignoring the signs;
A LOT of messages/phone calls about the tennis courts and suggestions on how/why we should open.
- Youth and adult summer basketball will be cancelled;
Will really need to promote this program(s) next year to make sure we have enough participants;
- Pool and staff?
- Will have to limit our community day events over the summer;
Think about different types of “safe” events than what we usually try to do.

Mr. Cassarino said the pool is a question mark now. Is it cost effective to open it and they will have to limit the community events they usually have? They will have to think of other activities or not do any at all this season.

Ms. Mayberry mentioned that Baby Cassarino is due within the next 2-or-3 days. Everyone congratulated Justin and wished the family well.

Walpole Library: Mrs. Justine Fafara had submitted “COVID-19 Effects on the Library” and “COVID-19 Phased Reopening Plan – Last Revised May 5, 2020”. Mrs. Fafara reported that the Library has been physically closed since Monday, March 23, 2020. Staff has been diligently working from home on a number of projects. They expanded their virtual/digital offerings since March and will continue to offer them as long as possible. They added a new provider for downloadable materials called Hoopla, which offers ebooks, audio books, music, movies and TV shows. In January she added a service called Newsbank, which offers New England newspapers online, and has seen good use during this pandemic. Julie started a YouTube channel with short story time snippets, tutorials for their digital services and more. They also have a page on their website dedicated to all of the video tutorials Julie has made to help people use their digital services and resources.

They are working on a plan for their Summer Reading Program that will include take and make crafts to replace their weekly craft programs. She has been involved in many Zoom Library calls. It has been very busy. They are making it work. Quite a few people have reached out for new library cards. Curbside pick-up started last Tuesday. They are offering pickup times twice a week. They will begin phase 2 on June 1st, offering curbside services daily Monday-Saturday.

Hooper Institute: Mrs. Helen Dalbeck had submitted a written report “Hooper Institute Summary Due to COVID-19”. Mrs. Dalbeck advised that all teaching in the classroom ended on March 13th. Although both Becky Whippie and she have emailed and talked with their teachers, they have not taught any Hooper Institute classes virtually. They miss the kids. She and Becky have been working closely together. They have shared some enrichment material and news from the gardens and the field. Out of

this challenge, Becky created videos to share via their Facebook page. They are how-to seasonal activities that would have been part of the curriculum and natural history themes that would have been taught as part of their outdoor classrooms. She continued to grow food in the high tunnel and arranged to share produce with the Fall Mt school kitchen as well as a special food sharing program set up by the school counselor to help feed families in need when school is not in session. This will be ongoing through the summer. It is very positive. Their intention is to be part of virtual learning and teaching in the fall if that is the direction the schools will be taking. They want to be part of the day to day, week to week schedule, as an essential part of public education in Walpole.

All special events and public programs have been cancelled or postponed until the fall. Summer camps have been revised and reworked to be at home editions. Large camps are something they would not attempt to do during this pandemic. Woodworking projects are being developed to be taking and make projects to do at home.

The Walpole Community garden has 44 beds that are being planted. Everyone involved is thrilled to have the opportunity to do something positive, at a safe distance socially.

The high school work program applications are way down with nine students to date. Half of these students are 8th grade students; the other half are returning students. They will be able to be placed in essential businesses (they have 6 firm, 2 reserved), all farms plus Walpole Vet and Walpole Recycling. This process starts next week.

Adventure programs and hikes for older kids are being created to have activities, crafts, maps and science inquiry that can be picked up in to go folders and taken into the field.

They are also doing some open trail sites. Families can make shelters and build fairy houses. Hooper staff will set up and curate but activity is self-lead. A lot of people are using their trail for various activities. They also see wildlife on the trails.

Mrs. Dalbeck advised they are applying for grants but have not yet received any. She will keep trying. Mr. Dalessio will send her the link to a website where she might apply. Mrs. Pschirrer got word today from the NH Charitable Trust Foundation that the Governor has designated them as a distributor of some funds that are available.

Mrs. Dalbeck pointed out that they want to be part of the day-to-day, week-to-week on-line learning in the fall if that is the way the schools will go.

Police Department: Police Chief Michael Paquette had submitted a letter dated May 20, 2020. This past week if they were not dealing with COVID-19, they would have had their Third Annual Chief of Police Breakfast at the Town Hall. All the chiefs were grateful for this event. Maybe it can be held in the fall.

- NH State Motor Vehicle grants have been cancelled until further notice.
- They have limited their interactions with the public. Stopping motor vehicles for major infraction or emergencies. They are trying to limit their exposure with the public by keeping their officers safe and avoiding interactions.
- They had to assist the Walpole Schools with doing checks on students. The Walpole School asked the Walpole Police to check on families that their child has not been interacting with the school over a media platform. Students are still required to continue classwork and attendance with their school. They have been going to homes to talk to parents.

- It has been difficult performing interviews with victims and/or suspects. They try to keep their police station a natural/clean zone. But, sometimes have both suspects/arrestees and victims inside. Right now they are working several major cases. Some people are from out-of-state. It has been great having the station cleaned a few hours every day by Brad.
- Their department stats will be lower than usual. It has been difficult being proactive. Chief Paquette explained the new process for court arraignments. It will be difficult. They have been in the Villages patrolling with their steady lit blue light on as giving some comfort to their citizens that they are still out there for them.
- They have participated with the Walpole and North Walpole Fire Departments with Walpole Residents children's "Birthday Parades". This has been a great way to show community support.
- Department Training – They are usually almost done with their mandatory State of NH required training. The NH Police Academy has cancelled in-person training.

Mr. Dalessio asked if the Police Department has noticed an increase in skid marks on the roads. There are some in Drewsville; anywhere there is a straight road. Chief Paquette is aware of them. They are on the VT side as well. The department has had complaints of a vehicle going very fast on County Road about 1-to-2am. Almost every time an officer is in that area they have either received another call or that particular vehicle has not gone through. He is going to move the radar unit over to County Road. Mrs. Pschirrer advised that the Selectboard knows the Police Department is very busy.

Selectboard Office: Mrs. Sarah Downing submitted a "COVID-19 Effects to Selectboard Office and Town Hall Operations" dated May 20, 2020. She reported that on March 18, 2020 at 1 PM, the Town Hall closed to public access. Appointment are now required with Selectboard and Town Clerk/Tax Collectors' Offices. Additionally, no meetings or events are being held in the Town Hall.

Facilities changes include:

- Daily cleaning of surfaces, bathrooms, door handles, pens, etc.
- Installation of hand-sanitizing dispenser in hallway and one movable dispenser.
- Touchless dispensers for soap, paper products and faucets installed in Town Hall bathrooms. The bathrooms are for public use.
- Plexiglass coverings added to public windows for both Town Hall offices.
- Donated cloth face masks were distributed to Town employees.
- Posting of signage on the Common requesting that visitors do not congregate. With the nicer weather a lot of people are on the Common but they seem to be honoring the request not to congregate.
- Masks preferred signage at the entrance door and near public windows. This was a recent addition.

Process changes:

- More payments and documents are sent via postal mail or email. In general, the Town Hall has been quieter although there has been a recent uptick in e-mail and phone inquiries to the Selectboard Office with the posting of tax and water-sewer billing.
- Selectboard meetings have been held online via Zoom for the past 2 months. The Board is coming in during weekends to sign paperwork. Other committees and boards have been using or are considering moving to Zoom online meetings. The Town now has a second Zoom license.
- Internal staff is calling before coming to visit Town Offices. Thank you for helping us reduce the possibility of congestion in the hallway and on the entrance ramp.

Recent Purchases:

- Webcam/microphones for use during online meetings for those with desktops.
- Paper masks for use during elections, etc. Free stock is being requested from the State.
- Hand sanitizer to replenish stock.
- Hand-held, no contact thermometers; one for each department; have shipped.
- Departments should note on POs if a purchase is related to COVID-19.

Town Clerk / Tax Collector: Mrs. Sandy Smith had submitted a written Staff Report dated May 2020. Unfortunately Mrs. Smith was unable to attend this meeting due an illness.

COVID-19 is changing their routine just a little.

They now work by appointment only. They schedule appointments and ask them to call if they have the need to cancel. Most people are comfortable with this system, as they don't want to be exposed to anything. We have had just a couple that have forgotten to come. Most are coming on time. We have them call us from outside and if our customer has not left, we tell them when they see someone leave, they can come up and knock on the outside door and we will let them in.

We allow approx. one hour for a new vehicle or a transfer. Ten or fifteen minutes for a renewal, extra time if they have several. One hour is given for a Marriage License. These are just estimates.

Most customers bring their own pen, if not, we let them use a pen and then we spray it so no germs will be spread. We spray their driver's license before giving it back, they seem to appreciate the caution that we are using.

It is a very different way of working but they are getting used to it. The good part is we can close on time!

ADJOURNMENT: Mrs. Pschirrer thanked everyone for attending. They appreciate the work everyone is doing especially under these circumstances. Every day brings a new surprise. There may or may not be another Staff meeting next month. It is impressive to see how well Walpole is doing as a community. Some towns have not yet met to approve their budgets. She adjourned this Staff meeting at 6:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Regina Borden, Recording Secretary



Peggy L. Pschirrer, Chair



Cheryl Mayberry



Steven Dalessio

(**Note:** These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections will be found in the Minutes of the May 28, 2020, Selectboard meeting.)