

REPORT OF THE
GORHAM TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING VIA ZOOM
April 7, 2020

Chairperson Phillips opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. There were 48 members of the public in attendance via zoom.

Roll Call: Chairperson Phillips, Councilors Shepard, Hartwell, Hager, Pratt, Kuech and Wilder Cross. Also in attendance were Interim Town Manager Tom Poirier, Town Attorney Mark Bower and Town Clerk Laurie Nordfors.

Moved by Councilor Hartwell, seconded by Councilor Pratt and VOTED to accept the minutes of the March 10, 2020 Regular Town Council Meeting and the March 24, 2020 Special Town Council Meeting.
7 yeas

Open Public Communications

Phil Gagnon, Revolving Loan Fund Committee member reminded businesses of the forgivable SBA 7A loan that is offered to businesses, non-profits and religious organizations during the COVID-19 crisis.

Councilor Communications

Councilor Pratt extended his gratitude to all Town Staff for going above and beyond during the current crisis and also thanked the public for being patient and coming together as a community.

Councilor Shepard echoed what Councilor Pratt said. He also reported that the Ordinance Committee is scheduled to meet via zoom on April 21st.

Councilor Wilder Cross offered her condolences to Town Manager Ephrem Paraschak and his family for their unimaginable loss during this time. She also thanked Staff for accepting many challenges and working above and beyond. She appreciates everyone's patience during these hard times.

Councilor Kuech expressed her gratitude and appreciation for all Town employees and everyone working behind the scenes. She appreciates how the Town and School have come together during this time to help feed Gorham residents in need.

Councilor Hager echoed the other Councilor in thanking everyone who has come together to help the community. He also reported that EcoMaine will meet this week to present their annual budget.

Town Manager Report

Interim Town Manager Tom Poirier remarked that during the unprecedented times that have impacted the United States and the world during the COVID-19 crisis, Town Staff has gone above and beyond to provide services to the Town. He reminded citizens that all Town buildings will remain closed through April 30, 2020 but many Town functions remain available on-line or through phone calls.

School Committee Report

Chairman McCallister thanked all of the teachers and school administrators who have transitioned to on line learning in a short period of time. He also thanked parents and students for being understanding and patient.

We are now entering our fourth full week of school closures and our move to distance learning. At this point in time, we are just now beginning to feel like we are developing a solid foundation from which we can build. The Gorham School Committee approved of the distance learning plan two weeks ago and because of this, we will be allowed to “waive” the days we are missing and will not have to make them up. As of right now, we are trying to keep our school calendar as consistent as possible and plan on having an April break and closing school on June 16th, 2020 as we otherwise would have. Generally speaking students in grades 4-12 were issued 1:1 devices and our teachers are using google classroom as their primary distance learning tool. Remaining devices were issued to families in Grades K-3 who had special education children at home, or no other home device to utilize. Email communication has been the main method of communication with families along with the use of See Saw and Zoom.

We have been offering food service programs to help provide breakfast and lunches to families in need across Gorham since the 2nd week of closure. Until this week we had used four satellite locations to distribute meals. We want to thank the Town of Gorham greatly for the use of Little Falls and we also want to publicly thank our business partners Shawn Moody and Michael Phinney for allowing our use of their facilities during this time. Beginning this week, we have changed our distribution sites to our schools (except Narr.). While we will only be distributing Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays families will still be able to receive meals for the full week. In addition to Gorham families, we are also providing meals to community members in need. Individuals who cannot pick up at our satellite locations may still have food delivered to their homes. Anyone interested in participating in “Operation Feed Gorham” should reach out to either Superintendent Perry or our School Nutrition Director, Michael Sanborn.

Just a reminder that we are trying to collect information from students and parents on how things are going to inform future changes to our system and to help us find that “balance” we are all still searching for! A survey was emailed to all parents. If you’ve lost that email you can find the information in the Superintendents latest update posted on Monday.

I wanted to also report that one part of our work that has NOT been turned completely upside down has been our continued work on the Narragansett Modular Expansion Project. We had a slight delay with sprinkler systems but that issue has been corrected and we currently remain on our project timelines. The one area that is of concern right now is the kitchen expansion. The planning board has not met since town facilities were closed to the public and we are awaiting approval of our permitting. I am sure we are not the only ones in this boat since the planning board has been unable to meet. We are hopeful that the planning board will be able to meet before the end of April so that we can move forward with the necessary work as planned. If we are delayed further into May with the kitchen project we may have difficulties opening the school year next year with this project complete. We are working on contingency plans in case this occurs but are hopeful they will not be needed.

I want to recognize the collaboration between the Gorham School Department and the Town of Gorham during this pandemic response. The Town of Gorham has allowed us to use the Little Falls site for the distribution of lunches. The schools have also worked with the town to assist in providing medical supplies to our fire department and EMT folks such as thermometers, masks, gloves and other PPE that our nurses had stockpiled for our own pandemic planning purposes. Additionally, our technology department has been working closely with the Town to assist in strengthening emergency communications systems. Finally, the schools have worked with the recreation department to identify community members in need of food support and have successfully served about 70 community members each day for the past two weeks. This “thanks” can be spread around – but primarily, I wanted to thank our school nurses and Kenny Fickett, Dennis Crowe and his technology team who have worked closely with Tyler, Michael Sandborn and Cindy Hazelton for their work on community food support and Superintendent Perry and Town Manager Ephrem Paraschak (as well as Interim Manager Tom Poirier) for their hard work in helping our community navigate these unprecedented times. It is only as we continue to work together that we will be able to navigate this crisis successfully as a community.

Our next School Committee regular meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2020. It will be a virtual meeting held online beginning at 7pm. To prevent abuse, all attendees will be asked to include their full name before being able to attend the meeting and make a public comment. You will also be able to view the meeting on GOCAT.

Order #20-042 Moved by Councilor Shepard, seconded by Councilor Hager and Ordered, that the Town Council issue a renewal liquor license to MK Kitchen, 2 School Street. **7 yeas**

Order #20-043 Moved by Councilor Hager, seconded by Councilor Pratt and Ordered, that the Town Council issue a renewal liquor license to Gorham Country Club, 93 McLellan Road. **7 yeas**

Councilor Kuech asked the Council to be recused from the next Item due to a conflict of interest.

The Town Clerk read into the record several public comments that were submitted in writing in advance of the meeting. The Interim Town Manager read several public comments from the Q&A screen of the zoom meeting. There were several citizens who spoke for and against the item.

Order #20-044 Moved by Councilor Hartwell, seconded by Councilor Wilder Cross and Ordered, that the Town Council authorize a referendum question for June 9, 2020 to expend up to \$750,000 to install and construct a new kitchen area at the Narragansett Elementary School utilizing funds previously approved in the School Department operating budget, as well as funds from a previously approved referendum bond package, and

Be It Further Ordered, that the Town Council schedules a Public Hearing on May 5, 2020.

Order #20-044 was VOTED 3 yeas, 3 nays (Shepard, Pratt, Hager), 1 abstention (Kuech)

Item Fails

Order #20-045

Moved by Councilor Shepard, seconded by Councilor Pratt and Ordered, that the Town Council transfer \$5000 from the Town Council Contingency account to be used by the Gorham Food Pantry during the current State of Emergency. **7 yeas**

Order #20-046

Moved by Councilor Hager, seconded by Councilor Pratt and Ordered, that the Town Council offer to all existing lenders with the Gorham Loan Fund Committee, the option of deferring payment on existing loans effective April 1, 2020, and lasting through June 30, 2020; all new loans issued on or after April 1, 2020 would be subject to the same deferment option under the same timeframe. **7 yeas**

Order #20-047

Moved by Councilor Kuech, seconded by Councilor Shepard and Ordered, that the Town Council appoint the following people as election workers per Title 21-A MRSA Section 503, with terms to expire April 1, 2022:

Democrat Workers:

Sherrie Benner, Elizabeth Bischof, Diane Caswell, Wendy Clark, Patricia Clay, Katharine Corbett, Laurie Corbett, Thomas Corbett, Nancy Craig, Nicoleta Dalton, Geraldine Day, Melissa Deering, Renee Deering, Anne Dunbar, John Ersek, Sheri Faber, Mary Fagerson, Rachel Flynn, Mary Franklin, Mary Fraser, Katherine Garrard, Yvonne Graffam, Barbara Guimond, Joanne Hachey, Colleen Hoyt, Carole Jordan, Jennifer Laflin, Kandy Lefebvre, Donna Libby, Connie Loughran, Linda Maclean, Carol Marshburn, Michelle McCaffrey, Elizabeth McDonagh, Barbara McGarvey, Janet Miliano, Susan Parsons, Denise Quint, Judith Ringo, Regina Rofo, Kimberly Ross, Robin Sanford, Susan Searle Sato, Melinda Shain, Paula Smeltzer, Mary Snell, Craig Stirling, Deb Stirling, Judith Stevens, Mary Sturtevent, Sheryl Towle, Gail Trudeau, Kathleen Walsh, Debra Winch

Republican Workers:

Marilyn Amoroso, Elizabeth Axelson, Sandra Bailey, Merideth Bickford, Kathy Bruni, Donna Carll, Nancy Connolly, Rebecca Curtis, George Deering, Linda Deering, Rhonda Desrochers, Jane Dube, Susan Emerson, James Falk, Judith Falk, Linda Frinsko, Sharon Geer, Diane Godfrey, Mary Golden, Maynard Hincks, Carolyn Hodgkins, Thomas Hodgkins, Nancy Kenty, Elizabeth Labrecque, John Labrecque, Marjory Macleod, Joann Means, Carlene Petersen, John Petersen, Jenifer McCullough, Rosamond Phinney, Heidi Pratt, Marlene Scholl, Nancy Shaw, Laurel Smith, Marth Towle, Janice Weed, Norman Weed, Carol Wyman

Order #20-047 was VOTED 7 yeas

Order # 20-048

Moved by Councilor Shepard, seconded by Councilor Hager and Ordered, that the Town Council grant an abatement of taxes pursuant to MRSA 36, section 841, to Jason Stewart, 60 Small Pond Road in the amount of \$282.36 for the 2019-2020 tax year due to an acreage discrepancy, a correction due to a deed split was warranted. **7 yeas**

Moved by Councilor Hager, seconded by Councilor Pratt and VOTED to adjourn. 6 yeas, 1 nay (Hartwell)

Time of adjournment; 8:44pm

A True Record of Meeting
04-07-2020

ATTEST _____ 04-08-2020
Laurie Nordfors, Town Clerk