



**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
WORK SESSION  
VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Minutes of Thursday, June 4, 2020  
2:00 PM**

Board Members present were Chairman John Spencer, Vice-Chair and Clerk Lynne Bermudez and Selectman Richard Gandt. Of the Selectmen's Staff, Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian, Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary Debi Morong, Highway Superintendent Gary Wildes, Water Superintendent Greg Krom and Park & Cemetery Superintendent Steve Shepard were present. Other guests present were Park & Cemetery Commissioners Gretchen Rehak and Marshall Hook, Board of Road Commissioners Phil Knowles and Joe Gibbons and from the Board of Water Commissioners Richard Stone and Mark Gallagher.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Spencer called the meeting to order at 2:07PM.

**GOVERNOR'S ORDER**

Vice-Chair & Clerk Bermudez announced that, *Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Topsfield Board of Selectmen will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the Topsfield website at [www.topsfield-ma.gov](http://www.topsfield-ma.gov). For this meeting, members of the public who wish to watch or listen to the meeting may do so in the following manner: Video conference (see log-in information below.) No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Topsfield website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.*

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

The meeting is being **recorded** by the Recording Clerk for record-keeping; and Selectman Gandt requested and was granted permission to record the meeting.

## **REORGANIZATION OF HIGHWAY, WATER & PARK and CEMETERY COMMISSIONERS**

Currently there are three (3) commissions that oversee the Water Department, the Highway Department and Park & Cemetery Department. The proposed change would be for the Town Administrator to oversee the Department Head and operations of each department with each Board of Commissioners transitioning to being an Advisory Group.

TA Harutunian has a three-phased approach to the implementation plan:

### Phase I

- 1) Obtain support from team and Town approval at Annual Town Meeting
- 2) Education and planning

### Phase II (January 1, 2021)

- 1) Department Heads will report to TA
- 2) Commissioners' responsibilities will revert to the TA
- 3) Commissioners will work in an advisory capacity
- 4) No organizational structural changes
- 5) Some efficiencies will be realized immediately and implemented

### Phase III

- 1) Structural Changes:
  - Park & Cemetery Superintendent Retirement
  - Reorganize the Park & Cemetery Team; place under the Highway Superintendent
  - Highway, Water, Park & Cemetery Admin. #1 – reduction in hours from 40 to 35/week
  - Highway, Water, Park & Cemetery Admin. #2 – increase in hours from 10 to 35/week
  - Stipend or pay increase for additional duties; Highway Super. & Foreman
  - Hire a new Recreation Director; # hours/week TBD
  - Hire additional grounds crew (if needed)

Financial impacts would include: hiring an additional administrative assistant (cost), new stipends or pay increase to the Highway Superintendent and Foreman (cost), replacing the higher salaried Park & Cemetery Superintendent position with a lower salaried Recreation Director position (savings), and a reduction in the hours of the current Admin (savings).

Operational Efficiencies would be seen with the sharing of equipment between departments, bulk departmental purchases and the servicing of town vehicles

by the highway mechanic as opposed to being sent out for repairs at a higher cost.

The hiring of a Recreational Director would enable development of public programming opportunities in Town with camps and classes, streamline the permitting of ball fields and open space through online booking, and be the liaison between the Town and the Topsfield Athletic Association (TAA). This would lighten the responsibilities of the Park & Cemetery (P&C) Superintendent. The P&C responsibilities will move under the Highway Superintendent after the retirement of the P&C Superintendent.

All commissioners present spoke strongly in favor of this reorganization.

At 3:38PM, Vice-Chair & Clerk Bermudez made a motion to adjourn. Selectman Gandt seconded the motion and the motion carried as follows:

Chairman Spencer	YES
Vice-Chair & Clerk Bermudez	YES
Selectman Gandt	YES

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Morong, Executive Assistant &  
Recording Secretary

#### **DOCUMENTS**

- Agenda
- Reorganization of Highway/Water/Park & Cemetery PowerPoint