



City of Concord

City Council

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Thursday, May 27, 2021

7:00 PM

Zoom Meeting Link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8296563798>

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Telephone Dial: US + 1 929 205 6099

Landline: 877 853 5257

Webinar ID#:829 6563 7988

COVID-19 - Public Meeting Procedures Notice

Due to the COVID-19/Corona Virus crisis, and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, City Council is authorized to meet electronically. The City of Concord will be utilizing the Zoom platform for this electronic meeting.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04.

*All members of City Council have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through the Zoom platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting by following the link below, or dialing the number below and entering the ID number at the prompt. For those who want to provide public testimony in the Public Hearing portion of the meeting, and you are connected to the Zoom website, you may click on the Raise Hand icon in the Attendees Section of Zoom to make the request. When the time is appropriate, you will be recognized so you can provide your testimony. For those calling in who want to provide public testimony, dial *9 to alert the host that you wish to speak. The host will unmute you at the appropriate time during the public hearing portion of the meeting. All participants please keep your phones and computers on mute unless speaking.*

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Members of the public can also email questions or other public testimony to citycouncilmeeting@concordnh.gov.

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City Council Meeting began following the Finance Committee Meeting that began at 5:30 P.M.

1. Mayor Bouley called the meeting to order at 7:41 P.M.
2. Roll Call.

Action: In accordance with the Right-to-Know Law, Councilors Grady Sexton, Kretovic, and Werner indicated they were at home with family; all other committee members indicated they were alone.

Present: 14 - Councilor Candace Bouchard, Mayor Jim Bouley, Councilor Byron Champlin, Councilor Nathan Fennessy, Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton, Councilor Fred Keach, Councilor Linda Kenison, Councilor Jennifer Kretovic, Councilor Gail Matson, Councilor Keith Nyhan, Councilor Erle Pierce, Councilor Zandra Rice Hawkins, Councilor Brent Todd, and Councilor Robert Werner

3. Discussion of masks relative to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mayor Bouley indicated that the City Council was meeting to determine whether or not to extend the City's mask mandate, which expired on June 1, 2021.

Councilor Kenison indicated that much of the e-mail testimony she received pertaining to the matter was from people that were not Concord residents. She noted that most of the testimony she received was in favor of extending the mandate.

Councilor Champlin expressed his support for extending the mandate. He indicated that he had spoken to many merchants who were also in support of extending the mandate. He referred to the survey the Chamber of Commerce conducted of its

members, of which 200 responses were received, and the results were 50% in favor of letting the mandate lapse, and 50% in favor of extending it.

Councilor Champlin indicated that he had spoken about the matter with a representative from the NH Medical Society (NHMS). The NHMS recommends that the following three criteria be met in order to reduce vulnerability: 1) The vaccination rate in a particular area should be 70%. The vaccination rate in Merrimack County currently is 51%; and the rate in Concord is 64%; slightly below the 70% recommendation. 2) Community transmission rates should be 50 or less new cases in a 14-day period. The City of Concord is currently at 60; slightly over the recommendation; and 3) The PCR positivity rate should be below 5%. Concord is currently in good shape at 1.1%. Councilor Champlin noted that the NHMS expressed some concern that Memorial Day weekend social activities could lead to an increased number of cases and recommended that the City's mask mandate be extended for another month.

Councilor Bouchard expressed concern about children who are not currently eligible to be vaccinated, and asked how the City would be addressing the matter at its summer camps and recreational centers. She suggested that the City let the mask mandate expire, with a hybrid for children.

Councilor Werner expressed his support for extending the mandate for another month, and noted that he felt that it didn't pose a significant hardship for people to wear masks for a little while longer.

Councilor Rice Hawkins expressed her concern that children under the age of 12 were not able to be vaccinated and she felt that additional thought was needed for people who were immunocompromised. She supported extending the mandate and re-visiting the matter in July.

Councilor Grady Sexton indicated that she originally supported the mask mandate, as it was a cry from merchants for the City Council to provide leadership. But noted that the message seemed to be changing. She encouraged people who haven't been vaccinated to do so and supported merchants doing their own thing. She supported letting the mandate lapse.

Councilor Pierce confirmed his agreement with Councilor Grady Sexton. He felt that there was a lot of confusion out there with the State ending the mandate. He was in favor of letting the mandate lapse.

Councilor Fennessy suggested the City follow the science. He noted that the CDC had said it's safe to stop wearing a mask if vaccinated, and that people could still choose to wear a mask, whether or not they'd been vaccinated. He wanted to encourage people to get vaccinated if they haven't yet done so. He was in favor of letting the merchants make their own decisions. He supported letting the mask mandate lapse.

Councilor Matson indicated that she was leaning towards letting the mandate lapse. She encouraged people getting vaccinated.

Councilor Kretovic expressed her support for letting the mandate lapse. She noted that even if the City Council were to extend it, there was really no way to enforce it. She felt like it should be a personal choice. She suggested the Council keep an eye on the transmission rate, and if it increased, consider re-enacting the mandate at that time.

Councilor Bouchard asked City Manager Aspell to weigh in on how the City would be handling its summer camps and children's programs if the mask mandate is lifted. City Manager Aspell indicated that COVID precautions (masks, social distancing, health screening, frequent cleaning, etc.) would continue at the camps and recreation centers. He indicated that if City Council decided to let the mask mandate expire, Parks & Recreation Director David Gill had a letter prepared to send to all participants and users, which explained the continued COVID precautions that will be in place.

City Manager Aspell asked the City Council members if they were in support of holding the July 4th celebration, which the Parks & Recreation Department was planning to have this year. Councilor Bouchard suggested it would be hard to social distance at the celebration.

Councilor Nyhan expressed his support for ending the mask ordinance and encouraged the City to have the July 4th celebration.

Councilor Champlin pointed out that masks prevented transmission and hoped the Councilors kept that in mind when voting. He indicated that outside transmission was low and, therefore, supported having the July 4th celebration.

Councilor Kenison asked City Manager Aspell if he had a sense of how City

employees felt about wearing masks. City Manager Aspell indicated that the staff who deal with customers on a regular basis had plexiglass barriers and that employees could choose to wear masks if they wanted to. He also noted that staff have been advised to wear a mask if a customer asks them to because they feel uncomfortable.

Action: Councilor Rice Hawkins made a motion to extend the mask mandate until July 15, 2021. Councilor Champlin seconded the motion.

Mayor Bouley indicated that he had been talking to many people in the community, peers, friends, colleagues, merchants, workers, etc. and asking for their feedback about the matter. He noted that the mask mandate was originally put in place to help retailers protect its workers. He noted that the majority of workers he spoke with wanted the mandate to end. He spoke to the confusion that is out there in the community because the CDC says one thing, the State says one thing, and the City says something else. He also noted that even if the mandate was lifted, establishments could still require them. He said he had spoken with State officials and, based on those conversations, believed the Governor's executive orders pertaining to public meetings would be lifted soon as well. He indicated that he felt it was time to end the mask mandate, but that Council would be prepared to respond quickly and re-enact the mandate if the number of cases went up.

Councilor Rice Hawkins noted that the majority of the workers she spoke with wanted to see the mandate extended.

Councilor Grady Sexton suggested the City Administration conduct social media outreach to encourage people to get vaccinated. City Manager Aspell indicated that would continue to occur and noted that Concord Fire Department staff have administered 100,000 COVID vaccines since the pandemic began.

Yes: 4 - Councilor Champlin, Councilor Kenison, Councilor Rice Hawkins, and Councilor Werner

No: 10 - Councilor Bouchard, Mayor Bouley, Councilor Fennessy, Councilor Grady Sexton, Councilor Keach, Councilor Kretovic, Councilor Matson, Councilor Nyhan, Councilor Pierce, and Councilor Todd

Action: Councilor Fennessy made a motion to adopt a resolution encouraging people to get vaccinated, and to wear a mask if not vaccinated. Councilor Champlin seconded the motion.

There was considerable discussion – with everyone supporting the sentiment, but with many feeling that a motion was unnecessary; that Council members have already decided on the message they want to get out; and that City Administration has agreed to and will assist in doing so.

Councilor Rice Hawkins said she felt that a motion was unnecessary and that she felt confident that City staff would get the Council’s message out to the community.

Councilor Kenison indicated that she supported the sentiment, but didn’t support the motion, as she felt it was unnecessary.

Councilor Grady Sexton indicated that she supported the concept, but felt it would be difficult to vote on a resolution without wording.

Mayor Bouley said he looked at it as just a motion – not that an official resolution would be written.

Councilor Fennessy clarified that his motion was simply to have the City Council use its platform to encourage people to get vaccinated; not to write a resolution.

Councilor Todd indicated that, without a motion, he thought the Council had already agreed to this. He felt the message was already out there. He also expressed his opinion that those people who are not yet vaccinated, are probably not inclined to do so. He felt that vaccination was a personal choice.

Mayor Bouley suggested utilizing the City’s Public Information Officer to get the message out. City Manager Aspell concurred.

Yes: 7 - Councilor Bouchard, Mayor Bouley, Councilor Champlin, Councilor Fennessy, Councilor Pierce, Councilor Rice Hawkins, and Councilor Todd

No: 7 - Councilor Grady Sexton, Councilor Keach, Councilor Kenison, Councilor Kretovic, Councilor Matson, Councilor Nyhan, and Councilor Werner

New Business

Adjournment

Action: A motion to adjourn was made and duly seconded with no dissenting votes.

Yes: 14 - Councilor Bouchard, Mayor Bouley, Councilor Champlin, Councilor Fennessy, Councilor Grady Sexton, Councilor Keach, Councilor Kenison, Councilor Kretovic, Councilor Matson, Councilor Nyhan, Councilor Pierce, Councilor Rice Hawkins, Councilor Todd, and Councilor Werner

A true copy: I attest:

Suzanne Stevens

Executive Assistant