

# Board of Selectmen Meeting of March 19, 2020

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The Board of Selectmen held its regular meeting on Thursday, March 19. A key concern is how to continue to conduct town business during the COVID 19 virus outbreak. The board members practiced social distancing around the table at our meeting, as we will continue to do until health officials suggest otherwise.

The board approved the minutes of our regular meeting of Feb. 20, with minor technical changes, and the minutes of our special meeting held on March 16. There was no opening public comment.

The board acted on four requests for tax refunds as recommended by Krista Kot, tax collector. This is a routine activity usually resulting from the sales of motor vehicles generating a tax refund of pre-paid taxes.

The selectmen appointed Mark Peyser to the Board of Ethics replacing Alisha Gorder for a term running until Jan. 2, 2022. The board tabled the nomination for the replacement of Craig Sternberg on the Board of Ethics. Mr. Sternberg cannot be reappointed because he is term limited.

The board appointed two alternate members to the Agriculture Commission: Sage Raga for a term running until Jan. 2, 2023, and Denise Hebner for a term running until Jan. 2, 2022. The board also appointed three representatives to the Sustainable Connecticut Team: Walter Kowalczyk, representing the Planning and Zoning Commission; Vivian Hardison, representing the Conservation Commission, and Lise Fleurette, representing the Energy and Environmental Task Force.

Congratulations and thank you for your service to all who have been appointed. We also express our appreciation to those leaving boards and commissions.

The board approved a 2.3% general pay raise for all non-union town employees. This matches the general wage increase for unionized town employees. This does not cover any Board of Education or Region 9 employees.

First Selectman David Bindelglass updated the board on actions taken by the town regarding the COVID 19 virus outbreak. Town Hall will be closed to the public beginning Friday, March 20. Telephone and email access will remain in place. A drop box will be available by the Police Department entrance to the building in order to file essential documents. The box will be monitored and documents retrieved and filed on a regular basis.

Town parks are open but the Playscape is closed as are town playing fields (which are currently closed for the winter season in any case). The dog park is open. The library is closed as of March 20. No decision has been made about closing the tennis courts as of this board meeting.

Town meetings regarding the budget and the Annual Town Meeting are postponed for 30 days per order of the governor. The state primary is postponed until June 2. Boards and commissions are continuing to meet, as needed, using virtual tools such as Skype and Zoom. The superintendent of schools and the school administrators continue to work toward implementing a distance learning program for the K-12 schools.

During closing public comment, June Logie offered thanks and support to the board and all town officials for the hard work being done to keep Easton safe. The first selectman echoed these comments, supported by the other selectmen.

The entire meeting was recorded as usual for Channel 79 broadcast which is available to those who are cable subscribers. In addition, a test of a possible live stream process and upload to the town website process was conducted. Live streaming may be a means by which to conduct the budget hearing and the Annual Town Meeting in the current environment.

Uploading videos to the town website will allow everyone with Internet access to watch meetings after the fact. This project, led by our Area Nine Cable team, was successful. We thank Doug Dempsey, of the Area Nine Cable Commission for his work in this endeavor and for setting up the test, along with Robert Webbe, the technician who does the recording on a regular basis for all the meetings broadcast on Channel 79.

There are still some logistical and equipment issues to be addressed before we can move forward with live streaming and with posting videos of meetings on the town website for future viewing. Doug, Robert and Area Nine Cable member Andy Anderson are diligently working on this project.

Please stay safe during this time. Thank you to our emergency services officials and other town officials who are doing exemplary work to keep our community safe.

*Lessler recorded the sounds of awakening aquatic life on a recent hike at Trout Brook Valley, enjoying the great outdoors at a time when inside gatherings are prohibited in order to stop the spread of COVID-19. Click below to listen.*



Robert Lessler takes a hike at Trout Brook Valley.