

**TOWN OF BOLTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN, REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2020, 7:00 P.M. - VIRTUAL
MINUTES**

		Present	Absent
First Selectman	Sandra Pierog	X	
Selectman	Robert Morra	X	
Selectman	Mike Eremita	X	
Deputy First Selectman	Kim Miller	X	
Selectman	Robert DePietro	X Arrived 7:22 p.m.	
Administrative Officer (Staff)	Joshua Kelly	X	
Members of the Public			

Also present:

Lori Bushnell, Tax Collector

Nick Lavigne

Jill Collins

Jim Dwire, Co-chair Bolton Memorial Day Parade

John Toomey, Co-chair Bolton Memorial Day Parade

Nick Zuba – Green Bank

1. Call to Order:

By: Sandra Pierog

Time: 7:09 p.m.

Place: Virtual

2. Pledge of Allegiance:

Bypassed for this virtual meeting.

3. Public Comment:

There was no one who wished to speak.

4. Approval of Minutes:

March 3, 2020 Regular Meeting

Motion: I move the Bolton Board of Selectmen postpone this item until the May meeting.

By: Morra

Seconded: Miller

Voting:
For: Pierog, Eremita, Morra, Miller
Against: None
Abstain: None

5. Appointments:

None

6. Correspondence:

Pierog received a letter from John Toomey and Jim Dwire regarding the Memorial Day parade and the honoring of veterans. The letter was shared with the BOS. The Co-chairs of the Bolton Memorial Day Parade are putting out feelers for what the parade and/or ceremony will look like if the Governor's order is still in effect about public gatherings of over five people. Eremita feels the order will remain in effect and we would not want to socialize at such an event. Other BOS members agreed. Other towns have cancelled their parades. Eremita added we could hold a ceremony to honor veterans at the Fire House, if we can gather. Miller suggesting asking five people to gather and maintain social distancing for the honor ceremony; this could be videotaped or live streamed, perhaps by the monuments, as a virtual thanks to our veterans. A speaker or two could acknowledge veterans. Eremita hates to give up this date. Morra stated Miller's idea is a good one. Such a ceremony would involve a limited number of people for this important event. This option may be our best bet.

Pierog instructed John to plan an event to be held at the green with a limited number of people and live stream the ceremony. Facebook Live won't be great quality, but is better than nothing. Toomey has asked a WWII veteran to be the grand marshal. Pierog indicated someone will be there to film the event. Miller asked for confirmation that this means the parade is officially being cancelled. Pierog indicated this is correct. Toomey and Kristin Hick exchanged email about the band providing music for the event. Hick has been trying to work out how to have band practice virtually which is near impossible. Pierog will contact the musical department for suggestion of using recorded music to play for effect that day.

Brian Miller for the Bolton Road Race sent a letter to Pierog requesting authorization to hold the race next year on March 14. This is a great event for the town and she would like to see it continued. The BOS agreed by consensus of not having a problem with that date for the event.

7. Reports & Updates:

A. Subcommittee Reports

Pierog stated the Finance & Admin report is in the packet.

B. Properties and Facilities Report

Staff reported the Town Garage work is progressing. The block walls are up, some of the siding is on, some doors are in, and the electrician started today.

C. Open Space Management & Acquisition

Nothing to discuss on this item.

D. Lower Bolton Lake Report

Staff reported Kim Welch is continuing to work with Northeast Aquatic Research to set up and electronic meeting with lake community to review the current lake status and the treatments that are planned for this year.

E. FY 20 Budget Report

Pierog reported those categories trending above 75% are Conservation, Fire Commission, and Data Processing.

Eremita asked where the money is coming from for having the police at the school? Pierog indicated we are still waiting for the bill. Staff reported the estimate should be received Thursday.

F. Other

There was nothing for this item.

8. Ongoing Business

A. Consider and possibly act on Budget Transfers and/or Appropriation Requests

Staff added the following in addition to the rationale stated:

- The Town is currently renting RVs for the purpose of having more quarantine space for first responders; these rentals may be reimbursable via FEMA. Should the RVs continue to be needed another budget transfer will be requested in May.
- Other Payments – Social Services: Miller asked if this is part of the Senior Center. Staff responded it is a part of the same department. The Resident Assistance Fund would be a cash assist with rent or utility payment. Morra added there is a process where clients are referred to State agencies for assistance first. Who does the vetting for those requesting assistance from Bolton? Staff replied the Director of Senior Services does with preset criteria after the client utilizes State assistance first.

Proposed Transfers - April 2020

\$ 1,200.00	Payroll Other - Admin	From \$ 1,200.00	Payroll
<i>Rationale: Due to the FY 2020 budget assuming that the new Administrator would take health insurance rather than a waiver, this fund is short by \$1,200. Due to the Media Coordinator position being vacant for an extended period of time, there are several thousand dollars available in the Payroll line to help make up for the Other Payroll shortage.</i>			
\$ 2,792.00	Rentals	From \$ 2,792.00	Professional/Tech. Services - Admin.
<i>Rationale: The Town has rented two RVs for use as first responder quarantine zones. To be as accurate as possible in our accounting, it is recommended that a formal transfer to a new line be done.</i>			
\$ 1,350.00	Payroll - Assessor	From \$ 428.00	Payroll Other - Assessor
		From \$ 922.00	Payroll Other - Tax Collector
<i>Rationale: The Assessor's Payroll line is up due to merging the Assistant Assessor and Assistant Tax Collector positions. The money to make up for this shortage can easily be found in savings from the Assessor's Other Payroll line and the Tax Collector's Other Payroll line.</i>			
\$ 19,215.00	Payroll - Town Clerk	From \$ 16,475.00	Payroll Other - Town Clerk
		\$ 2,470.00	Payroll Other - Tax Collector
<i>Rationale: The Town Clerk's Payroll line is short because our Assistant Town Clerk became full-time. Most of the money can be found in the Town Clerk's Other Payroll line, and the remainder can be found in the Tax Collector's Other Payroll line.</i>			
\$ 41,067.00	Payroll - Land Use	From \$ 36,182.00	Payroll Other - Land Use
		\$ 4,885.00	Payroll Other - Tax Collector
<i>Rationale: The Land Use Payroll line is short because our Assistant Building Official became full-time. Most of the money can be found in the Land Use Other Payroll line, and the remainder can be found in the Tax Collector's Other Payroll line.</i>			
\$ 288.00	Payroll - Library	From \$ 288.00	Payroll Other - Library
<i>Rationale: The Library Payroll line was calculated before union contracts were fully negotiated last year, and a small miscalculation was made in the FY 2020 budget. The money needed to make up the shortage can be found in the Library Other Payroll line.</i>			
\$ 5,000.00	Other Payments - Social Services	From \$ 5,000.00	Payroll Other - Tax Collector
<i>Rationale: The Town will likely see an uptick in Resident Assistance Fund claims, and allocating additional funds to that effort now rather than later may help to keep more residents happy, safe, and supported during the COVID-19 health crisis.</i>			

Motion: I move that the Bolton Board of Selectmen approve the budget transfers as presented.

By: Morra

Seconded: DePietro

Voting:

For: Pierog, Eremita, Morra, DePietro, Miller

Against: None

Abstain: None

B. Consider and possible act on the draft resolution in support of Bolton's Inclusion in the C-PACE Program

Nicholas Zuba of the Green Bank was present. This item was discussed at the Facilities meeting and an agreement was reached that we can approve this evening.

Motion: I move the Bolton Board of Selectmen approve the agreement with The C-PACE Agreement with CT Green Bank.

By: Eremita

Seconded: Morra

Voting:

For: Pierog, Eremita, Morra, Miller, DePietro

Against: None

Abstain: None

Zuba was thanked for attending the meeting.

C. Reschedule Special Town Meeting for the purposes of reallocating capital reserve funds

See below for discussion on this matter.

D. Reschedule FY 2021 Annual Budget Referendum

Eremita and Morra would like to wait on this matter until the May BOS meeting. The matter was postponed until next month by consensus.

E. Other

None

9. New Business:

A. Discussion on Town response to COVID-19 State of Emergency

Pierog reported Josh, Jim, Kristen, Mike, herself, and others have been on calls with the Bolton Unified Command, which serves as the nexus of town emergency operation discussions. There are currently five confirmed cases in Bolton. There have been two deaths and one resident remains hospitalized.

Morra commented he made a suggestion to the Health Board that recovery rates be published as this would be helpful information. We know that some people have recovered. Pierog agreed she has not seen any information on recovery cases. There are

also those that are untested and unidentified that are self-quarantining or walking around. The governor conducts a daily press conference and has been asked these questions. Also asked for Chief Executives of towns if the number of unemployment applications by municipality; we were told this is not available.

Pierog received a comment in the Zoom chat window. Trish Brudz sent a link that shows recoveries by countries; it does not go down to the town level. Miller found that by clicking on the USA recoveries are listed by state. The numbers seem high with what the governor has shared. The data source is also shown on this link.

Morra commented we have a group of town employees who have done extraordinary work. He asked Staff to please extend the BOS's gratitude to the town employees. Words can't justify how much we appreciate their efforts.

Staff commented the operation of Town Hall is being conducted by one or two people from each department coming into the building and others working from home. Shifts have been split on Buildings & Grounds to ensure no cross contamination. The Highway Department is not sharing vehicles. The Library is open for scheduled pick up only with no more than two people working at the same time. Playgrounds and the tennis courts are closed. Parks are open. The vast majority of services are available. There is very little that we are not providing even if remotely. The schools are providing meals, breakfast and lunch for students and their families, three times per week from the high school.

Pierog added school vacation next week will take place. There will be no distance learning. We have decided to close Town Hall Monday, Tuesday, and Friday for deep cleaning. Miller stated she could not be happier that April vacation remains on the schedule. It can be difficult for parents to continue working from home and help children with their learning.

B. Consider and possibly act on items required and allowed by Governor Lamont's Executive Orders:

1.7I: to authorize the budget-making authority to act in the place of a public vote in the event that health conditions prevent a public vote from taking place

Pierog provided some background about this resolution. Bolton's Charter requires holding the budget referendum no later than May 25th. Under this executive order the budget date can be extended by thirty days. However, this order specifies for budgets to be adopted by May 15th. No one could tell her if the governor is going to extend that date. This authority would allow the budget adopted by the BOS and BOE and sent to the BOF. The BOF is required to hold a public meeting. The BOF can act on steps to publish the budget and allow public comment with the BOF then authorized to adopt the budget no later May 10, 2020 for the 2021 budget and set a mil rate without a town meeting or referendum.

It is possible we could postpone this until the May meeting and hope the process not be any different than our current one based on the state of the pandemic. Eremita stated this could automatically eliminate the town meeting and/or referendum vote this year. If the orders still stand on May 10 about the assembly of more than five people, we still have the required fourteen days to notice the referendum. We can vote on this and will have both options available to us.

Motion: I make the motion the Bolton Board of Selectmen to adopt this resolution as presented.

By: Eremita

Seconded: Miller

Discussion: Morra was confused with an earlier explanation in regards to the 30-day postponement. Can't we move everything forward 30 days? Pierog stated the order indicates the cut-off date is 5-15. The Bolton referendum is set for May 26, 2020.

Voting:

For: Pierog, Eremita, Morra, DePietro, Miller

Against: None

Abstain: None

2.7R: to approve the reallocation of stale and leftover capital reserve funds to new projects

Pierog began by reminding the BOS has submitted the reallocation to the BOF for approval. The BOF approved it and then the town meeting was cancelled. Jill and Josh have since identified more money that will be stale. Executive order 7S speaks to how items can get approved without holding a town meeting. The order is not clear about this issue. If we cannot act and do not act Bolton will not be able to do projects scheduled during the summer. BOS and BOF have to approve the reallocation and the process is completed.

Morra stated what is different about these funds is that voters have voted and approved of these monies. The projects using these funds have also been voted on and passed by the voting residents. This is reallocating and putting money towards capital projects. These are one-time payments. This process is different than the regular budget. Miller added the reallocation of funds is super specific, in that school funds have to be used for school related projects. Pierog cautioned that not all are that specific. However, in the spirit of good cooperation we feel it is a good idea to reallocate funds from BOE into BOE projects and the same for Town funds. That was the taxpayers intent. Eremita agrees we should use this order on this matter.

3.7S: property tax process and timeline alterations

Lori Bushnell was present to talk about this order pertaining to the collection of property taxes.

Pierog stated she and Bushnell conferred with the tax collectors for the towns of Tolland and Windham. The order requires to take action by April 25, 2020. This is a tax deferment program to defer taxes payable on July 1, 2020 for a grace period of 90 days intending the new due date to be October 1, 2020. The order has to be corrected as counting of 90 days brings the due date to late September. The grace period will also be interest free. This can be applied to the entire town or there is an option for residents to attest they have suffered economically to get the extension. A form for this has been published by OPM. The BOS can extend the eligibility to any category of taxpayer. The Tax Collector's office would then have to flag the residents who have filed for deferment.

Bushnell added that Bolton has to choose at least one option. The most uniform option would be the deferment until October 1, 2020 for all taxpayers. However, any taxes held in escrow will still have to be paid by the end of July. That means Bolton will collect 6.5 million by August 1, 2020. That is one benefit of being an annual collection town. The other option with the application process would be tedious on the part of her office. The office would have to mail out application to everyone or we would have to advertise the dickens out of the program so everyone knows about it and they would have to take the initiative to apply for the deferment. Some people are not going to be informed enough to take this action.

Morra stated the application process for deferment is a terrible option. Small businesses can be dramatically impacted during this period from month to month to month. In thirty days one could be in a disaster situation. The across the board deferral is the best one in his opinion.

Pierog stated the 90-day deferral and interest free grace period would cause Bolton to lose \$15,000 - \$20,000 in interest. Last year through September 30th Bolton had collected \$16.85 million. This equates to about a \$10 million deferral. People have the option to pay their property tax bill on time.

Also included in this order is a low interest rate program for delinquent taxes prior to January 1, 2020. The interest rate drops from 1.5% per month to .25% per month for 90 days. This is a pittance of a pittance lost to the Town. Bushnell is not sure how much paperwork is required in the Tax Collector's office for this program. Bushnell recommends implementing this program as well.

Does the Town get made whole by upper government under these programs? Pierog replied in the negative. Bolton can choose one, the other, or both programs and inform the State of the decision by April 25, 2020. Eremita feels we should choose the deferment program only to take care of the current taxes. Morra concurs with Eremita. If this situation gets more difficult the governor may come up with something a bit more palatable. Miller stated we have a low rate of those owing back taxes anyway. Eremita said those owing back taxes was not caused by the situation we are in now.

Pierog stated item C of the order requires landlords that participate will be required to pass the forbearance on to tenants or lessees. Bushnell will research this portion. The application process may have to be done differently.

Motion: I make the motion the Bolton Board of Selectmen to adopt the deferral program as noted in 7S, item 6A to apply to all taxpayers.

By: Pierog

Seconded: Eremita

Voting:

For: Pierog, Eremita, Morra, DePietro, Miller

Against: None

Abstain: None

C. Consider and possibly act on the newly drafted Financial Policy Manual

Pierog stated this was discussed at the last subcommittee meeting.

Motion: I move the Bolton Board of Selectmen approve the Financial Policy Manual.

By: Pierog

Seconded: Morra

Voting:

For: Pierog, Eremita, Morra, DePietro, Miller

Against: None

Abstain: None

D. Other

None

10. First Selectman's Report:

A. COVID-19 Preparations

This matter was discussed previously.

B. Charter Revision

Pierog reported this committee continues to meet. The next general meeting is scheduled for April 16, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.

C. Sustainable CT

Pierog stated this group continues to meet.

D. Other

None

11. Administrative Officer's Report:

A. COVID-19 Preparations

Kelly reported there is an Emergency Operations Guide on the town's home page. This is a comprehensive document to show what the town is doing and a link to the State's FAQ page.

On Thursday, April 16, 2020, there is a Facility and Public Safety Committee meeting during which Green Bank will be joining for a walk-through of possible solar array car ports at the high school. The meeting is at 1:00 p.m.

Pierog complimented Staff on his idea of creating the Emergency Operations Guide. Pierog is grateful for the creation of the guide and it is helpful. Everything residents need to know about how the Town is operating is included. Staff has been invaluable throughout this time with all of the meetings and orders from the governor. Staff expressed the same gratitude in reverse.

B. Administrator's Goals

None

C. Other

None

12. Adjournment:

Motion: Move to adjourn at 8:33 p.m.

By: Morra

Seconded: Miller

Voting:

For: Pierog, Eremita, Morra, DePietro, Miller

Against: None

Abstain: None

Respectfully Submitted,

Yvonne B. Filip

Yvonne B. Filip, Board of Selectmen Recording Secretary

Please see minutes of subsequent meetings for corrections to these minutes and any corrections hereto.