

Town of New Scotland
Special Town Board Meeting
07/10/2020

The following Town Officials were in attendance:

Supervisor:	Douglas LaGrange
Councilperson:	Adam Greenberg
	William Hennessy
	Daniel Leinung
	Bridgit Burke
Town Clerk:	Diane Deschenes
Town Attorney:	Michael Naughton
Absent: Highway Superintendent:	Kenneth Guyer

1. Supervisor LaGrange called the special meeting to order at 1:00 PM. This is another of our series of Friday 1 o'clock COVID-19 update meetings for the Town Board of the Town of New Scotland. These meetings are held according to the Governor's Executive Order 202.1 which includes not having public meetings. This was noticed and I have the notice of the publication from our Town Clerk, Diane Deschenes. A roll call attendance was taken.

COVID-19 Update

Supervisor LaGrange said that the latest notice I have from the County is on cases in all of Albany County but specifically we look at the ones in the town. We have one case which is a confirmed positive COVID case. We have seven people under quarantine and one previous one just dropped off a couple of days ago. We have two that are dropping off today and then one on the 12th, two on the 13th, and two on the 15th. We have gained a couple. The contacts, again, are quarantines. The cases are tested positive. On the 3rd, which was a week ago, there were 203 total people on that list whether it be cases or contacts. On Wednesday we were at 182 and these are the numbers county-wide. Today the list shows 294. I don't know what we can extrapolate from those numbers other than the tests are out there. I did notice as I skimmed through it that there was several situations where the numbers were up when it came to contacts, therefore, quarantined in the same household. That's about the best I can tell you. I can't really give you any other reasons for that. It's just an FYI. As far as here at Town Hall, things have been going good. We did have a couple of further interviews this morning and we had to ask one of the applicants for the DPW position to wait outside, and retake their temperature a couple of times. It's hot out and he came from work. I think it was a little over 100.4 or 100.2. Deputy Clerk Barber said it was 100.4. Supervisor LaGrange said they waited a little while and he thoroughly understood. He came in a little while later and he was right at 98.6.

So, I've been putting up the hand sanitizers for the public here at Town Hall at strategic places. We have four of them. We still haven't gotten the fluid for those yet. They are a different style but I also installed four at the Community Center in anticipation of one day opening up there. Those are the same types that Kenny had eight of that I got for him to install at the parks. I believe most of them are in the process of being installed at the parks. They are setting it up to put them on posts and getting things arranged. I don't know where that stands right off the top but I know that was priority-one for Jamie, Kenny, and Eric. Those do have the actual fluid for them. They dispense with a cartridge affair and it's a foam sanitizer whereas these at Town Hall you actually pour the fluid into the top. Again, I thought it might be here by the end of the week but we still have plenty of the sanitizer that the Sheriff's office supplied us with. We have that both at the front and back door for the employees and visitors to use as needed. So, I think that's pretty much all I have as far as anything that's gone on. I think we're in pretty good shape. Supervisor LaGrange added that one of the reasons we wanted to meet today was to discuss what the Governor's executive order said. If you haven't already had a chance to see what Michael said on Tuesday and then again today it looks like we still are in the Zoom mode. Michael, do you want to elaborate or does anyone have any questions or comments?

Attorney Naughton said that the information that he sent around indicated that the Governor has extended the option for municipalities to hold these Zoom-type meetings. There was some discussion and debate about whether regular meetings in Town Hall are prohibited. There is some clarification. The Governor is saying to the NY Mayors Association that it's not prohibited. So, we haven't been treating it as being prohibited for a while. We've just elected to continue holding Zoom meetings on a discretionary basis as allowed by the order until August 6th but I would expect that it will be extended

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again. He's kind of doing it on a monthly basis. So, when you get to the end of the program here and you're deciding what do with the August meeting I think you could safely assume that it will be extended. If for whatever reason the Governor does not extend it and you have elected to notice it as a Zoom meeting you could just change the notice and hold it in Town Hall. If you are inclined to continue to hold Zoom meetings, that's fine. I suspect that the order will catch up in time for us before the August meeting. Supervisor LaGrange added, "On August 12th." Attorney Naughton said unless there are any questions, that's the long answer from the lawyer. Supervisor LaGrange said it seems like there were a lot of differing thoughts and opinions at least from the start of that email whether it was prohibited or not. Attorney Naughton said that he shared that email just so you could see how ridiculous lawyers are and what they can argue over.

Supervisor LaGrange said, "I don't think we have to necessarily, unless the Board chooses to this early, but I was going to propose, and this is depending on everybody's feelings, that we might skip next Friday and go to the following Friday and maybe do this every other week." Things seem to have found a certain level here. We certainly would still have plenty of time for noticing our meeting at that point whether it be Zoom or public. We can decide that on the 24th. Then we would still have a week before the advertisement goes out. Whatever everyone wants. If you want to, say we're going to do Zoom now and change it later so we're ahead of the game. Whatever you'd like to do. Councilperson Greenberg said that he's for doing it Zoom through August certainly. Whether we schedule it now or wait a week or two it's no difference to him. Councilperson Leinung said he thinks he's in a similar position. He was in Town Hall the other day and Doug showed me how the rooms would be set up. I think we could probably sit 8-10 members of the public in there. Supervisor LaGrange said that the way it's set up you could fit 8 people. If couples came, say four couples came, we could get up to 12 without infringing on the 6-foot distancing and stuff. If individuals came that weren't family members or the like we're limited to eight, four on a side. Councilperson Leinung said that his feelings are that even if we feel comfortable doing it he still thinks it brings up a possible issue if for some reason we do get 10 people showing up for a meeting and we don't have adequate space for them. It very rarely happens but it still could possibly happen. Generally he thinks he's fine with continuing the Zoom meetings. He has a feeling that the Executive Orders will probably be continued month by month as long as the emergency declaration is going on. He has a feeling that they'll probably keep this EO going but, again, it sounds like it's going to be a month-by-month decision. Supervisor LaGrange said he thinks it would be great for all of our municipalities because it seems like the majority of them are in the first one or two weeks of the month. It would certainly be a lot more beneficial and a lot less chaotic for us if we had these EOs extended or changed at the end of the month just so we could plan ahead. Maybe that's not understood or taken into consideration.

Councilperson Burke said, "Everybody knows that I would like to go to open meetings and end Zoom, but I certainly understand that's not the majority's opinion and I'm comfortable with going with the majority and not making a big deal out of it." Supervisor LaGrange said he appreciated that. He'd love to get back to the public meeting. It's one of those things. Just look at these numbers today. Theoretically for whatever reason, and I can say this is accurate, but we're up 100 cases in the county of either positives or quarantines so it's still kind of a fluid situation. Oftentimes the folks that come to our meetings are folks that are more prone to being in the concerning group, whether it be age or issues. I'm growing more comfortable with the fact that I think we open up a lot more opportunities for people to join us through Zoom at this point, especially for their comfort level. There are people that might not want to come to a public hearing because they are still concerned about the virus. Councilperson Burke said, "I hear that, Doug, but I do feel like the evidence demonstrates that people are not participating in the Zoom meetings so that's where my concern comes from, but I understand where everyone is coming from and I respect that." Supervisor LaGrange said that he wasn't trying to convince her; he was just talking his thoughts through.

Councilperson Hennessy said, "I guess I'm last to chime in. I'm more supportive of having the town board meeting at Town Hall. The rest of the world is mostly doing that and I don't think it's a problem for us to do it. If we have the public joining, we have to accommodate. If they can't fit, then they can watch us on Zoom. I'm fine with waiting until we can see what's going on more. We have different data. I see different data showing a continued decrease but yet we see what's going on in the world and the difficulty going on down south. Caution is fine. I'm still a little bit concerned about the parks and the games so I'd like to keep our wits about us with what's going on in the parks also and make sure that it is accommodated properly." Supervisor LaGrange said that he doesn't disagree and in that case they

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are outside. Here we're in a contained area. Just as an example, I was here getting thing situated this morning. It was probably a little before eight I think and the doorbell rang so I figured I'd check just to see if it was Betsy coming in and she forgot her keys or something like that. As I opened it, it was a resident. He had moved to Florida and he was just back yesterday and stopping by to drop off some paperwork. Now, despite everybody's best efforts in CT, NJ, and us, whoever it is saying we're going to make people who come back or to the state from different states that are hot spots right now, here's a guy that just came up yesterday, stopping by Town Hall. He had no mask so obviously I kept him out anyway but at the same time he's not self-quarantining or anything. We just can't guarantee that if we have people coming into a meeting, especially inside, that it couldn't be a similar circumstance and you just don't have any idea. It was kind of an eye-opening experience this morning for me in that regard. The person was kind of like "just back from Florida." What do you do? Anyway, again that was an eye-opening experience for me in that sense.

Councilperson Greenberg said the other thing that he spoke to Doug about yesterday is that he thinks we should look into, now that's it's becoming more clear that the virus is airborne especially inside in systems, there are certain filtration filters that work to clear the air. Doug was going to speak with Roland J. Down I believe about getting those kinds of filters on our system. Certainly until that's done I don't think it's safe for the public to be in Town Hall. Supervisor LaGrange said that there is a certain name for those that they are using. There are levels of filtration. There is a certain type of filter. Bill, do you know the name of it? It starts with an "M" I believe. Councilperson Leinung said it is MERV. Supervisor LaGrange said that's the MERV rating? Councilperson Hennessy said the filtration issue is such that a HEPA filter is a high-efficiency filter and a MERV is a medium-efficiency filter. The Governor initially said he wanted HEPA filters but then he backed off and went to a medium efficiency because they believe the filter, I believe it's a MERV 13, can stop the virus. I don't know how accurate they are in that determination but the fact is that many systems will not accommodate a stronger filter and that has to be determined. If you're going to have a company come in, I'd like to contact that other company that installed the system in the front of the building that served Diane's space because they have adequate fresh air coming into the front half of the building. The back half of Town Hall I believe is served by a unit up in the attic, in the ceiling of the meeting room but there are other ways to skin the cat. The simplest thing to do is to stick some of those window fans that can exhaust right in the windows and just exhaust air out. It forces fresh air into the building. That's the easiest way to accommodate that side of it. Councilperson Greenberg said that that's only going to work for a month or two. Councilperson Hennessy said it can work year round, who cares? Supervisor LaGrange said winter is coming. Councilperson Hennessy said you can still do it. You're exhausting air; you're not blowing cold air in. You don't blow the cold air in and push everyone's germs around. You exhaust whatever might be coming around from the people and the breathing spray you actually exhaust out. You would not realize filtration of cold air into the building if you actually exhausted that. You wouldn't sense it. It's not coming in the window. Supervisor LaGrange asked Councilperson Hennessy if he wants to talk to the folks who did the work up front and see what their thoughts are before he contacts anybody else. Councilperson Hennessy said that's fine, he can.

Supervisor LaGrange said that we have somewhat of a consensus here, reluctantly or not, to just go ahead with the Zoom so people know ahead of time. The sooner the better that we get it on the website that the next regular meeting is going to be Zoom. We'll take care of that now unless anyone wants to wait a week or two weeks to decide the same thing. Councilperson Leinung said he thinks that makes sense. One more point: I'm not sure how we could simulcast the Zoom meeting at the same time making this available for people who don't feel comfortable if we're meeting in person. I'm not sure if the audio would be good. So that's something if we do resume he would like to figure out how to at least webcast our meeting or something like that to make it more available. Supervisor LaGrange said those were points in Michael's email too that they were having a lot of issues with that. Councilperson Leinung said it might be as simple as someone just having their phone and recording it and posting it. We'd have to test it out first to make sure the audio is fine and everyone can hear what's being said. That's just something we'd have to check before we go back to some type of in-person meeting while also doing a Zoom.

Councilperson Greenberg said he just wanted to respond to Bridgit's point for one second about not having much public interaction now which has been true. Bridgit is right but we generally don't have much public interaction even when it's live for one thing. For the other thing, just to be clear. Doug you've gotten zero complaints or questions from the public about when it's going to go back to being

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live at Town Hall, correct? Supervisor LaGrange said that's correct. He asked Diane if maybe she has but he hasn't had anyone ask when we are going to get public again? It just hasn't happened. Town Clerk Deschenes said she hasn't either. Councilperson Greenberg said it's not like there is any kind of demand out there that we're hearing where people want this to start back up. Town Clerk Deschenes said she had no complaints. Councilperson Leinung added that he thinks we should refer to it as in-person instead of public since this is a public meeting and it is public so it's really in-person and not public. Just wanted to make that clarification. The lawyer in me.

Sales Tax

Supervisor LaGrange said he thinks we're at least working through this and I don't want to hold everyone up. I know Adam needs to get back out. Is there anything else that anyone has? Councilperson Leinung had one more quick thing. He's assuming you'll let us know when we get the next sales tax figures coming in. I saw that the Comptroller put something out that said in May and June it was a decrease of 24% or 30% each month. I would think that we'll probably see somewhere around a 30% reduction once we see those numbers. Supervisor LaGrange said that if we get 20 or 30, we're talking \$100,000-\$150,000. At this point I'd almost welcome that compared to what I thought it might be. I did ask Lisa and she told me that both last year and the year before the numbers came out around the 18th of the month. So, I wouldn't anticipate them sooner than that but of course I usually get them out to you guys the day we get them if not the next day so you'll be sure to see them as soon as I see them. Once I stop crying I'll start typing.

Supervisor LaGrange asked if there was anything else and he thanked everyone for taking the time. Councilperson Burke asked if it was two weeks before the next meeting? Supervisor LaGrange said he gets that it's productive and everything. He thinks that if anything came up all of a sudden that was important we should probably get together, but quite frankly it's more minutes Diane has to type. It constrains all of us a little bit at 1 o'clock on Friday. If nobody has any great desire I would propose that we have our next one on the 24th which is two weeks from today but that's my feeling. Councilperson Greenberg asked if it is better to schedule next week and cancel if we don't want to just so we have notified if something happens to come up, sales tax figures come out, large cases, whatever it might be. Councilperson Hennessy said that he'd prefer to schedule it at least because one of his concerns is too much of life is too comfortable through Zoom whereas it's not if it's an in-person meeting. We could at least keep these going. If nothing comes up, I get it; we can cancel it. I'd prefer to at least schedule. Councilperson Leinung said that that sounds fine to him. We can schedule it. If we need it we can maybe check in on that Wednesday or I don't know, the day before. If we don't need it we don't need it. Supervisor LaGrange said that he could send out a text or an email to everyone and say, "Hey, I don't have anything new to report or whatever, shall we cancel?" Then we can at the last minute. That's fine. It's easier to notify ahead of time than to try to get something together quick. So, good point.

Councilperson Hennessy said that the 298 figure Supervisor LaGrange mentioned before might relate to data I'm looking at on the County website where they have current mandatory quarantines of 298 and you said 294. It might be a similar number. I don't know. Supervisor LaGrange said it probably is, Bill, and yours is probably updated for today. Councilperson Hennessy said that it was yesterday, July 9th, actually. Supervisor LaGrange said this is what I've been telling you ever since the beginning. I think they do the best job that they can to get these figures out to us but it's so fluid all the time that I'm sure it's tough to do. I think you're probably right, Bill, and yes I think I made that point earlier. These are both cases that are positive tests and quarantines both that total that number. I could add them up and give you a breakdown but I just didn't have the time today. Maybe I'll try to do that for next time. Councilperson Hennessy said he's just relaying it if others wanted to kind of track other methods. Your tracking is clearly a HIPAA confidential element but there is data has been online. I'm just trying to relate it to something that's easily identifiable.

New Scotland South Road Fire

Supervisor LaGrange said that that reminds me that I wanted to mention to you just as a side note and I might bring it up at more of a regular meeting. We had a fire on New Scotland South Road two nights ago, right across from Miller Road. We had one of our EMTs who originated from Onesquethaw Fire, Jake Houck, who was going by. I think it was after 10 PM at night. He saw the fire in the roof. He woke up the mother and the two kids and aided getting them out of there. He got the fire department called and everything. There was a lot of damage. She's actually living with her sister right now to get by. I just wanted to mention Jake because he could very well have saved their lives and that's a local

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resident who risked himself to go in there and get them out. Again, it's been on Facebook. It's been other places. We have helped her out a little bit with the Neighbors Helping Neighbors. I thank Dan and Adam who were the first two I contacted to help get that together. It just shows the kind of people we have in New Scotland. I just want to be on record mentioning Jake and the heroics that took place a couple of nights ago here. If you weren't aware of that I want to let you know as Board members.

Supervisor LaGrange asked if we want to adjourn.

2. Adjourn

Councilperson Leinung made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilperson Greenberg. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.

Diane R. Deschenes, Town Clerk.