

Board of Selectmen Meeting of Jan. 21, 2021



Notes from the Easton Board of Selectmen's Meeting of Jan. 21, 2021

After standard actions approving the minutes of the Jan. 7 board meeting and approving two tax refunds as recommended by the tax collector, the board discussed two issues that have come up during public comment.

Bigoted Commentary

First, one individual on two or three occasions has included anti-Semitic references and dog whistles in her commentary. Selectman Bob Lessler suggested that any member of the board who feels that a public speaker has crossed a line of decency should be empowered to interrupt the speaker and call out the offensive comment. If there is a repeat, then any member of the board should be empowered to direct the administrative assistant managing the Zoom meeting to mute the offending speaker. The board agreed that hate speech or bigoted commentary should be blocked but, generally speaking, the bar should be set very high for authorizing a call out or muting of a speaker.

Three-Minute Time Limit

Second, First Selectman Dave Bindelglass noted that we have been lax in enforcing the three-minute time limit for speaking. He will pay closer attention to this issue while not

adopting a rigid approach to its enforcement.

Watershed Property Exemption

June Logie spoke to the board both during the beginning and the ending public comment period. She asked the board to support legislation pending in Hartford that would exempt watershed property from the affordable housing mandate set out in Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-30g. Later, she requested that Lessler forward to the working group on a land use ordinance the research other materials he has prepared on this topic.

Appointments

The board re-appointed Jean Stetz-Puchalski and Lori Cochran-Dougall to the Agriculture Commission for terms running from Jan. 2, 2021 to Jan. 2, 2024. Bindelglass notified the board that he has appointed David Logie as an alternate on the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission is unusual in that, by state statute, appointments are made by the first selectman and not by the full board.

Covid-19 Incidence and Vaccine Update

Bindelglass reported that Covid -9 numbers are slightly better than those reported at the last board meeting. Randy Shapiro and the Senior Center are doing very good work helping people sign up for vaccines. Hospitals could open for vaccines as early as next week. People 65 and over will be eligible for vaccines very soon. The schools seem to be doing very well in their fully open learning environment.

South Park Bridges

The town will enter into a voluntary mediation dispute resolution process regarding the South Park Avenue bridge work for the now completed bridge. The process for bidding

to repair the second South Park Avenue bridge should begin soon.

Paine Open Space

The Department of Public Works has done a great deal of work to clear fallen trees from the Paine Open Space property. The Park and Recreation Department will perform additional trail clearing work at Paine as well. A somewhat formal plan to maintain the property going forward has been worked out with these departments.

Watch the meeting video [here](#).

Board of Selectmen Extends 5G Moratorium



Easton's ban on the installation of 5G technology within the town now extends to June 30, 2021. First Selectman David Bindleglass, Selectman Bob Lessler and Selectman Kristi Sogofsky voted to extend the moratorium. The June deadline allows time for several state proposals on the issue to be considered by the legislature, which is in session until early June.

The selectmen initially passed the moratorium resolution last June, but it expired at the end of 2020. The resolution calls on telecommunications companies to "cease and desist

in the build-out of 5G-enabled small cell antennas” in the town until the technology has been proven safe to people and the environment through independent research and testing.

Several town residents spoke in favor of extending the ban, citing concerns about the impacts on the health of people, animals and the environment.

New EMS Generator

The selectmen also approved a proposal presented by Easton EMS to purchase a new generator for the EMS building on Sport Hill Road. The current generator is not functioning properly and unreliable despite efforts to extend its life. The selectmen approved the use of \$21,635 in Local Capital Improvement Program (LoCIP) funds. LoCIP is a state program that provides financial assistance to municipalities for eligible capital projects. The initial funding request was included and approved as part of the EMS budget for 2020-21.

Appointments and Reappointments

January marks the start of new terms for many of the boards and commissions in town. As a result, the Board of Selectmen approved many reappointments. They also filled the final member vacancy on the Easton Diversity and Inclusion Task Force.

Appointment:

- Chris Peritore – Easton Diversity and Inclusion Task Force (member, term expiring 1/2/22)

Reappointments:

- Tara Donnelly Gottlieb – Board of Finance (alternate, term expiring 1/2/27)

- Philip Tamallanca - Parks and Recreation Commission (member, term expiring 1/2/24)
- Rocky Sullivan - Parks and Recreation Commission (member, term expiring 12/2/24)
- Jay Habansky - Planning and Zoning Commission (alternate, term expiring 1/2/24)
- Wallace Williams - Planning and Zoning Commission (member, term expiring 1/2/26)
- Prabha Gupta - Senior Center Advisory Board (member seat 1, term expiring 1/2/24)
- Sally England - Senior Center Advisory Board (member seat 2, term expiring 1/2/24)
- Eunice Hanson - Senior Center Advisory Board (member seat 3, term expiring 1/2/24)
- Ronald Berry - Insurance Commission (member, term expiring 1/2/24)
- Anne Hughes - Commission for the Aging (member, term expiring 1/2/24)
- James Yeotsas - Board of Fire Commissioners (member, term expiring 1/2/26)

View a recording of the Jan., 7 Board of Selectmen meeting [HERE](#).

Board of Selectmen Meeting of March 19, 2020



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.