

Town of Jamaica Selectboard

Minutes of Special Meeting ~ August 6, 2020

Board Present: Greg Meulemans, Paul Fraser, Andrew Coyne, Thomas Tolbert and Jessica Pollack.

Meeting called to order at 7:20 PM by Chair Greg Meulemans.

No items were added to the agenda.

Chair Greg Meulemans opened the meeting with a description of recent events that lead to the decision to call a Special Meeting. The Chair explained that several members of the community had expressed deep concern and fear as a result of racist graffiti painted on Route 30 in Jamaica Village and East Jamaica, as well as some neighboring towns. The Sherriff was in attendance and spoke about the status of the investigation, support from the State Police in the investigation, and he shared some possible changes to supplement his organizations' ability to aid in prevention and prosecution.

The Chair asked that each of the members of the public who were in attendance and who were interested in sharing their thoughts and experiences with members of the Selectboard to do so. Each of the individuals who shared their concerns were in agreement that the graffiti was offensive, upsetting and was also sadly affecting children in the community. A number of responses were suggested including being in contact with neighboring towns, providing information in the Jamaica Journal, and potentially some form of surveillance.

The board discussed two actionable options for formal resolution: (i) the publication of a statement of the Selectboard condemning the racist graffiti, and (ii) placing the large banner created by the State of Vermont and utilized by various towns from time to time with the statement "Hate Does Not Grow Well in the Rocky Soil of Vermont" in a central location in the Village for a period of time. Jessica Pollack read a draft statement for publication.

Following this discussion, including some revisions to the proposed statement, Tom Tolbert motioned to publish the following statement on the Town of Jamaica website:

"The Town of Jamaica condemns in the strongest terms any effort to spread targeted messages of hate, that are designed to induce fear in any member of our community. Hateful speech aimed at any member of our community will not be tolerated. Happily, Jamaica is a diverse and vibrant community. We support all of the members of our community who engage in peaceful demonstration and constructive dialog."

Tom further motioned for the Selectboard to investigate obtaining the banner for a period of time and to select a proposed location for the banner.

Greg Mehlemans seconded the motion. All in favor.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:35 PM

Respectfully submitted:

Jessica Pollack, Selectboard Member