

**SELECTBOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2020
MEETING MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING ROOM – 6 P.M.**

Present were Chair Jeff Cyr, Vice Chair Sarah Etelman, member Chris Geraghty, member Bruce Forcier, Member Andrea Miles, and Town Administrator Michael J. Sullivan.

CALL TO ORDER

Cyr called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Sharon Hart said confirmed COVID cases are 142 and contacts are 129 (down by 1 from last week after a contact was transferred to a different town). There are no new cases this week but deaths have risen to 23. VERO closed its COVID floor and none of its residents are currently hospitalized. All of its staff members have returned.

Hart, Public Health Nurse Marge Bernard and Mount Holyoke health staff will virtually meet at the end of this week to discuss the college's reopening plan and disease tracing.

Cyr asked Hart to expand on why Cumberland Farms initially was able to provide self-service and more recently had to shut that down. Hart said the store was not allowed from the get-go to offer self-service according to the Health Department, but Cumberland Farms disagreed. Both entities checked with the state, and when the state reported back that self-service was not allowed Cumberland Farms ceased allowing it.

Hart said MAVEN, the state system used by the Health Department to track COVID numbers, cannot show active cases, only cumulative numbers.

The Health Department has not heard from the Department of Education about health mandates regarding the return to school. Hart and Facilities Manager / Health & Safety Coordinator Matt Cowie are in contact with the school department about air exchange and water fountains, and possibly performing upgrades with CARES Act grant monies.

In total, TOSH was awarded \$1.57 million in CARES Act funding. A portion - \$627,000 – was received this week. Some of that needed to be spent before the end of Fiscal Year 20. \$28,000 was spent on upgrading voting booths as there needs to be more distance between each one. The School Department is ordering \$200,000 worth of Chromebooks for distance learning and IT upgrades.

Funding has also been used for communication signs to be installed around town. Payment for the use of contract services is also being considered for assistance with COVID-19 contact tracing and enforcement. Contract services are a benefit when compared to hiring additional staff in that TOSH can adjust more quickly when the grant funding for the contract services runs out.

Departments that feel they have needs which meet the specific CARES Act funding requirements must submit proposals to Sullivan. The Planning Department will make sure the proposals meet CARES Act guidelines. The needs must be directly related to COVID-19 and the funding cannot replace typical revenue or budget funding.

POLICE POLICY BRIEFING

Police Chief Jennifer Gundersen said the South Hadley Police Department is extremely disturbed and disheartened by the violence police officers around the country have committed on people of color. She said it is concerning that other police officers have stood by and watched this behavior that some may think is rogue but in reality is not. The department has discussed concerns about what they are seeing daily, and the chief has spoken with the police union about having an open mind about how the department provides services to the community. Honest and difficult discussions need to be had.

She can say with confidence SHPD complies with “Eight Can’t Wait” in policy and practice. SHPD only uses force when necessary – a few times a year, said Gundersen - and when officers do use force there is a strict reporting requirement they must follow. A shift supervisor first reviews the force report. Then, a second and third level of review is completed by the lieutenant in charge of patrol operations and the officer in charge of training to ensure policy and training compliance. Finally, the chief is the fourth level of review.

Gundersen said there is no quota for officers when stopping motor vehicles, however, she is often communicating down through the supervisors to the officers about various areas she expects officers to enforce, such as traffic laws when valid complaints from the community are made. As an example, a complaint about speeding on Hadley Street was recently made. After deeming the complaint valid, she communicated to supervisors she expects officers to patrol the area. The largest complaint she routinely receives is about the rotary.

There are times when directed traffic enforcement, made available through grants from the Executive Office of Public Safety, such as Click It or Ticket, have quotas of sorts. For example, EOPS will give a recommendation for Click It or Ticket to stop three cars per hour. Gundersen will then tell officers the result of the stops could be a citation or a warning. She prefers warnings.

She has reviewed the demographics of who officers are stopping and ticketing. She believes they are in accordance and not discriminatory. A traffic study would be a better gauge of determining who is actually driving through South Hadley instead of using census data, which not everyone fills out.

Chokehold are banned by written policy and practice. It is considered deadly force by the department. She said it is disturbing to see what happened to George Floyd, and nothing like that force would ever be allowed in South Hadley. SHPD does not have or use military equipment like teargas or flashbangs. Officers are not trained on those or on chokeholds. Gundersen said she believes there is no role for any of that in what the department offers the community. She noted South Hadley officers wear Molle Carriers. It is not military clothing, but it can look that

way. These carriers allow officers to wear their equipment on their chest. This offers no tactical advantage or disadvantage but will prevent injuries that commonly occur when gear is worn on the hips and low back.

She is looking to develop a bicycle patrol and would appreciate guidance from the Selectboard on how SHPD can better engage community members. This meeting, she said, is a step toward that.

Gundersen is a fan of having a school resource officer. She has never worked in a community with a civilian review board but said in some communities it brings added value.

The South Hadley Police Department has 28 officers of which five are women, two are Hispanic and one is Black. All but five have college degrees - four have masters degrees, four have associates degrees and the rest have bachelors degrees.

Gundersen is rewriting SHPD policies, and giving new responsibilities and roles. In the last year-and-a-half, there have not been any professional standards reviews for on-duty behavior or serious infractions.

TOWN MEETING RECAP

The drive-in style town meeting went well. Moderator John Hine spoke about the incident in which a resident who was not a town meeting member wished to speak and was not acknowledged for some time despite town meeting members using allotted time during a vote on a warrant article asking for the moderator to let the resident speak. Eventually, Hine allowed the person to speak.

Hine said he did not know the person or have an idea of what the person was going to say, so it was hard to make a judgement call on whether the person would have something helpful to say related to town meeting, which is generally the criteria for allowing non-town meeting members to speak. He stressed to the public that if they want to speak during town meeting to reach out to Hine ahead of time. Additionally, town meeting members can make a motion to allow non-members to speak. Geraghty confirmed with Hine that in this instance, if town meeting members made a motion to allow this person to speak, the person could have spoken without any issue.

Miles brought up that state bylaws regarding annual town meeting specify anyone who is a registered voter in town may be allowed to speak, even if that person is not a town meeting member, which is in conflict with the town's bylaws. Town counsel is reviewing this discrepancy.

AD-HOC VIRTUAL TOWN MEETING

The Selectboard agreed to create an ad-hoc committee with the goal of finding a virtual platform to use in the event the town needs to hold the fall annual town meeting virtually. Members will be appointed at the board's July 7 meeting. Selectboard members agreed to have Sullivan reach out to current town meeting members and the Commission on Disabilities to suggest members for the committee. Two will be from town meeting and one from the CoD, in addition to people from other facets of town boards and offices, yet to be determined.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Cyr asked about town hall reopening to the public. Sullivan said internal discussions have been had about the town's ability to provide nearly every service during the pandemic, either online or via the mail. Town Clerk Carlene Hamlin is performing marriage intentions and swearing people in outside or at the SHPD vestibule. He said opening right now does not make sense, although at times it feels inconvenient to the public and staff. The risk of opening town hall too great.

While there is still a threat of opening parks and spray parks, it is what the public has demanded, and TOSH does not have a direct responsibility to protect employees at these places - but it does at town hall if town hall were to open to the public. In the case of spray parks, the risk of not opening was greater than opening. Sullivan said TOSH did not want to force people to take risks such as going to the Connecticut River to cool off. Spray parks are open Monday – Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. There is a continues spray to eliminate the need to touch the structures to get them to turn on. Condo pools remain closed because they cannot meet established safety standards.

ADJOURN

Miles motioned to adjourn. Etelman seconded. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED
Kristin Maher
Executive Assistant to Administration