

**GLASTONBURY TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES (AMENDED)
TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2020**

The Glastonbury Town Council, with Town Manager, Richard J. Johnson, in attendance, held a Special Meeting at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Video Conferencing. The meeting was broadcast in real time and via a live video stream.

1. Roll Call.

Council Members

Mr. Thomas P. Gullotta, Chairman
Mr. Lawrence Niland, Vice Chairman
Dr. Stewart Beckett III
Ms. Deborah A. Carroll
Ms. Mary LaChance
Mr. Jacob McChesney
Mr. Kurt P. Cavanaugh
Mr. Whit C. Osgood
Ms. Lillian Tanski

- a. Pledge of Allegiance.

Led by Chairman Gullotta

- b. Moment of silence for COVID-19 victims and healthcare providers

Led by Chairman Gullotta

2. Special Business as contained in the Call.

- a. Action concerning Executive Order 7S - Suspension and Modification of Tax Deadlines and Collection Efforts.**

Mr. Johnson explained that there are two tax relief programs. The Council must select at least one option but can select both options. He clarified that the programs need to be enacted as they are set forth in the executive order.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

WHEREAS, effective March 10, 2020, Governor Lamont declared a State of Emergency in Connecticut in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the State of Emergency, the Governor has issued a series of Executive Orders; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 7S – Suspension and Modification of Tax Deadlines and Collection Efforts establishes a Deferment Program and Low Interest Rate Program; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 7S requires municipalities to participate in one of the two tax relief programs by vote of the legislative body of the municipality with formal notice of such action to be provided to the Secretary of the Office of Policy Management no later than April 25, 2020.

Mr. Niland stated that he supports both options. They owe it to taxpayers to do as much as they can during this time. Ms. Tanski agreed, stating that Glastonbury is in a strong financial position because of its responsible leadership, as well as their residents paying their taxes reliably. Dr. Beckett asked about deferment from April 1. Mr. Johnson explained that the deferment is only for current taxes that are due and payable for July 1. The low interest is for delinquent taxes, going back 15 years, that are paid between April 1 and July 1. Chairman Gullotta asked how many people are delinquent. Mr. Johnson replied, the gross delinquency that goes back 15 years totals about \$2.7 million.

Mr. Osgood stated that the lower interest rate from April to July 1 is benefitting only those who did not pay their taxes. He is in favor of deferment without application, but he has a problem with deferring taxes for those who didn't pay their taxes. Both Mr. Niland and Mr. McChesney agreed with Mr. Osgood about granting the deferment without application. Mr. McChesney inquired about escrow taxes. Mr. Johnson explained that escrow taxes are excluded from the program. Mr. Osgood suggested voting on the deferment and then holding a separate vote on the interest rate.

Ms. Carroll continued reading the motion.

*BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council hereby enacts the following Tax Relief Program(s) in accordance with paragraph 6 of Executive Order 7S and directs the Town Manager to advise the Secretary of the Office of Policy Management no later than April 25, 2020 of such Council action **and all of this would apply to taxpayers without application.***

Option 1: Tax Deferment Program effective for taxes due and payable July 1, 2020 for all taxpayers.

Disc: None

Result: Motion passed unanimously {9-0-0}.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

Option 3: Low Interest Rate Program for delinquent taxes for the period April 1 through July 1, 2020.

Disc: Dr. Beckett stated that there is no reason to change the interest rate, so he is not in favor of this motion.

Result: Motion failed {7-2-0}. Dr. Beckett, Ms. Tanski, Ms. LaChance, Mr. Cavanaugh, Mr. McChesney, Mr. Osgood, and Mr. Gullotta voted against the motion.

b. Action on letter to State Legislators and Secretary of State recommending mail-in ballot for Presidential Primary and November 2020 Election.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council hereby supports a formal letter of recommendation to the Secretary of State and State Senator and Representatives that a mail-in ballot format be implemented for the 2020 Presidential Primary and November 2020 General Election.

Disc: Mr. Osgood and Dr. Beckett suggested tabling the reading of the letters to next week's meeting.

Motion by: Dr. Beckett

Seconded by: Mr. Osgood

MOVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council hereby table the reading of letters received from the public to the Town Council meeting of April 28, 2020.

Result: Motion failed {4-5-0}, with Mr. McChesney, Mr. Gullotta, Ms. LaChance, Ms. Carroll, and Mr. Niland voting against.

Council members Carroll and Niland took turns reading emails received from the public.

Disc: Mr. Niland clarified that this is simply a recommendation to the State to expand the definition of who is allowed to participate in absentee voting. Mr. Osgood agreed that any registered voter in Glastonbury should be able to mail in an absentee ballot. He is in favor of changing the absentee ballot requirements for mail-in voters. However, he moved to table this recommendation to their next meeting because more members of the public should have been able to participate. Ms. Tanski agreed, stating that there was confusion from residents on whether there was or was not a public comment opportunity today. She would also like to hear from the registrars. The correct place for this to be concerned is on the state level, so she encouraged all residents to contact their state legislators, the state secretary, and the governor.

Mr. Cavanaugh stated that they need to do some clarification on whether or not they going to have a public comment session. He also remarked that he does not know enough about mail-in

balloting to send a letter to state officials. It also appears that the Council would be asking the state for a mandate. He concluded that they need an opportunity for more public input and how this would work, how it would be implemented, and how much it would cost. Dr. Beckett summarized the concern as the following: how do we run elections with social distancing measures in place?

Mr. McChesney stated that he is on board with mail-in balloting, though he agrees that it is a constitutional issue. He noted that they will discuss it next week, but time is of the essence. In the interim, he stated that he would like to know the feasibility of doing this: whether it is a mail-in ballot system or an absentee ballot system. What sorts of systems could they have as alternatives to in-person voting? Ms. LaChance commented that this is about planning and risk mitigation. Chairman Gullotta clarified that this is a letter. The Council is not in control of absentee ballots. They are not in control of setting up a universal system for Glastonbury or the state. He looks at this as a public health issue, and he urged the public to let them know whether their elected officials should be addressing it and how.

Motion by: Dr. Beckett

Seconded by: Ms. Carroll

MOVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council hereby table the action until their regular meeting of April 28, 2020.

Result: Motion passed unanimously {9-0-0}.

Result of original motion: Failed {9-0-0}. Council unanimously voted to table the motion to the next meeting.

- c. Action to reschedule public hearing concerning Building Zone Regulations – Building Heights from April 28th to May 12th.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council hereby reschedules the public hearing set for 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 28, 2020 concerning proposed amendments to the Building Zone Regulations - Building to 8:00 p.m. to the Regular Council Meeting on Tuesday, May 12, 2020 in the Council Chambers of Town Hall, 2155 Main Street, as described in a report by the Town Manager dated April 17, 2020.

Result: Motion passed unanimously {9-0-0}.

- d. Discussion concerning public comment process and protocols – remote meeting format (possible referral to the Rules of Procedure Subcommittee).

The Council discussed and decided for the near-term meetings use of written format per the Town website. **By consensus, public comment will be by written format for the April 28, 2020 Regular Council Meeting. Also by consensus, refer to the Council Rules of Procedure Subcommittee for future update.**

Chairman Gullotta noted that, once the Council returns to Chambers, the subcommittee should revise their rules of behavior on obscenities or slanderous language used towards a public official. Mr. Johnson noted that the Town homepage has a process set up where members of the public can submit a comment through a fill-in form. He suggested using that process for the Council's next remote meeting. Mr. Niland suggested clicking in attendees so that they can speak for a little while and then click out. Ms. Tanski stated that, tonight, they did not get a full name and email on every comment that was made by a member of the public. She finds the option of collecting all of the comments in one place and then distributing it for all to be read a sensible solution.

Dr. Beckett remarked that he favors Mr. Johnson's idea because it is simpler than what Mr. Niland proposed. Ms. LaChance liked the idea of having a uniform way for people to make comments, but there should be some sort of summary. Mr. Niland stated that a hybrid approach would be fine, too, stressing that anything that gets them as close to normal as possible is their best option. Ms. Carroll and Mr. McChesney agreed with Dr. Beckett's suggestion of erring on the more cautious side for their next meeting. Mr. Osgood stated that they should also allow people to continue to send letters to the Council, and instead of reading them, they should be summarized.

The Council came to a unanimous consensus on a written format approach. All comments will be at or under 50 words, to be submitted via the Town website, though email and call-in would also be accepted, if the former option is not possible. Mr. Niland noted that, typically, the allowable count on a fill-in form is not by words, but by characters, so they may have a bit of difficulty enforcing the 50-word limit. He also suggested adding one more field with a dropdown that indicates whether it is a communication or a public comment. The Council also agreed that if the public can read the comments, then Council can simply paraphrase them during their meetings. Mr. Johnson stated that he will look into making the comments available so that people could read them in advance of the meeting. The Council agreed to accept comments submitted before 2:00 pm on Monday, or the day before their scheduled meeting.

e. Town Manager's Report.

Mr. Johnson reviewed two items, noting that he will present a full report at next Tuesday's meeting. He presented graphical information on positive COVID-19 test results in Glastonbury, noting that, as of recent reporting, there have been a little over 130 cases and 11 deaths. Food

bank donations have totaled over \$24,000. Mr. Niland inquired about the ongoing negotiations concerning Cotton Hollow. Mr. Johnson explained that they are continuing discussions with the property owners. Provided they are able to complete discussions by next Monday, they would have a formal agreement for Council's initial action by next Tuesday night.

f. Executive Session – potential land acquisition.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council hereby enters into executive session to discuss a potential land acquisition at 9:35 pm.

Result: Motion passes unanimously {9-0-0}.

Present for the Executive Session item were council members, Mr. Tom Gullotta, Chairman, Mr. Lawrence Niland, Vice Chairman, Dr. Chip Beckett, Ms. Deb Carroll, Ms. Mary LaChance, Mr. Jake McChesney, Mr. Kurt Cavanaugh, Ms. Lillian Tanski, and Mr. Whit Osgood, with Town Manager, Richard J. Johnson.

No votes were taken during the Executive Session.

Motion By: Ms. Carroll

Seconded By: Dr. Beckett

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council hereby exits executive session at 10:10 pm.

Result: Motion passes unanimously {9-0-0}.

3. Adjournment.

Motion By: Ms. Carroll

Seconded By: Dr. Beckett

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council hereby adjourns their special meeting of April 21, 2020, at 10:11 pm.

Result: Motion passes unanimously {9-0-0}.

Lilly Torosyan

**Lilly Torosyan
Recording Clerk**

**Thomas Gullotta
Chairman**