

HUDSON, NH BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the March 31, 2020 Meeting

1. CALL TO ORDER - by Chairman Morin for the meeting of March 31, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall.
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE led by Jill Laffin
3. ATTENDANCE
Board of Selectmen: David Morin, Kara Roy, Marilyn McGrath, Normand Martin
Participated Remotely: Roger Coutu
Staff/Others: Steve Malizia, Town Administrator; Rob Buxton, Fire Chief; Jill Laffin, Executive Assistant
4. NEW BUSINESS
Covid-19 State of Emergency Update - Chief Buxton

Chief Buxton started his update by informing the Board the briefing they've been handed contains a host of information regarding where we're at. It's hard to believe that we've only been dealing with this since the 31st of December. Here we are at the 31st of March and cases have grown pretty quickly to new heights. Our first case in the United States was on January 22nd at one. Here we are at the 31st of March with 164,000 cases in the United States with 3,100 deaths. Just from a historical perspective, I want to make a notation that that now exceeds the 9/11 death toll. That was a piece of history that came out today.

Testing and generalities we gave you some pieces regarding Massachusetts, where they're projecting their surge is going to hit between the 7th and the 17th. So they have some prediction centers that are working right now and they're looking at the growth numbers. Mass General has created an online health program so you can basically "tele-medic" back and forth regarding health programs which has been a good increase for them. New Hampshire currently has 314 cases with 3 deaths, with 45 hospitalized. 99 in Hillsborough County. Yesterday night after the Governors press conference they released a map on the DHHS website that shows population by community. It puts us in a chart that shows we have one to four case locally in Town. Certainly for HIPPA protection they don't tell you where those cases are, what the addresses. One of the things that I reviewed last night on the map was, Nashua is 20+. Windham-Salem area is 10-19 cases and Litchfield is actually about 10 cases. So we're kind of in this little pocket where it's fairly quiet, but it's getting tight quickly.

State of New Hampshire has established two surge hospitals. Or surge areas as they're calling them. One at Nashua High School South for overflow when the hospitals reach

capacity and one at the SNHU arena in Manchester. Those are important from the logistical standpoint to get established early so when the hospitals reach their capacity they have a place to move folks. I can tell you that this afternoon they put us on notice that they split the ER in Southern New Hampshire (hospital) down the middle so you have 19 beds on one side and 19 on the other. They've taken over two floors to create more ICU space. They're in the process of training staff on ventilators and those types of things that have been short to come by.

We continue to work logistically to secure protective clothing for first responders. Those are still a challenge. You were talking about the testing earlier. Out of Scarborough Maine they've created a 15 minute rapid test that they're actually starting to field test in Detroit. I'm assuming that it's very similar to the strep process where you do the rapid strep test and then you get the full test after. So they're actually out in Detroit field testing that now. I assume if that passes field test then that will be available in this area as we get closer towards peak.

The goals from our 24th meeting were basically to ensure employee health and safety and to continue to provide services to the community. I've given you a list of accomplishments that the EOC staff has put into place. The Continuity of Operation Plan is up and running. You have remote staff working in various divisions across Town. Public messaging has been up. We have HCTV, the Town's website and social media platforms are blasting out up to date information every day. That is pretty much a full time job. Steve has been gracious enough to give us a hand doing the television shows and the PSA stuff at HCTV on the landfill and the sewer system this week, or yesterday. That's been a great help. Plan is in place for the Town Clerks Office for receiving registrations and pushing registrations out. Along with a guideline for construction inspections. They started inspecting again on Monday this week. New inspections are going out in person and doing the inspections with the area vacant and open to open air. Renovation inspections are taking place by video or pictures. That is currently going that way. That's for all field inspections, it's not just construction activities. That's on Elvis's side of the house on Land Use/Engineering also.

Self-Monitoring guidelines have been set up. We have some folks that have either been prior to the start or just at the beginning of this you had folks that were away on vacation. So we've established self-monitoring guidelines where they go through a process for 14 days. That they are checking their temperature, answering the questionnaire twice a day. We've kind of pushed that out to some staff that was away on vacation. We are awaiting thermometers and then that will go into place at all the public safety agencies as employees check in for their shift to ensure safety and health for your fellow employee.

We continue to incorporate new communication protocols that are being pushed down by the State. One of the concerns that we highlighted early on was the ability to flag if a first responder was going to a potential covid-19 incident so we didn't have staff walking in blindly and becoming exposed. Those programs started coming down this week and we've incorporated those into the plan already.

We continue to work with Nashua Regional Public Health regarding the surge planning. This is not a smooth process because we don't do this much. I think this is probably the first time you've had this much surge capacity set up in the state ever. So you have a lot of balls in the air between the National Guard setting up surge areas and how they're

being staffed and maintained and getting the protective clothing to be able staff the surge center has been a huge issue for public health, so they continue to work through that process.

We started tracking activity for all of the departments in regards to reimbursement. We need to put a big report together at the end and submit it to the federal government so we can receive our 75% back. Part of that happened at the beginning of this. We started tracking everybody's activities from our daily brief outs to basically the report outs at the end of the day to any activities they're doing in between.

Two concerns I highlight for you this evening as we have two of our own first responders in quarantine. They'll be in quarantine until April 11th. There's no chance of them getting out. They were exposed to a positive patient on an emergency call. The other piece is we're starting to see the positive cases grow around us and again we're 1-4 cases in Town. So no doom and gloom quite yet but it is growing and the escalation is starting. The last report that I saw was they're expecting peak right after April 19th. Which ought to be kind of cueing a couple of things when you think about the stay at home order was put in place through May 4th. April 19th is towards the end of April so kind of forecasting depending on when the peak hits, what's the impact on that and where we're going to be going.

I gave you a financial review. Kathy has been tasked with the branch regarding finance for the EOC. Every PO is getting filtered through her in a systematic way so as we sign PO's to get purchasing done it goes to Kathy. To date we've spent approximately \$10,476 on this incident. Anything from N95 masks to gowns to eyewear to EMS stock as we're trying improve our cache of protective clothing because it is becoming very, very difficult to secure. The national stock that they're trying to make available to us has not really started showing up in the state yet. As that has been coming in drips and drabs the bulk of that has actually been going to the surge centers. We had some concern regarding that so we tried incur some costs up front to get some backlog in place. We're in pretty good shape today and we continue to see a good push from the public to give us a hand. You have construction companies dropping off N95 masks that they've had. Floor finishing companies dropping off N95 masks that they had on the shelf, never used because they didn't need them yet. We had Bob Clegg donate several gallons of hand sanitizer. We have another company in Town that secured approximately 50 gallons of hand sanitizer. We had enough cache that we actually started inventorying that and set up a logistical program so if a department has a need they send it in, we process it, and get it delivered out because there's just that much activity starting to take place. Hand sanitizer is every day in every office that we're dealing with.

Goals for the next week: continue to work on employee safety and health. Protective clothing. Improve our practices. Before we got on TV we were talking about the incident that the two first responders had. They were actually giving a hand with a routine fall, call. It wasn't until they were several minutes into the call that they became aware of a potential exposure the patient had had. Then a couple days later a relative called in and said, they're at the hospital. They received a positive test. That's when we end up automatically going into quarantine. The two members that are quarantined did a great job. Once they started receiving information, they called out to anybody else that was coming in, they got their protective equipment on, gave the guys a chance to get their

protective equipment on. We still had an exposure up front which disqualified them from work and put them automatically into quarantine for 14 days. They're both asymptomatic. I've talked to them both a couple of different times. They're both asymptomatic. They're doing their self-monitoring piece right now. They will not be tested for covid-19 unless they start showing symptoms. That is State protocol right now. One of the concerns they had was they had a couple of folks that were asymptomatic that got tested, showed negative, then 2-3 days later they came down positive. So the State has drawn a line in the sand and said they're not testing even a first responder unless they're symptomatic.

Continue to work through some different guidelines regarding how we share information. We're on our little islands. We pass information around when we're at Town Hall in the same workspace, so getting information for an inspection may not seem like a big deal to the Building Department but getting it over to the Assessing Department so they can continue to do their work is very important. Those processes are being developed and pushed out. We continue to plan economic development stuff and push that over to Brian in Planning because there are some new guidelines in regards to business tax and things that are going to impact our business community that we would expect him to get pushed out to his folks.

Establish and update practices for services we currently deliver. What does that mean? I've expressed to Chairman Morin, I've expressed to the Administrator, I think at some point here we're going to get to a point where we need to open the doors to Town Hall. But we're not coming back to the same Town Hall that we left. There's going to need to be some sort of separation put in place for our employees. What we're seeing right now is they're talking about maybe in June we see a lull in this but then we see another spike in October, potentially going down the road. Certainly not our wish to close, open, then close again. We want to setup our employees for success and make sure they have some safety and health pieces in place. Looking at those plans and what that would potentially look at, whether it's glass separation, air exchange, what does that mean for work station design? Haven't even had a chance to scratch that surface yet. But that's certainly we'll look at and get out as quickly as we can.

EMS Practices: The State of New Hampshire right now is looking at empowering folks that are in the field to do a survey. Basically get on the phone with a doctor on the other end. Here are the signs and symptoms that we have, coordinate with the medical control and actually do a release right there in the field and determine whether they need to be transported to the hospital or not. The public health folks are very concerned about overrunning the hospitals with sick people. The way they're going to attempt to deal with that is to try to keep the not so sick people out of the hospital and try to keep them at home, taking care of themselves. That puts more pressure on our first responders to do good evaluations, good diagnosis and good communication with the hospital. At this point we have stopped transporting to Massachusetts facilities. In the south end of Town it is not uncommon to get a request to get transported to Lowell. We have stopped transporting to Massachusetts communities just based on the fact that the two public health agencies aren't communicating at this point. We can't get any exchange of information back and forth regarding positive testing, so as a safety mechanism for our people we said you're going to Saint Joe's, you're going to Southern if you're in the south end of Town and we'll go from there. That's basically out of protection for our people. We

don't have a big population that go down to Lowell, but we do have a few folks that still do.

This (handout) is truly a synopsis of what we're working on. This is a full day. In and out every day, the staffs working. There are a lot of people behind this work. When you look at the list of accomplishments that are listed there over the last couple weeks, there's a lot of people that have input on that in different pieces. From the inspectors to the land use folks, coming up with rotations, dealing with the Clerk's office, Assessing. Finance in particular in regards to reporting and tracking those activities and getting information out. Erika's been working remotely. The maintenance of the Town's website and the social media platforms is probably four hours of her day at this point. Just between answering questions, trying to get up new information, it's a pretty heavy piece for her right now. We're very thankful for her efforts.

Attached to the document I gave you rundown of what the purchase were and where they've been. Those are just a couple of spreadsheets that Kathy's provided to me basically showing where we're at today. Certainly open to any questions, any concerns and can give you as much information that I can attempt to bring forth. Selectman Roy asked, have you received any guidance yet from the Feds on how to request reimbursement? To which the Chief replied, reimbursement has not come in yet. We do have mission requests that I can put in through the State EOC but as far as reimbursement coming back to the community they have not even scratched that surface yet. Selectman Roy then asked, is KC concerned at all about getting it before the end of our fiscal year? Chief Buxton said, that is something that we talked about and she is monitoring that to see where, that was one of the big pieces we talked about the 24th was in regards to discretionary spending. There were some guidelines put out to Department Heads to really watch what they were doing project-wise. I know the Administrator and the Finance Director have been monitoring that. When I've talked to her about direct expenses we've seen, today, there was no flags thrown. I think that she's fairly comfortable with where we've been traveling. Everybody's been busy doing this so some of the other expenses haven't moved forward. That will be something here once we get another couple weeks behind us we'll have a good snapshot of what a month looks like, from a revenue standpoint. When I did talk with Patti she talked about the pace of the office. It seems somewhat consistent. Building Department the pace of the office actually increased because we're getting close to spring construction season. So folks are trying to get as many projects on the books as they can and get them off the ground. She didn't raise any concerns to me.

Chairman Morin asked if there were any other questions. Selectman Roy said, so on the last page there's a bunch of things listed with vendors but not what they purchased. That begs a question, are we capturing the things we had to do, like the polycom in front of us, the remote work. The Administrator replied yes, the detail is not on the sheet but that was state-wide setting that up. Chief Buxton explained, when you look at the top of these and you see a Fire and Police and General Town Hall, I know I'm expecting an IT report that wasn't quite ready for me today. IT has one sheet for each department. As they have things come in it will be tracked in there. You'll see that increase as we move forward.

Selectman Coutu asked, on a daily basis, Chief, how many people are manning the emergency management office? To which the Chief explained, we're doing that virtually

so I think on our call in the morning we're at 21 people. But we're not meeting face to face. The EOC has moved virtually so we're using the same program we're using with you tonight. Where we get on at 10:00 a.m. and do a virtual call out lasts anywhere between a half hour, forty-five minutes. Then people go off into their individual workspaces and do their work. Then in the afternoon we have a report out between 2:00-3:00 p.m. on the daily activities. I get information out that's been received from conference calls at noontime or the Police Chief has taken in at noontime regarding legal type events and we get that pushed around virtually. So when we say how many people are on an EOC call it's about 21-23 depending on how many from the School attend that are working on this event every day. It is a piece of their day, every day. Selectmen Coutu then said, I thought the office was open daily from 9:00a.m.-3:00p.m. Chief Buxton said we've moved out of the actual physical location and gone virtual a week ago. That was one of the goals we had as an EOC team up front. That's why we got the Go To Meeting, so we weren't contaminating each other. So we weren't going home in the evening and bringing contamination into the EOC and ending up with a sick leadership team. Selectman Coutu then said, okay so we won't be seeing any more expenses for lunches? To which Chief Buxton replied, I would assume not.

Selectman McGrath stated, over the last couple of weeks, we received the monthly Police Department Report. I hadn't seen anything about your report Chief, but I was thinking about it today. Under these circumstances where they're so busy trying to attend to this epidemic that we're facing and everything else that going on, I would like to suggest that we require those on a quarterly basis until we're beyond this epidemic. I don't think that it's necessary for the Police and Fire Departments, get a monthly report. We get press releases and anything of unusual circumstances. So I would like to throw that out there. Selectman Martin agreed with this saying he made the same suggestion to the Chairman. I know we just go the Police Chiefs for February. But I think that we can either go quarterly or hold off and start back up when we're under normal operations. Selectman Roy did not object to that. Selectman Coutu felt this was appropriate and a must do to free up man power to do the things necessary to address covid. A Board consensus agreed that the Police Chief and Fire Chiefs monthly reports would be put on hiatus until after the covid-19 pandemic.

Upon nothing further for Chief Buxton, Chairman Morin thanked him for his update. Selectman McGrath added, I think that the Town is in good hands.

5. SELECTMEN COMMENTS

Selectman McGrath- Our custodian in Town, Wayne, has been doing an extraordinary job. He's been taking care of multiple buildings. Trying to make sure they're not only clean but sanitary so that people aren't picking up anything as their working in the building. I think he's doing a really good job and he needs to be recognized. Chairman Morin added, I have to say I came in the other day and I figured any germs I have would be dead just by the smell in here! HE's doing an excellent job. The Town Administrator added, he's been shampooing the carpets too.

Selectman Roy - I have nothing tonight

Selectman Martin - I did mention to you yesterday about the monthly Department Head reports as well. I haven't found them very informing. So I'm wondering if we could look at not tonight, but look at going forward what kind of information, better information, because I'm not finding anything useful in those reports for me at this point. So maybe we should revisit that at another meeting and put it on the agenda.

Selectman Coutu - Other than to express our sincere appreciation to our municipal employees, our first responder teams, I've noticed that we had this conversation that the calls seem to be increasing rather than decreasing in Town. I feel for our firefighters and police officers who are out there on a daily basis having to respond to sometimes some inoculate calls. But it's their job, they do it, no one's complaining and I appreciate that. I want them all to know, including our Highway Department personnel and all of our employees who are showing up for work at Town Hall. Those who are at home through no fault of their own. So how grateful we are. They are a presence for our community. They are a presence of our government and they're doing an outstanding job. The only thing, this message goes out to the general public. We've heard time and time again to take precautions in our daily lives to avoid passing anything on to people who are standing by us, near us even six feet away. I noticed today, I had to get some fresh air so I went to Sam's Club to get some gas. As I was parked outside the building I watched approximately 150-200 people go in and out of the building and I only saw two people with face masks on. I would think, granted we don't have that many cases reported in Hudson, but we don't know when our peak is going to be and if we're going to be impacted by what's surrounding us. Sooner or later we're going to feel the brunt of it. I would hope that more and more people would put on masks. There are some available for purchase and I'm sure there are people in various neighborhoods who'd be willing to donate masks to anyone who's in need. As long as we take all of the precautions to protect ourselves, we're also protecting our neighbors. Let's not take anything for granted. In terms of reporting I just want to tell you an interesting item that I read in today's Lowell Sun, several towns in Massachusetts are no longer reporting their numbers and the reason why they're not doing that is they were advised I remember the news flash coming out last week. The head of the Massachusetts health organization that they're not required to do the reporting. So they took that as a commandment in the health field and they're not reporting. So how many other communities are not doing this around the country, I don't know. But the numbers are a little more severe than what we're getting. I'm asking everyone to join with me in daily prayer for all those who've been affected by the corona virus. Thank you.

Chairman Morin - just one thing we didn't discuss tonight. The basketball courts at Greely Street have been closed. The reason that took place is during the weekend our Police Department had to respond there several times because large groups were gathering and playing basketball. For the safety of everybody we closed those basketball courts today.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 7:29 p.m. by Selectman Martin, seconded by Selectman Roy. A roll call vote was taken, carried 5-0.

David S. Morin, Chairman

Kara Roy, Vice-Chairman

Marilyn E. McGrath, Selectman

Roger E. Coutu, Selectman

Norman G. Martin, Selectman