

Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS Fire Commissioners Meeting

Meeting Called By: Commissioners Date, Time: 03/15/2020 at 1:00 PM

Transcribed By: Beth Joslin Place: Tilton Town Hall, Downstairs Meeting Room, 12 Center Street, Tilton

Moderator Kent Finemore called the meeting of the to order at 1:11 pm.

Present: Commissioners Paul Auger, Eric Pyra, and Jon Cilley; Moderator Kent Finemore, Clerk Stephanie Giovannucci, Northfield Police Chief John Raffaelly, Tilton Police Chief Bob Cormier, Fire Chief Michael Sitar, and Administrative Assistant Kathy Tobine.

New Business

Covid-19 & District Meeting

Finemore stated that Kevin LaChapelle had shared with them executive orders from Governor Sununu, as well as a memo from Attorney General Gordon MacDonald. Chief Raffaelly commented that Governor Sununu would be speaking on television at 1 pm.

Finemore commented that he had heard the school board would be meeting. Commissioner Cilley replied that that meeting had been held earlier that day. It was decided that the schools would be closed to unauthorized personnel with the exception of holding the Fire District Meeting. Students will not be returning to school in the month of March.

Finemore asked what was discussed regarding the district meeting. Commissioner Cilley responded that it was pending the moderator's opinion but they would like to postpone it. Finemore stated that they must first look at the statute RSA 40:4 duties of the moderator. It was changed in recent years due to weather events and has been extended to include situations regarding the virus. There is additional guidance that they need to read and discuss as a group. Finemore stated that he alone cannot decide to postpone the meeting it needs to be in collaboration with the commissioners, the fire chief, the police chiefs, and the clerk.

The group read and discussed guidance sent by Stephen Buckley of the NH Municipal Association. Finemore stated that some of the information regarding postponement was incorrect, that the statute states the moderator may postpone the meeting up to 2 hours before the meeting but not more than 48 hours before. Finemore commented that there was good guidance but that the information was incorrect regarding the statute. The guidance from NHMA also recommends that they include the health officer and legal counsel. Finemore asked who the district's legal council was. Chief Sitar replied that they use a few different firms. Finemore commented that he was not concerned about including them if there isn't a dedicated attorney.

The group read the memo from Attorney General Gordon MacDonald and discussed. Giovannucci asked if it stated any postponement requirements for towns that are not SB2. Finemore replied that only two of the points were in regards to SB2 and all the other information pertained to them.

Finemore commented that his concern is that the meeting is to approve the operating budget and he does not know how long they can postpone the meeting as the district will have to operate without an approved budget. Chief Sitar responded that they use the money in the undesignated fund balance till the budget is approved. Chief Raffaelly commented that the police department works similarly and had been on a ghost budget till theirs was approved. Finemore asked how long the district could operate like that, as things are expected to get worse. Chief Sitar stated the district operates on about \$50,000 per week, given what is in the bank and the fact that Tilton has made a tax payment they should be good for another month or so. Chief Raffaelly commented that if it gets postponed for an extended

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period of time, he doesn't see the towns denying the district a budget. Chief Sitar commented that they could borrow on the anticipated taxes. Giovannucci stated that she believed if the budget isn't approved that they work with the previous year's budget until one is approved. Chief Sitar commented that last year's budget was \$6,000 more than what they had requested this year.

Finemore stated his concern regarding postponing the meeting is they don't know when it will take place. If things get worse, they may not have the meeting for months. Commissioner Pyra and Chief Raffaely mentioned how far out other towns have postponed their meetings. Commissioner Cilley suggested they postpone it by a month and make changes as additional guidance is released. Finemore stated that the other factor is where it will be held, they will need to choose a location they know they will be able to use. Commissioner Cilley commented that NH Veteran's Home has a community room. Giovannucci replied that they won't be letting anyone in there. Commissioner Pyra commented that he didn't know what the Pines Community Center will be doing. Finemore asked if they could hold it at the fire station on Park Street as they have done before. Discussion ensued.

The group paused their discussion to watch Governor Sununu's update regarding changes due to the Covid-19 epidemic.

Giovannucci commented that their MS reports must be filed with the DRA by a certain deadline, she expects that will likely change. Tobine replied that the deadline is April 1st and expects that to change because if the meeting is postponed then DRA will need to work with the district on the deadline.

Giovannucci commented that in light of Governor Sununu closing schools till April 3rd and advising against group gathering that it would be in their best interest to postpone the meeting till at least April 13th. Commissioner Auger suggested meeting again before that to determine if it will need to be postponed further. Tobine suggested that they could use the commissioners' meeting on April 6th to discuss it again. Discussion ensued regarding the availability of venues for the postponed meeting.

Finemore asked Chief Sitar his thoughts on holding district meeting at the Park Street Fire Station. Chief Sitar replied that he did not have a problem with it but noted that there is only one bathroom and it is not handicap accessible. Chief Raffaely suggested getting a port-a-potty or two. Chief Sitar commented that they would need to utilize the Department of Public Works' parking and be sure that no one blocks the fire apparatus. Chief Raffaely asked where they could borrow chairs from. Giovannucci commented that she believed the Pines Community Center would allow them to borrow chairs. Finemore commented that amongst them they should be able to come up with a sound system.

Chief Sitar mentioned that at the school they also have used the screens to so the audience can see all the information. Commissioner Pyra asked if there was a blank wall in the station they could project on. Chief Sitar replied that they had recently been painted white so he believed they could make it work, commenting that the department has a projector they could use. Giovannucci commented that she believes between the two towns and the Pines they should be able to come up with everything they need to for the meeting.

Finemore asked if everyone was on the same page thinking that the meeting should be postponed. The group agreed. Tobine confirmed that the Commissioners' meeting will be held Monday, April 6, 2020 at 5:30 PM, at Tilton Town Hall in the downstairs meeting room. They decided to use that meeting to determine if the district meeting would need to be postponed further.

Finemore asked if everyone was okay with the April 13th date. He stated that it does not have to be on a Monday. With no disagreement with the date, Finemore asked what time they would like to hold it and suggested 6 PM. Tobine commented that moving it from 7 PM to 6 PM would allow for more daylight outside. Discussion ensued regarding details of getting chairs and porta-potties

Discussion ensued regarding ways to distribute the news of the postponement. Methods to include Northfield News, Tilton Alert, town and police Facebook pages, town and fire department sites, and WMUR. Also, to be physically posted at the schools, town halls, libraries, police and fire departments. Members of town selectmen will be notified of the postponement.

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Commissioner Pyra made a motion to postpone the annual district meeting from Monday, March 16th to Monday, April 13th at 6:00 pm with a location change to the fire station on Park Street in Northfield. Commissioner Cilley seconded the motion. Being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed.

Adjournment

Finemore adjourned the meeting at 2:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Joslin

Beth Joslin
Office Clerk

Next Meeting Date, Time, Place: April 6, 2020 at 5:30 PM.
Tilton Town Hall, Downstairs Meeting Room
257 Main Street, Tilton