



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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LORI L. SPIELMAN
First Selectman

JAMES M. PRICHARD
Deputy First Selectman

SARAH D. COOK
MELINDA M. FERRY
DAVID E. STAVENS
RONALD F. STOMBERG
JOHN W. TURNER

BOARD OF SELECTMEN SPECIAL MEETING

Monday, July 20, 2020

Town Hall Meeting Hall and Via ZOOM Conferencing

SELECTMEN PRESENT: Lori Spielman, James Prichard, John Turner, Ronald Stomberg, David Stavens, Melinda Ferry, Sarah Cook

OTHERS PRESENT: Dorian Famiglietti, Town Attorney; Rebecca Einsiedel, Administrative Assistant/Recording Secretary; Arlo Hoffman, Jeffrey Duke, Mike Vengruskas, Jennifer Smyth, Robert C. and Lisa Sandberg, Mike Swanson, Michael Stupinski, Michael Reilly

PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Tiffany Pignataro, Finance Officer/Treasurer; John Rachek, Board of Finance Chairman; Jane Roets, Heather Badeau, Pete Kurimay, Larrissa Burke, Brad Hensley, Molly Moseley, Lane Resnik, James Fay, Sandra Cosman, Cynthia Richey, Rosalie Stavens, K. Maloney, Lynn Fahy, Brian Luginbuhl, Rhonda Villanova, John Bellezza, Nicola Sinclair, John Smith-Horn, Joyce Armstrong, Kim Shores, Karen Trantalis, Tom Mascaro, Jennifer Brindisi, Marcos Rodriguez, Lenora Williams, Matthew Sherriffs, Aaron Foster, Dustyn Nelson, Sean Kelly, Sharon McLaughlin, Scott Noble, Deanna Wambolt-Gulick, Janet Wieliczka, Mark Plourde, Jean Prest, Dale Roberson, Hunter Cook, Chick MacMillan, Steve Schindler, Miranda Krupa, Celeste Ibrahim, Jaime Foster, Sarah Chouinard, David Olender, Josh Feldman, Dan Sclare, Zach Murdock, Kurt Sullivan, Tim Jensen, Jim Josephiac, Erin Stavens, Douglas Harding, Dan Meaney, Joel Nadel, Jessica Collamati, Ray Ruete, Eli Freund, Richard Grant, Amy Picone, Khara and Evan Dodds

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by First Selectman Spielman. She stated that seating in the Meeting Hall is limited due to COVID-19 restrictions, noting that a ZOOM option is available.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

III. CITIZENS' FORUM:

First Selectman Spielman turned the meeting over to Deputy First Selectman James Prichard. Deputy First Selectman Prichard stated that normally, Citizens' Forum is reserved for citizens to address the Board of Selectman regarding items not listed on the agenda. He added that under the circumstances, the BOS would make an exception so that everyone is heard on tonight's agenda item. He, along with the BOS members, set

a 2-minute time limit on each speaker in the interest of time. Mr. Stavens asked that speakers try to not be repetitive.

John Smith-Horn, 43 Hayes Avenue; Jaime Foster, 27 Abbott Road; Khara and Evan Dodds, 2 Jonathan Drive; Joel Nadel, 155 Windermere Avenue; Dr. Lenora Williams, 30 Windmill Road; Peter Kurimay, 273 Windsorville Road; Marcos Rodriguez, 17 Virginia Drive all provided public comment expressing their disappointment and personal views regarding the social media post that was referenced in the July 13, 2020 Board of Selectmen meeting.

The following is a collective summary of these speakers' comments: speakers expressed that the issue at hand is not reflective of Ms. Spielman's job performance, but the Facebook post of a meme she shared on her personal Facebook page was found by some people found to be bigoted, racist, distasteful, disgusting, despicable and insensitive; several speakers expressed their view that Ellington has a serious problem with racism and that the Town is not inclusive; comments included disappointment that the personnel matter would be addressed in executive session and questioned whether the First Selectman learned anything from this experience; there was a request that the Board of Selectmen propose a resolution to declare that Ellington has a racism public health crisis; the Chairman of the Ellington Democratic Town Committee (EDTC) issued condemnation, on behalf of the EDTC members, of the Facebook post and their interpretation of its meaning; and, that the Board of Selectmen members are incompetent, citing recent referendums. One speaker commented that he and his family love the Town of Ellington, and although he found the Facebook post disturbing, he has no negative things to say about the Town.

Jennifer Smyth, 206 Abbott Road; Jeffrey Duke, 4 Overhill Road; Mike Vengruskas, 14 Green Street; Arlo Hoffman, 7 Fairview Avenue Ext.; Robert Sandberg, 6 Broad Brook Road; Mike Swanson, 27 Standish Road and Steve Schindler, 2 Cherrywood Drive provided public comment expressing their personal views regarding the First Selectman and the current situation.

The following is a collective summary of these speakers' comments: the opinion that the First Selectman, Lori Spielman, is an asset to the community, a solid person who serves with honor; comments that a majority of the Town supports her and appreciates her integrity and her leadership; that she goes above and beyond her duties and that she kept the mill rate the same this year; there was expressed appreciation that the First Selectman personally meets with residents to solve problems, returns their phone calls, volunteers her time, donates and is always on the job; some comments that not all people saw the Facebook post as racist; that people need to look at the whole picture and that the meaning of the post is being made into something that wasn't intended; that there is a concerted effort strategically being implemented to bring shame to Ellington; and that the First Selectman should learn a lesson from this.

Ms. Ferry indicated that she is concerned that one of the speakers suggested that people currently do not feel safe outside of Town Hall where individuals have gathered both in support and in opposition of the First Selectman. Ms. Cannella stated that there are at least four police officers located outside of the building to ensure order and public safety and that she would alert Sgt. Santa that the individual is not feeling safe.

Mr. Prichard asked if anyone else wanted to speak. Ms. Cannella confirmed that all ZOOM attendees with raised hands were provided the opportunity to speak. There being no further comments, the meeting continued.

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. To discuss alleged violation of the Personnel Social Media Policy

MOVED (PRICHARD), SECONDED (TURNER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 6:57 P.M. FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING ALLEGED VIOLATION OF THE PERSONNEL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY.

PRESENT: BOS Members: [L. Spielman, J. Prichard, J. Turner, R. Stomberg, D. Stavens, M. Ferry, S. Cook]; D. Famiglietti, Town Attorney

MOVED (PRICHARD), SECONDED (TURNER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO COME OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 8:08 P.M.

Technical difficulties with the ZOOM Conferencing application did not allow for the continuation of the meeting via the ZOOM meeting format with the publicized URL, Webinar ID or password. A decision was made to recess the meeting.

MOVED (TURNER), SECONDED (STOMBERG) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO RECESS THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN SPECIAL MEETING AT 8:23 P.M. DUE TO TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES WITH THE ZOOM CONFERENCING OPTION. THE MEETING WILL RESUME ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2020 AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE TOWN HALL MEETING HALL WITH A ZOOM OPTION AVAILABLE.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Discussion regarding resolution: Postponed to July 22, 2020.

VI. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (PRICHARD), SECONDED (TURNER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN AT 8:23 P.M.

Submitted by


LouAnn Cannella
Recording Secretary

Approved by


James Prichard
Deputy First Selectman