

Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for Tuesday, November 10, 2020
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83012497485>

5:30 p.m. Executive Session: Exception 6 - Acquisition of Real Property

A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair Maurice P. Handel.. Those present were Matthew D. Borrelli, Marianne B. Cooley, Daniel P. Matthews, John Bulian, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. Also attending were Dave Davison, ATM/Finance and Katie King ATM/Operations. Recording Secretary Mary Hunt joined the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board vote to enter into Executive Session.

Exception 3 - To consider the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.

Second: Mr. Bulian. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

6:00 p.m. Call to Order:
The public portion of the Select Board meeting of November 10, 2020, was convened by Chairman Maurice Handel.

Mr. Handel announced this open meeting is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020 due to the current state of emergency from the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. He noted all public gatherings have been suspended as advised and directed by the Commonwealth. And, as such, suspending the requirement of the open meeting law to have all meetings in a public, accessible, physical location while encouraging and allowing members of all public bodies to participate remotely. Mr. Handel stated the meeting will include public comment and the Needham Select Board and all attendees are convening by Zoom, as posted on the Town's website identifying how the public may join. He said all supporting documents used at this meeting are available on the Town's website www.needhamma.gov.

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the meeting be continued to Tuesday, November 24, 2020, if a technical problem develops that makes it impossible for the Select Board to conduct the meeting in this format.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

6:01 p.m. Veteran's Day Proclamation:
Mr. Borrelli read a Proclamation recognizing Wednesday, November 11, 2020 as Veterans' Day.

Motion by Mr. Borrelli that the Select Board of the Town of Needham do hereby recognize Wednesday, November 11, 2020 as Veterans' Day and asks the citizens of the Town to join in appropriate observance of those who have served, preserving the principles of justice, freedom and democracy. Second: Mr. Bulian. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

6:05 p.m. Public Hearing: CrownCastle Fiber Grant of Location - First Avenue
Fred York, Phoenix Communications spoke with the Board on behalf of CrownCastle LLC, who are requesting permission to lay and maintain underground conduits and hand holes, with cables placed therein, under the surface of the following public way or ways: Install a manhole over the existing conduit and then place approximately 75' of micro conduit from the manhole to the building at 300 First Avenue, Needham.

It was noted Phoenix Communications is their preferred contractor for this work and they have filed a bond with the Town of Needham for this construction.

The Department of Public Works has approved this petition, based on Phoenix Communications' commitment to adhere to regulation that **all conduit installed must be 3" schedule 40 minimum; and, that when buried, the conduit must be placed at 24" below grade to the top of the conduit.**

Ms. Fitzpatrick indicated all paperwork is in order.

Mr. Handel invited public comment. No comments were heard.

Motion Mr. Bulian by that the Select Board approve and sign a petition from CrownCastle LLC., to install a manhole over the existing conduit and then place approximately 75' of micro conduit from the manhole to the building at 300 First Avenue, Needham. Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

6:07 p.m. Director of Public Works:
Carys Lustig, Interim Director of Public Works appeared before the Board with five items to discuss:

1. Sign Notice of Traffic Regulation - Mason Road
Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board vote to approve and sign the Notice of Traffic Regulation Permit #SS20-11-10 requiring that Mason Road southbound be designated as a stopped street at the intersection of Great Plain Avenue. Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.
2. Sign Notice of Traffic Regulation - Bradford Street

Ms. Cooley asked about a crosswalk where the new stop sign will be located. She said signage is not clear and said it is good to have both crosswalks.

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board vote to approve and sign the Notice of Traffic Regulation Permit #SS20-11-10 requiring that Bradford Street southbound be designated as a stopped street at the intersection of Dedham Avenue.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

3. Downtown Infrastructure Improvement (“Streetscape”) Update

Ms. Lustig, along with Bob Mackie, BETA Group, and Anthony DelGaizo, Town Engineer provided an update on the design process for the second phase of the downtown renovation project.

Mr. Handel noted correspondence from Jackie DeWolfe, 242 Dedham Avenue was received regarding the streetscape project, which he said would be shared with the consultant and streetscape committee.

Mr. Mackie presented a PowerPoint presentation titled “Downtown Streetscape Phase II, Needham, MA” dated November 10, 2020. He commented on various aspects of the project including the project limits, west side at Maple Street, and the East side at Pickering Street. Discussion ensued on a bicycle mount/dismount area, sharrows, possible pedestrian boxes at Maple Street and/or Pickering Street, four gateway towers, rapid flashing beacons, lighting, landscaping, and mobile seasonal parklets for additional outdoor seating, among other features.

Ms. Cooley asked why the need for two lanes for car traffic each way in the downtown as it relates to pedestrians, bicyclists, and outside diners. She commented parklets should be aligned with restaurants. Ms. Cooley shared her concern for crosswalk boxes that are not signalized or very visible at each end of town.

Mr. Borrelli echoed Ms. Cooley's concern regarding restaurants and businesses. He asked about widening sidewalks on the west side of town to accommodate outdoor dining without having to use a parklet. He suggested consideration be given to installing a crosswalk at Garden Street with a right turn only onto Great Plain Avenue, and more thought be given to the gateway arches.

Mr. Bulian concurred with Mr. Borrelli regarding wider sidewalks for dining, especially for restaurants disadvantaged due to narrow sidewalks. He said he is interested in creative ways to increase sidewalk space.

Mr. Matthews said the plan is impressive and will be an improvement for the Town.

Mr. Handel concurred with Mr. Matthews. He said he likes the ability to use banners at each gateway but cautioned on using too many.

Ms. Cooley said the end result of the project should allow for restaurants, pedestrians, shoppers, bikers, and cars to coexist. She suggested more thought for ways bikers can pass safely through downtown, without using bicycle dismount/mount areas. Ms. Cooley asked for input from the police and fire chiefs regarding the use of planters as a sufficient barrier to hold back cars at each parklet.

Discussion ensued on previous streetscape committee conversations concerning bicycle travel in the downtown. Mr. Mackie commented on the lanes of traffic, widening sidewalks, space limitations, and how to strike the appropriate balance.

Ms. Lustig commented on coordination of the Downtown Streetscape project and Town Common Improvement project.

4. Town Common Improvement

Bob Mackie, BETA Group, and Edward Olsen, Superintendent of Parks & Forestry provided the Board an update on the design process for the Town Common renovation.

Mr. Mackie presented a PowerPoint presentation titled “Town Common Renovations Draft Concept” dated November 10, 2020. He commented on current conditions of the Common, as well as options for a new configuration. Renderings of possible options were viewed. Mr. Mackie commented on features including benches and swings, shade trees and structures, tables for eating, connection to Town Hall, recessed and catenary lighting, a sound system, and the location of a tent, among other items.

Discussion ensued on whether or not to remove and/or replace Garrity Way.

Mr. Bulian said the draft concept is very creative. He supports having a tent with a paver pad underneath. He said it is critical to maintain the eight parking spaces Garrity Way provides for residents doing business at Town Hall. Mr. Bulian said it may be challenging, should it become problematic, to keep groups from using the Great Lawn for sport.

Mr. Handel pointed out parking spaces would become available on the street on each side of the Common, should Garrity Way become a walkway. He noted not all eight spaces would be gone.

Mr. Borrelli agreed with Mr. Bulian, noting he would like benches and passive use of the grass. He said he prefers Option 3 for a tent and is open to options for Garrity Way.

Mr. Matthews said people are used to walking diagonally across the Common. He said more thought should be given to whether or not to have a tent, noting further limited use of alcohol may not be allowed post pandemic. He said Option 3 makes

the most sense. He noted Garrity Way is used seven days a week and should remain.

Ms. Fitzpatrick said colorful Adirondack chairs for the lawn are part of the plan, but not shown on the renderings.

Mr. Olsen commented it has been a pleasure to work on many projects that have had an incredible impact on the people of Needham. He said the Town Common is the “front yard” for Needham and he is proud of the committee who worked together to come up with a terrific design. He concluded he is thankful to have been a part of the design team and that it is time to renovate the Common.

Ms. Cooley said she prefers Option 3 and wants the Common and Great Lawn to be used by citizens. She said she favors more swings and appreciates the trees. She said she is not opposed to closing off Garrity Way but wants to make sure the Farmers Market will be able to fit the space.

Discussion ensued on uses for Garrity Way, parking spaces, relocation of Town Hall drop boxes, pavers to blend in with the rest of the Common, and the location of the Circle of Peace sculpture.

Ms. Lustig said the next steps include funding, construction effects on downtown businesses, applying for Community Preservation funds, and possible construction schedule. She said the estimated cost of the project is \$1.3 million and will take 6 to 12 months.

The Board asked for another update on the project early winter 2021, well before spring Town Meeting preparation.

5. LED Downtown Pilot

Ms. Lustig asked for feedback on the decorative LED lights that were converted at Great Plain Avenue and Pickering Street, and the new lights installed in the Heights to determine if the DPW should pursue additional conversions.

The Board concurred it favors transitioning to the LED lighting.

7:26 p.m. Appointments and Consent Agenda:

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board vote to approve the Appointments and Consent Agenda as presented.

APPOINTMENTS: No Appointments were made at this meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. **Accept a \$180 donation made to the Needham Health Department’s Gift of Warmth Program from First Baptist Church in Needham.**

2. **Accept the following donations made to the Needham Community Revitalization Trust Fund: \$100 from Josephine Li-McLeod and \$50 from Maureen Callahan.**
3. **Ratify the vote in the 2020 MPO election for the Town of Brookline for the At-Large Town seat, the City of Everett for the At-Large City seat, the City of Beverly for the North Shore Task Force sub-region seat, and the Town of Medway for the South West Advisory Planning Committee sub-region seat.**
4. **Approve open session minutes of October 13, 2020 and October 27, 2020, and executive session minutes of July 23, 2020, October 27, 2020 and November 3, 2020.**
5. **Water & Sewer Abatement Order #1298.**
6. **In accordance with Section 20B of the Town Charter, and upon the recommendation of the Town Manager and the Personnel Board, adopt a compensation plan for Schedule K for fiscal year 2021 that includes a 3% increase.**

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

7:30 p.m.

Town Manager:

Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager, Katie King, ATM/Operations, and Dave Davison, ATM/Finance spoke with the Board regarding 3 items:

1. Extend Authorization for Local Outdoor Dining Alcoholic Licensing Approval
Ms. King reminded the Board that on September 10, 2020 Governor Baker issued Covid 19 Order 50 - Order Making Certain Phase III Adjustments. Included in this order is an extension of outdoor dining provisions, allowing the Local Licensing Authority to permit outdoor dining with alcohol for a period past November 1, 2020. On June 9, 2020 the Board authorized the Town Manager to grant all local approvals necessary to allow existing local businesses to utilize outdoor dining with alcohol until November 1, 2020. On September 22, 2020, the Board extended this authorization to permit outdoor dining with alcohol through December 1, 2020. To continue supporting Needham's restaurants, it is requested that the Board extend this authorization until 60 days after Governor Bakers' March 10, 2020 Declaration of Emergency is rescinded.

Discussion ensued on the coming winter season and the importance of people being able to safely dine indoors so restaurants can survive through the winter. It was noted some merchants are now staying open later on Thursday evenings for holiday shopping. The Board encouraged residents to shop and dine in Needham.

Motion by Mr. Bulian that consistent with Governor Bakers' Declaration of Emergency and to provide a timely response to businesses seeking to remain open in the Town of Needham under occupancy and other operational limitations, the Select Board hereby extends the authorization granted to the Town Manager by its votes of June 9, 2020 and September 2020 to grant all local approvals necessary to allow existing local businesses to utilize outdoor

seating in parking lots, on-street parking spaces, sidewalks, landscaped yard areas or other appropriate locations to provide more space to serve patrons from December 1, 2020 until sixty days after the Declaration of Emergency is rescinded by the Governor, such authorization to remain subject to all the terms and conditions stated in the Board's original vote.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

2. Financial Update

Dave Davison, Assistant Town Manager/Finance provided the Board with an update on COVID-19 cost projections as well as a preview of the FY2022 budget. He said there are currently more unknowns than knowns. He commented the state is now closing out the FY2020 budget, noting there could be funds made available for distribution to cities and towns for costs incurred from COVID-19. He reiterated the state has not yet passed a budget for FY2021, noting the goal is to have a budget presented to the governor by Thanksgiving. He said the governor filed an amended FY2020 budget based upon revised revenue updates, which effectively reduced state aid for cities, towns, and school districts by approximately 5%. He reminded the Board the Town of Needham has also made adjustments to its revenue forecasts for FY2021 going into Town Meeting in June 2020. Mr. Davison commented there are great unknowns for FY2022 at the federal, state, and local levels, noting he will have a better sense after January 1, 2021. He did note the contraction in the economy is affecting federal coffers just as much as at the state level. Discussion ensued on the budget outlook for FY2022, noting available resources to cities and towns for many core services is going to be critical. He noted millions of dollars in services are provided to Needham residents, businesses, and schools by way of federal monies and grants. Mr. Davison turned to more immediate items affected by the local economy, saying FY2020 was looking to be a banner year of economic activity in terms of growth and development. He said FY2022 is closing out to be a good year, rather than a banner year. He said activity started to drop in FY2020 in May and June as local receipts were down by 19.7% when compared to May 2019. He said June 2020 local receipts were down 27.6% when compared to June 2019. Mr. Davison said some of the decline was attributed to monies collected by the state on behalf of the Town and remitted to the Town, particularly in the area of meals and excise tax. He commented on slightly higher delinquent rates on property tax payments, which was not unanticipated due to the extension given because of the pandemic. He commented the delinquency rate on June 30, 2020 was 1.5% as compared to June 30, 2019 which was 0.9%. He said the higher delinquency rate was primarily due to one large commercial account, but that most uncollected taxes have been collected from FY2020, with the exception of the large commercial account and some residential and small commercial properties. He said most FY2021 was looking good, except for the major revenue drop off in May and June. Mr. Davison commented the Town is still impacted by delays and extensions granted to businesses in remitting their sales and use taxes to the Commonwealth, hence those being remitted to the Town. He commented on declines in permit activity, along with actions by the Town to lower some fees temporarily (i.e. parking meters and licensing fees). He noted November and

December will be critical for when funds funnel through to the Town in late December, January, and February. He admitted the mandatory closing of some establishments has forced shoppers online and some people are making purchases out of state where sales tax is not collected. He noted his concerns. He commented on the strong real estate market of single-family homes, educational expenses, and anticipated Covid-19 expenses totaling \$1.1 million, primarily associated with cleaning, disinfecting, and ventilation systems. Mr. Davison said a number of costs are still to be incurred. Mr. Davison commented on legislative relief, noting our state representatives have reached out to the Town looking for input.

Mr. Borrelli asked if it might make sense to have a disaster fund for emergencies?

Mr. Davison said there are several funds, including a general stabilization fund. He acknowledged a “rainy day” fund should be considered in the future, noting more expenses are anticipated in January 2021. He commented on Covid-19 grants received including \$34,000 to the Health Department for their expenses and \$39,339 a reimbursement grant for transportation costs incurred by the elderly specifically related to Covid-19.

The Board thanked Mr. Davison for his work during this difficult time, noting the extra burden he is handling.

3. Potential New Banner for Symbols of Pride Program

The Board discussed the Community Revitalization Trust proposal of including the new banner “One World Together” into the Symbols of Pride Banner Program.

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board voted to approve the inclusion of the “One World Together” banner into the Symbols of Pride Banner Program. Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote

Ms. Fitzpatrick told the Board the MetroWest Collaborative Development was selected to administer the Emergency Rental Assistance Program which will launch Monday, November 16, 2020, with a 3-week application period ending Friday, December 4, 2020. She reminded the Board that if more applicants apply than the Town can handle there will be a lottery. She thanked the Board for their help.

8:05 p.m. Board Discussion:

1. Committee Reports

Ms. Cooley reported Needham United Against Racism Initiative (NUARI) met last night, saying the group will be meeting regularly on the first and third Monday’s of the month. She said the most significant development is that a consultant was engaged to work with NUARI in developing their vision and guiding principles. She said discussion last night was also about policing, education, and housing. Ms. Cooley said the next couple of sessions will revolve around the vision, to be followed by an agenda based on priorities of the committee.

Mr. Borrelli said the committee was open and honest, and the meeting was very helpful in trying to get people involved in Town government, Town Meeting, or on committees. He said it was a robust conversation and a great kick off meeting.

Ms. Cooley said there are many resources available on the NUARI page of the Town's website. She thanked Ms. Fitzpatrick for her work.

8:10 p.m.

Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting of Tuesday, November 10, 2020.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

A list of all documents used at this Select Board meeting is available at:

<http://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=99&Type=&ADID=>