

Town of Corinth
Board of Selectmen
PO Box 461
Corinth, VT 05039

Unapproved Minutes of an Emergency Meeting of the Select Board
March 16, 2020

By teleconference, beginning at 9:00 AM.

Present for the Board: Chris Groschner, Rick Cawley, Steve Long
Catherine Tudish, Select Board clerk

Others present: Annie Dolan, Richard Dolan, Zach McNeal, Robert Rinaldi, Jeff Spiegel

This meeting was held to discuss the town response to the spread of the new coronavirus and COVID-19.

Groschner expressed a major concern about the spread of the virus based on scientific modeling, explaining that the way it grows in the population creates a spike in cases that will overwhelm the medical system. We need to “flatten the curve” by trying to slow the progression of the virus so that fewer people are sick at the same time.

Groschner said the best way is for people to isolate themselves as much as they can, because a lot of affected people are walking around without symptoms.

“We will need some way for people to communicate their needs for help,” Groschner added.

Robert Rinaldi, coordinator of the Vital Communities list serve, said the list serve could help by posting urgent messages at times other than the regular morning posting. There is a work-around, Rinaldi said, to have messages sent out during the day, although not necessarily going out just to Corinth. It would also be possible to create another list, not through Vital Communities, but perhaps through a Google group.

Long asked Jeff Spiegel if he had a list of volunteers through the recently formed Corinth Community Coalition.

Spiegel said not at present. We need a list of people willing to volunteer, he said, adding, “A challenge is to identify people who need support.” He suggested sending out a questionnaire requesting volunteers and also a questionnaire asking if people need help.

Groschner mentioned that in the past the fire department wanted to create a list of people who might need help, but received only three returns. He said waiting for paper returns might be too slow a process.

Annie Dolan and Zach McNeal both agreed.

Dolan added that it is important to watch out for neighbors to see if they might need assistance.

Long said he had talked with Nancy Ertle earlier in the morning about printing copies of an informational letter to be sent out to town residents by the select board.

In addition to information about the coronavirus, the letter would give residents who need help a way to request it.

The select board approved payment of postage for the mailing.

Spiegel noted that the state capital has shut down. He asked if town offices should be accessed on line or by phone.

Cawley said he had received an email from the West Fairlee town clerk, stating that their office will be closed for the week.

McNeal stated that the group currently meeting constituted an emergency management department.

Long said that as part of an emergency management department they could order the town offices to close.

Cawley suggested closing it to public traffic, but allowing the town clerk, treasurer, and others who work there to continue using the offices.

Groschner said the select board agrees to close Town Hall to the public for this week, and to decide when to re-open on a week-by-week basis.

Cawley said Nancy Ertle would be able to get the word out to those who use the Town Hall and let them know they could conduct business on line or by phone.

Annie Dolan said that Michelle Brock, a paramedic who lives in Corinth, should be included on the emergency management team.

Cawley recommended that Mike Pittman of the fire department be added.

Spiegel suggested including Carlotta Peratoni, principal of Waits River School, who would have a good understanding of student needs while the schools are closed.

Long asked who answers the emergency number 439-5155.

McNeal replied that the number goes directly to Hanover dispatch.

Long asked if that number was for medical emergencies.

Annie Dolan said only if 911 goes down, and also for fires if 911 goes down.

Long then asked who should be called if someone needs help of a non-emergency nature.

Spiegel said using one person's number could overwhelm that person.

Long said he would call Topsham Telephone Company to see if they could open a voice mail account for the specific purpose of having a help line to take calls from anyone affected by the coronavirus who needs assistance such as having food delivered. Long said it would be a phone line that more than one person could access to get voicemail messages remotely.

The meeting ended at 10:05 AM.