

## FINAL



**Town of Henniker  
Board of Selectmen Meeting  
Tuesday, May 4, 2021  
Virtually on Zoom**

**Members Present:** Chairman Kris Blomback; Vice Chair Tia Hooper; Selectman Peter Flynn; Selectman Scott Osgood; Selectman Leon Parker

**Town Administrator:** Joe R. Devine Jr.

**Recording Secretary:** Kelly McCutcheon

**Virtual Zoom Guests:** Milli Knudsen, Heidi Aucoin, Heather Jones, Cordell Johnston, Danny Teaze, Jeremy, The Messenger, Town Tax Collector Kim Johnson, Deb Aucoin, Jarrod Gleason, Ruth Zax, Susan Fetzer, Martha Taylor, Alison, Paul Knudsen, Stephanie Teaze, Joan O'Connor, Mike French, Fire Chief Jim Morse

**Consent Agenda:**

Item 1: Check Registers October, November, December 2020 & January, February 2021

Item 2: Consent Agenda for April 19, 2021

Item 3: Consent Agenda for May 4, 2021

**Selectman Parker moved to approve the consent Agenda as presented. Selectman Flynn seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

**Public comment #1**

No public comment.

**Item 4: Historical Society Downtown Tour**

Martha Taylor and Susan Fetzer quickly presented on the QR codes for the town's historical markers. The town started doing historical markers in 1893 and the current agreement is the markers are town owned with stewardship charged to the Historical Society.

The Historical Society has established a YouTube channel in addition to their website, which the QR codes would automatically link to with any smartphone to the YouTube video for the specific site marker. The Historical Society website has more information on the self-guided audio tours and how to use the QR codes with smart phones. <https://www.hennikerhistory.org/>

Martha Taylor and Susan Fetzer on behalf of the Henniker Historical Society requested the Board's permission to attach QR codes half the size of a dollar bill to the historical markers that already have accompanying audio.

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**Selectman Flynn moved to authorize the Henniker historical Society to place QR codes on the back of historical markers. Vice Chair Hooper seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

June is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Henniker Historical Society and they are planning lots of events.

### Item 5: Concert Committee Update

Ruth Zax and Milli Knudsen, representing the Concert Committee, stated they are planning on 12 concerts this year on Tuesday nights starting June 15<sup>th</sup> from 6:30pm-8pm and following CDC guidelines. Ruth requested permission from Chair Blomback for permission to reach out to Superintendent Kristen Mix of Parks and properties for assistance in setting up the 6ft squares as well as Stef from Pat's Peak in regards to the orange snow fencing. Chair Blomback granted permission for both.

This year the Concert Committee has raised \$1,900 in donations from business sponsors. The committee raised the money because their budget has been consistent for a few years and the committee wished to pay the long-time performers more in addition to being able to afford more diverse and cultural music groups. Ruth Zax thanked all the business sponsors and donors for helping make this season possible.

Milli Knudsen stated at this time the committee decided to maintain the same strict CDC guidelines as last season and hope by July or August there will be no more need for masks or fencing. With the CDC guideline if it rains the event is canceled, a rain date will be rescheduled if possible but is not guaranteed.

Selectman Flynn offered his property and yard for the committee if needed. Ruth and Milli expressed their appreciation.

**Selectman Flynn moved to authorize the Concert Committee to use the Henniker Community Park for the purpose of running the summer concert series as the committee has done in the past. Selectman Osgood seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

### Item 6: CNHRP – Traffic Data Collection ((Central New Hampshire Regional Planning))

Selectman Parker stated the RMC (Road Management Committee) input should be obtained since they are already planning for next year's construction. Vice Chair Hooper stated the RMC traditionally fills out those forms for CNHRP and that it needs to be reviewed by the RMC before return.

**Vice Chair Hooper moved for the Town Administrator to provide the CNHRP list to the Road Management Committee for their input of tier 1 and tier 2 priorities; then send the listed for input by the Town Planner, Police Chief, Road Agent, and Town Administrator for any additional locations that need to be added. Selectman Parker seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

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Item 7: 1st Reading – Ethics Policy

**Vice Chair Hooper moved to accept the Ethics Policy as a first reading and moved to advanced to a second reading at the next Board meeting (May 18<sup>th</sup>). Selectman Flynn seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

Item 8: 1st Reading – Employee Evaluations and Merit Raises

There has been a lot of discussion regarding merit raises and employees who do not meet expectations. The town currently does not give merit raises, everyone is on a step and moves up through the steps. Merit raises are a reward for doing more than just a 4% step every time there is a favorable evaluation.

The Board discussed the steps and concern over step increases when not earned, the COLA (cost of living adjustment) increase which historically the town follows the State has set, and employees who have maxed out of their steps.

**Vice Chair Hooper moved to accept the Employee Evaluations and Merit Raises as a first reading and moved to advance to a second reading. Selectman Osgood seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

Item 9: 1st Reading – Amendment Chapter 25 – Building Construction Fees

**Selectman Parker moved to accept Amendment Chapter 25 – Building Construction Fees as a first reading and moved to advance to a second reading. Selectman Flynn seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

Item 10: Surplus Equipment

**Selectman Parker moved to authorize the Town Administrator to send the equipment to auction. Vice Chair Hooper seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

Item 11: Biannual Update from Town Clerk

Town Tax Collector Kim Johnson stated that as of today 1% of the taxes are unpaid from last year, 150 certified letters were mailed April 16<sup>th</sup> compared to 216 letters the year before, and the next project is 2018 deeding which will start in July or August.

Vice Chair Hooper asked for outstanding tax report. Kim stated it will be completed on April 21<sup>st</sup> and ready for June Board meeting. Chair Blomback asked if any land will be auctioned this year. Kim stated traditionally the town waits 3 years before auction recently held a land auction.

Item 12: Discussion – Mask Use Town Properties

Joe Devine stated on April 16<sup>th</sup> the State mandate expires but businesses and municipalities may still enforce their own rules and asked the Board how they would like to proceed in regards to town properties.

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Vice Chair Hooper stated it is unknown how many employees are vaccinated since they are not required to inform their employer and that the CDC still recommends masks indoors if there is not a high enough level of vaccination, and the Board has a responsibility to continue to practice safe measures. Joe stated that already people have been coming into town hall unmasked and trying to enforce masks for the public is going to make people upset.

There was discussion over the total number of employees, guessing what percentage is vaccinated, if each department should have their own policies, standard policies for all town departments, and the State policies sunset.

As Town Administrator Joe had spoken with some employees and department heads. Town hall employees are not overall concerned as there is still a Plexiglass divider between them and the public. Chair Blomback asked Selectman Flynn and Selectman Osgood what New Boston and Claremont are doing. Selectman Flynn stated New Boston is making a decision on Monday but assumes penalties will be dropped and masks will be volunteer based. Selectman Osgood stated Claremont is decided by department.

Selectman Parker stated trying to impose more restrictive policies is setting up the opportunity for conflict and that the requirement for masks should be removed. He stated let people exhibit personal responsibility and make their own choices.

Vice Chair Hooper stated if masks are no longer required and employees catch COVID19 and are unvaccinated that they will be out of work for 2 weeks without pay which will impact the already short-staffed departments.

Selectman Flynn stated there are two clerks in his town who refuse to get vaccinated and asked what the Board will do if employees refuse. Vice Chair Hooper stated some businesses and towns are requiring vaccination before employees return to work. Chair Blomback stated the Board cannot mandate vaccination despite the Board being for vaccination.

Selectman Parker stated given the controversy he sees a lot of arguments if the Board tries to mandate masks or vaccination. Vice Chair Hooper stated masks need to be required for meetings. Chair Blomback stated he agreed with Selectman Parker and the language should be changed to recommends. Selectman Flynn agreed. It was reiterated that sick pay will no longer be issued for those who catch COVID19.

Chair Blomback suggested incentivizing employees to vaccinate. Vice Chair Hooper stated her disbelief at the need to incentivize. Selectman Osgood stated it is reasonable to ask employees to vaccinate and wear masks but trying to mandate masks and vaccines for everyone will add conflict that is not needed. Vice Chair Hooper stated the virus will not be beat is not enough people get vaccinated. Chair Blomback stated vaccines are important but a divisive issue.

**Chair Blomback moved to change the requirements for masks to highly recommend the continued use of masks for the public and town employees on town property. Selectman Flynn seconded. Motion carried 3-2 (Hooper, Osgood).**

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### Item 13: Town Hall Hours

Joe Devine spoke with the town hall employees regarding staying open later one night, and there was concern over coverage if someone calls out sick. Selectman Parker stated the clerk's office needs to be open on Thursdays for in person transactions. Vice Chair Hooper stated she does not see the issue in staying open later one day when there is a half day on Friday. Joe stated he was asked to receive feedback from the staff and the staff opposes staying open past 5:30.

Chair Blomback stated he respected both sides and did not want to create a headache for Joe while also understanding Selectman Parker and Vice Chair Hooper's points. Selectman Osgood stated he liked what was presented with the Friday half day.

**Selectman Parker moved to adopt the town hall summer hours as laid out in the memo. Vice Chair Hooper seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

### Item 14: Acceptance of Board of Selectmen Minutes April 20, 2021

**Vice Chair Hooper moved to approve as amended. Selectman Flynn seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

### Item 15: Acceptance of Board of Selectmen Non-Public Minutes April 20, 2021

**Vice Chair Hooper moved to approve as presented. Selectman Parker seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

### Item 16: Town Administrator's Report

- COVID-19 Update—As of April 30, 2021, we have nine active cases (0.18% of the population). We have had eleven new cases in the past fourteen days, a total of 230 cumulative cases (4.7% of population) a positivity rate of 3.1%, and 6,769 tests have been conducted on Henniker residents.
- Senate HB 374: You may recall I was asked to testify before the Senate regarding upcoming bills. HB 374 would change the process for voting and adoption of SB2 form of town meeting. In 2019 there was a change to the law, enabling voters to have a complete, informed discussion at town meeting before voting. This meant the question of adopting SB2 is voted on at the town meeting's business session. Under the previous law, the question had been regulated to one sentence on the official ballot, leaving voters a few seconds in a voting booth to make up their minds on the most significant change a town meeting is ever likely to make. I am happy to report the committee unanimously voted inexpedient to legislate on HB 374. In speaking with Cordell, he is confident that will hold up in the Senate, mainly because they put it on the consent calendar.
- Depot Street Trees—Superintendent Aucoin has asked about removing two trees along Maple St. These trees are in the Town's ROW and dying. He hopes to remove them in conjunction with the sidewalk project and replant two new maple trees to replace them. The new trees will be out of the ROW, and roots will not cause damage to the new sidewalk.
- Building Inspector Position—We have begun interviewing candidates for this position. I hope to be able to update the Board at the next meeting with a hiring recommendation.

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- Town Hall Painting—I have reached out to both Merrimack County DOC and the State Prison to inquire about stripping and painting Town Hall. I will update the Board on their availability, but I hope they will possibly paint some, if not all, of Town Hall this summer.
- Citizens Government Academy—I wanted to gauge the Boards support for this initiative. In an ongoing effort to increase transparency and a better understanding of municipal government, I wanted to start a Citizens Government Academy this fall. The idea is residents learn firsthand from Town employees and get a behind-the-scenes look at how Henniker's government operates. While I haven't started the in-depth planning with this, the idea is as followed. Through a combination of presentations and hands-on projects, participants learn about vital community services, including emergency services, law enforcement, planning and zoning, finance and budget, wastewater, highway jobs, solid waste, parks and recreation, and more. Most importantly, participants connect with local officials and the Town staff members who provide these services. Weekly instructors vary depending upon the Town service or department being covered that week.
- NEC Graduation –Congratulations to the classes of 2020 and 2021! New England College's Commencement Ceremony is May 8, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. Unfortunately, due to the COVID pandemic, they will not celebrate this achievement in person, but they will be celebrating virtually. If the Board is available, the Town has received an invitation to the Commencement. They will also be dealing with the erosion issue in their parking lot by the band stand.
- Upcoming Board of Selectmen Schedule—During the October 6, 2020 meeting the Board previously approved the 2021 Board of Selectmen schedule. I wanted to remind everyone of the summer approaching. This would also be an excellent opportunity to address any changes the Board might like to make. The schedule is as follows:
  - June 1
  - June 15<sup>th</sup>
  - July 20<sup>th</sup>
  - August 17<sup>th</sup>
- The bike shop is ok with closing the road with Henniker Handmade & Homegrown at the Community Center Saturday
- School budget vote is April 11<sup>th</sup>

**Vice Chair Hooper moved to change the August 17<sup>th</sup> Board meeting to August 24<sup>th</sup>. Selectman Flynn seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

### Item 17: Selectmen Reports

Vice Chair Hooper had no report

Selectman Parker stated RMC is meeting next Tuesday 6:30pm at the Highway Department

Selectman Flynn stated the Historic District Commission has several items on their agenda but need to set a date. Joe Devine stated they are meeting this Thursday at town Hall

Selectman Osgood had no report

Chair Blomback stated the Economic Development Committee is still trying to get together.

### Public Comment #2:

No public comment

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Item 18: Non-public Session 91-A:3 II a, c, d e, or e Personnel/Reputation/Legal/Land  
**Chair Blomback moved to enter non-public. Vice Chair Hooper seconded. Motion carried 5-0.**

### UPCOMING DATES

May 12, 2021 – Planning Board Meeting

May 18, 2021 – Select Board Meeting