

At a Special meeting of the Town Council holden in and for the Town of Gloucester on April 23, 2020;

Pursuant to R.I. Executive Orders #20-05 and #20-25 executed by Governor Gina Raimondo on March 16th and April 15, 2020, this Meeting is being Teleconferenced via Zoom. The information to join this zoom meeting was included in our posting as required by the noted Executive Orders.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Members Present: George O. (Buster) Steere, Jr., President; Walter M. O. Steere, III, Vice-President; William E. Reichert; Patricia Henry; and Julian (Jay) Forgue.

Also Present: Jean Fecteau, Town Clerk; Tim Kane, Town Solicitor; Joseph DelPrete, Chief of Police; Matt Floor, IT Director; Melissa Bouvier, Senior Center Director; Diane Brennan, Finance Director; Karen Scott, Town Planner; and Robert Shields, Recreation Director.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Councilor G. Steere stated this meeting was called so the Town Council could address some essential issues that are important to the continuation of town business. Councilor Councilor G. Steere stated that typically, we allow public participation, but due to the nature of the agenda items we will dispense with that tonight. Councilor G. Steere stated there will be an opportunity for all our residents to speak regarding next years budget at our Public Hearing at a date to be determined soon, perhaps even tonight.

Councilor G. Steere stated that participants expressing inappropriate behavior or being disruptive may be removed from this electronic meeting by the moderator.

IV. Finance Plans/Procedures resulting from Covid-19 Pandemic

A. Budget 2019/2020: Discussion and/or Action on spending/planning/and potential for borrowing through June 30, 2020

Diane Brennan, Finance Director addressed the Council and explained the current state of finances. D. Brennan stated that the budget challenge is on the revenue side potentially with last quarter tax payments. D. Brennan also stated that department revenues may lag in the future years to come.

After discussion, D. Brennan stated that, at this time, she feels she is all set to the end of the current fiscal year and that she didn't feel borrowing would be necessary.

Discussion followed on state and federal reimbursements for Covid-19 related expenses. D. Brennan outlined some of the expenses submitted to FEMA for last month and upcoming expenses to be submitted were discussed. D. Brennan stated she felt that we may incur costs from this pandemic for quite some time.

B. Budget 2020/2021:

1. Discussion/Action re: future spending/revenue/ and final proposed budget

D. Brennan stated she met with the Budget Board last night to review and finalize a budget for the Council so the process can go forward. D. Brennan highlighted some of the proposed cuts and changes to the budget that was prepared before the pandemic occurred as follows:

D. Brennan stated the details will be discussed at a later time and she gave an overview of highlights:

Police Dept.:	A new police recruit will hold off until January
Public Works:	Road work funds previously discussed to go into operating budget were not included. Additional staffing was not included.
Parks & Rec:	Reductions were made to programs as it was felt this years programs will not go forward in the same manner or additional programs may not go forward due to pandemic restrictions in place.
Capital Budget:	Brought back to 2%
Schools:	Local schools and the Region's budget was reviewed and certain line items lowered

Again, D. Brennan stated these items can all be discussed at Public Hearing.

D. Brennan stated we are in a revaluation year and explained the effects that will have on the budget and amount to be raised by taxes.

D. Brennan stated the revaluation company is considering doing telephone interviews when the change letters go out and people want to appeal their valuations.

Councilor Henry suggested instead of a 50/50 split of the \$100,000 Diane recommended cutting from the Regional and local school budgets, perhaps we could purpose the Region is lowered by \$70,000 and the local school by \$30,000.

Councilor Fogue questioned if there was any ramifications of the Police Department holding off on a recruit to January. D. Brennan stated there was no issue. The Chief reiterated this would work for his department at this time.

Councilor W. Steere asked if anyone has heard from the Region regarding their budget process. D. Brennan stated she took the numbers that were approved at their budget public hearing.

Councilor W. Steere stated it is important for the local communities to have a seat at the table when the stimulus funds come into Rhode Island. Councilor W. Steere stated we need to be sure to talk to our Representatives.

Councilor G. Steere stated he had a phone conference with the Foster Town Council President, Dr. Michael Barnes and the two School Committee Co-chairs. Councilor G. Steere stated during that conference Dr. Barnes was asked to cut approximately \$65,000 or so of the Gloucester share.

Councilor W. Steere thanked Councilor G. Steere for having that conversation and stated he hoped they could cut more than \$100,000.

Councilor Forgue stated in light of school closings there has to some savings there. Councilor Forgue further stated he feels there is play in that budget and that \$65,000 is a small amount in light of their budget.

Councilor Henry stated she spoke to three of the school committee members and asked them to contact Supt. Barnes to ask him to participate in these cuts. Councilor Henry stated the school committee members thought this request was reasonable especially in light of all the expenses that have stopped in light of current situation. Councilor Henry stated that is why she suggested a 70/30 split of the \$100,000 instead of a 50/50 between Foster and Gloucester.

D. Brennan stated she and the Budget Board have proposed a sizable increase to the Region and if budget can not get passed the Region would have to go back to current appropriation. D. Brennan stated there would be more jeopardy for the Region if a budget wasn't passed. Councilor W. Steere agreed.

2. Approval by Council of proposed Budget for Public Hearing or Set Future Meeting Date to Approve - Discussion and/or Action

Councilor G. Steere stated the Council would have to approve the budget for public hearing by April 28th.

Discussion:

MOTION was made by Councilor Henry to TABLE the APPROVAL of the proposed Town Budget for 2020/2021 to April 28, 2020; seconded by Councilor Reichert

Discussion: Councilor W. Steere questioned if this approval was just to approve the proposed budget for the public hearing. Councilor G. Steere answered in the affirmative. It was clarified that changes could occur at public hearing.

Councilor President G. Steere requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Forgue - Aye

Councilor Henry - Aye

Councilor Reichert - Aye

Councilor W. Steere - Aye

Councilor G. Steere - Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Set Public Hearing Date (if ready) - Discussion and/or Action

Councilor G. Steere stated the Finance Director & Clerk recommend May 28th for the Public Hearing on the proposed budget.

Discussion:

MOTION was made by Councilor Forgue to SET the 2020-2021 Budget Public Hearing for May 28, 2020; seconded by Councilor Reichert

Discussion: none

Councilor President G. Steere requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Forgue - Aye
Councilor Henry - Aye
Councilor Reichert - Aye
Councilor W. Steere - Aye
Councilor G. Steere - Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Set Adoption of Budget and Approval of Ballot Questions for Financial Town Referendum Date (if ready) - Discussion and/or Action

Councilor G. Steere reviewed the dates being considered: budget adopted and ballot questions approved by June 8th for a June 23rd referendum.

The Clerk stated this item is informational and the Council can decide this date at a later time.

5. Set Financial Town Referendum Date (if ready)- Discussion and/or Action

Councilor G. Steere stated this is the date the Clerk needs to determine tonight so that advertising and preparations can begin.

After discussion it was agreed to set for the earlier of the two dates.

MOTION was made by Councilor Forgue to set the Gloucester Financial Town Referendum date for 2020 for June 23, 2020; seconded by Councilor Henry

Discussion: none

Councilor President G. Steere requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Forgue - Aye
Councilor Henry - Aye
Councilor Reichert - Aye
Councilor W. Steere - Aye
Councilor G. Steere - Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

V. Gloucester Declaration of Emergency

A. EMA

1. Updates as deemed necessary per EMA Director - Discussion and/or Action
Councilor G. Steere called on Gerry Mosca, EMA.

G. Mosca stated he was scheduled for a FEMA Public Assistance application briefing where the terms of eligibility for reimbursement of Covid-19 expenses would be explained. G. Mosca stated all department heads with any Covid-19 expenses should report them to D. Brennan with invoices and justification as they occur and not hold them all.

G. Mosca recommended to the Council extending the Declaration a week, and stated we probably will need to extend again after that.

G. Mosca updated on PPE's for police, fire, and DPW and rebuilding the town's cache of supplies.

G. Mosca discussed the re-opening plan for the town while following state guidelines. G. Mosca stated we could be more restrictive than the state with our own local laws but not less restrictive than the state. G. Mosca recommended it be done the same way we did the closing, in phases. Gerry stated the town should start planning sooner rather than later how it will reopen. G. Mosca gave suggestions on ways to open the Town Hall in phases.

Chief DelPrete thanked Gerry Mosca for all the hard work he has done and for all the supplies he has procured for the Police Department.

Discussion followed on considerations for the eventual opening of the senior center. Councilor G. Steere brought up the use of the senior center for the PPP election, on June 2, 2020, and the Referendum to be held on June 23, 2020. Councilor G. Steere asked if perhaps, due to the fact that the senior center has been thoroughly cleaned and schools are out for the rest of the school year, we could move those events to the middle school. The Town Clerk will work to do that.

2. Plan for resuming full Town operations - Discussion and/or Action
Previously discussed.

B. Gloucester Declaration of State of Emergency - March 16, 2020 (ext. currently to April 27, 2020 - Discussion and/or Action

Discussion: There was discussion about whether to amend the Declaration to allow Boards and Commissions with pending matters to meet virtually. The discussion included the possibility of access issues for some residents. Discussion followed on the possibility of appeals and whether holding these types of virtual meetings would have to be at the discretion of the applicant. After discussion there was a consensus to wait on this amendment.

MOTION was made by Councilor Henry to Extend the Gloucester Declaration of State of Emergency, dated March 16, 2020 to May 4th, 2020; seconded by Councilor W. Steere

Discussion: none

Councilor President G. Steere requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Forgue - Aye
Councilor Henry - Aye
Councilor Reichert - Aye
Councilor W. Steere - Aye
Councilor G. Steere - Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

VI. Personnel: Police Dept.

A. Accept Resignations – Two Dispatchers - Discussion and/or Action

MOTION was made by Councilor Forgue to EXCEPT the resignation of Dennis Foster from full time Dispatcher and Elva Shea from the position of part-time Dispatcher; seconded by Councilor Henry

Discussion: none

Councilor President G. Steere requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Forgue - Aye
Councilor Henry - Aye
Councilor Reichert - Aye
Councilor W. Steere - Aye
Councilor G. Steere - Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

B. Approve Process to fill positions (Chief, Finance Director, Town Council Liaison)
Discussion and/or Action

MOTION was made by Councilor Forgue to AUTHORIZE the process to fill vacant dispatch positions; seconded by Councilor Henry

Discussion: none

Councilor President G. Steere requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Forgue - Aye
Councilor Henry - Aye
Councilor Reichert - Aye
Councilor W. Steere - Aye
Councilor G. Steere - Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

VII. MOTION was made by Councilor Henry to Adjourn at 9:01 p.m.; seconded by Councilor W. Steere

VOTE: AYES- G. Steere, W. Steere, Reichert, Henry and Forgue
NAYS-0
MOTION PASSED