

**Norwell Board of Selectmen  
Meeting Minutes  
March 2, 2016**

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Mr. McBride opened the meeting at 7:30pm, and introduced Ellen Allen, Jason Brown, Alison Demong, Peter Smellie and Town Administrator Peter Morin.

*MOTION: Ms. Allen moved the agenda as written, noting that some agenda items will be discussed out of order. Seconded by Peter Smellie and unanimously voted.*

**REPORTS**

**Citizen Comments** - None

**Selectmen's Report**

Ms. Demong gave a recap of the tick awareness education program at the Middle School gym this past Monday, which was attended by Health Agents from other towns and over 150 people.

Ms. Allen reminded all that papers to run for elected positions in the Town must be filed by 3/22/16. Applications can be obtained in the Town Clerk's office.

Town election will be held on same day as state senate special election; Tuesday, 5/10/16.

**Town Administrator's Report**

None

**Welcome new Library Director – Judy McConarty**

Mr. Morin welcomed the new Library Director Judy McConarty. The Town is lucky to have such a well-qualified person to fill this position, and the BOS welcomed her and wished her the best in her new job. Ms. McConarty thanked the board and told all that she is delighted to be here and is looking forward to meeting everyone and initiating new programs and library outreach.

**7:35 Economic Development Committee**

Rick Merritt, Michael Tobin - EDC members present

Mr. Merritt gave a summary of the Town's zoning history. The committee worked with Mr. Morin to do a business survey, which did not get many responses. It was therefore difficult to really see a pattern. The Green Communities Compact created the opportunity for a grant to fund an economic development consultant, so the EDC is waiting to see how the consultant would fit in and answer questions from the BOS.

Mr. McBride asked how the EDC sees the role of the consultant, and opined that hiring one might lend credibility to a board's proposals. The need is for someone who has experience expanding a town's business base thru economic development. The committee needs some guidance about where the BOS wants to go and how to move forward. Both Ms. Allen and Mr. Morin are confident that the Town will be able to re-purpose the grant money to hire a consultant, and are hopeful that the granting agency can recommend one. The BOS and Town Administration need better communication with residents so that they understand why this development plan is needed. Discussion ensued about placeholder Articles for the most recent zoning plan being placed on this year's Warrant. The consensus was that it may be premature, and it would be more effective to "go the extra mile" to communicate with residents about this topic. The BOS needs to be very proactive and cognizant of all the facts so that all have confidence in whatever proposal is put before the Town. It is critical to at least get residents

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interested in the process, which has been extremely difficult in the past, per Mr. Merritt. The board discussed Real Estate taxes and occupancy effect, the redevelopment of Queen Anne's corner and its problem of trying to re-zone with no plan in place. Per Ms. Allen, there are two choices; cut staff (Schools), or override (which would not be popular!), both of which demonstrate the need to move forward with zoning! The consultant would give an 'objective opinion' about moving forward with a plan, per Mr. Brown.

The idea of dedicating a special Town meeting to address this topic was discussed, which could buy at least 6 months to get the consultant and a plan in place. The Town needs more effective use of its business property. The proposed special Town Meeting might a good idea, because economic development would be the only topic.

Mr. Campbell, PB member, would like to hire the Urban Land Institute's local council, which has a program for problems just like this for a nominal amount of money (\$6K). The group would provide local expertise to do all day or a couple of days' analysis, with recommendations for solutions. He knows of other towns which have used the group with great success. The goal would be to define a bounded area and assign the task to this group.

Mr. Morin will contact the granting agency to indicate the preferred use of the grant money. Mr. Campbell thinks the Planning Board would be happy to be part of this process, but it is not clear to them what sort of new zoning would prime the pump. The Town needs to have major property owners like Federal at the table giving input.

RE: the survey – Ms. Allen would be happy to start calling these companies to get feedback, working from the largest companies on down. Mr. Campbell gave literature on the Urban Land Institute to Mr. Brown. The EDC already did outreach to the Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Campbell stated the need to ask different questions, and not necessarily of the current resident businesses. Per Ms. Allen the need is to address SWOT opportunities (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). Mr. McBride stated the need to have other people engaged in this problem/solution. Mr. Brown is in favor of objective outside analysis which could be presented by the "3<sup>rd</sup> party", i.e. the consultant. Mr. Morin will check to see if the compact money can be used for the survey. All like the idea of a Special Town Meeting. Mr. McBride asked for comments from the audience; there were none.

#### **8:05 Ziad/EPG – Main Street and Sidewalk Discussion**

Present - Linda Murphy, Highway department. Mr. McBride asked for a brief summary from Mr. Kary, who gave a summary of the project plan with adjusted numbers which are still close to \$1.397, with a slight increase to \$1.4 million for all inclusive items to do the sidewalk. The price of the granite curb (\$406K) was reason for the increase. All discussed components and cost of the sidewalk, which would cost an additional \$900K for all components, in addition to the curbing. This includes a 15% contingency.

Different options and prices were discussed at length, including a granite curb with no sidewalk at this time, concrete curbing, Cape Cod berms, use of the Chapter 90 money (which is all earmarked for other priority projects, per Ms. Murphy). The board concluded that there is currently no way to find the \$400K needed for the granite curbing.

The board discussed borrowing to do this project, with the reminder to all that using funds earmarked for operating expenses is not a prudent use of the Town's money. Borrowing at this time would adversely affect the Town's excellent bond rating and debt ratio. A future borrowing would be possible after some of the current debt is retired. It is regrettable that CPC funding could not be used for this project, but taking money earmarked for MUCH needed road repair is really not an option. This board is about managing the expenses of the Town, and would be averse to purchasing something that is wanted vs. something that is a real need.

Residents attending the meeting spoke in support of this project, asking several times that the board "find the money", citing the safety of pedestrians on Main St. and access to Town Center as reasons for the support.

Peter Bloomfield, Town resident, stated that the Town should be able to vote for this issue again, knowing it will need alternate funding. Ms. Demong added that some towns fund their

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sidewalks with "Betterment Funds", where residents on the street pay for the sidewalk on the street. Mr. Morin stated that this would be a hefty assessment for the people on Main Street, as this cost is usually restricted to the direct beneficiaries. Mr. McBride stated that it would be a tough sell for a relatively small group of residents. Mr. Morin added that while he can appreciate the popularity of the project, the operations side of Town government is getting hammered by department heads for cutting the budgets in order to make them work with the revenue that the Town has. The question is the money itself. There is just not a lot of money to spend. "The pool is narrower than you think". Mr. McBride added that it is not a matter of finding money. Per Mr. Morin, if debt were being retired this year maybe this would be feasible, but it is not. If the Town spends its reserves, it causes bond agencies to look twice at the Town's rating, which can have serious consequences. Per Mr. Brown, the original conversation was that the paving would be done just under the levy. Mr. Morin would like to find the narrowest cost of the project with the least opportunity cost. Mr. McBride reminded all that people voted for this board to make these decisions, but the need is to be fiscally responsible to do this job. ALL board members are Fully cognizant that this project has a lot of support, but there is also a large group that is against this project. Mr. Kary will calculate the cost of the different options and this will be revisited. He gave updates for drainage plans and the sidewalk portion that is included. The road bed will be as narrow as possible to slow people down.

**Appointment of Interim Highway Surveyor/Director**

Linda Murphy, Highway Department Administrator, would like to offer assistance, stating that Mr. Morin has enough to do, but would still be able to help out. She has 30 years of experience, and this appointment will provide someone in an official capacity. The board thanked her for volunteering her services to the department.

*Motion; made by Ms. Allen, seconded by Mr. Smellie, to appoint Linda Murphy as Interim Highway Surveyor until such time as one is elected or appointed. Unanimously voted*

**Warrant Articles discussion**

Mr. Morin gave an overview of the proposed Articles for the Town Warrant for the Special and Annual Town Meetings.

(Note: see list of proposed Articles on file in the BOS office)

*Motion; made by Ms. Allen, seconded by Mr. Smellie, to close the Warrants for the 2016 Special and Annual Town Meetings. Unanimously voted*

The board discussed the timing of AB meetings in order to be done before the Warrant goes to the printer. The AB will need weekend sessions. Mr. Morin will get the print date for the Warrant out to all, and stated that the AB is moving well through the budgets. Most of them will be done by 3/15/16.

Subjects for future BOS meetings were discussed. All would like to invite the Recreation Commission to a meeting, perhaps 3/9 or 3/16. Billboards, Main St. were brought up as other agenda items.

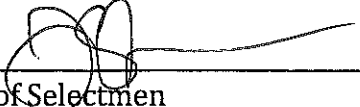
**Adjournment**

*Motion; made by Ms. Allen, seconded by Mr. Smellie, to adjourn at 9:40. Unanimously voted*

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