

**Norwell Board of Selectmen
Open Meeting Minutes
10/3/18**

TOWN OF NORWELL
TOWN CLERK
2018 OCT 25 AM 11:01

Present: Ellen Allen, Jason Brown, Gregg McBride, Alison Demong, Joe Rull, Peter Morin

Open session; 7:00pm, Selectmen's Office Conference Room

The meeting was called to order by Chair Ellen Allen at 7:05pm.

Approval of minutes

Motion; made by Gregg McBride, seconded by Alison Demong, to approve the 8/8/18 Executive meeting minutes. Unanimously voted

Motion; made by Gregg McBride, seconded by Alison Demong, to approve the 8/8/18, 8/25/18, 9/5/18 and 9/12/18 Open meeting minutes. Unanimously voted

Review BOS Policies and Procedures

Ms. Allen reviewed these policies with the board, noting the specific wording about each Selectman's role as a BOS team member. The board made suggestions and discussed ideas to work more effectively as a team while noting frustrations with the rules of government bureaucracy. Ms. Allen asked for suggestions to update these policies. Mr. McBride further explained the civil discourse policy created by the Town several years ago. The board discussed meeting policies and board representation while serving on the BOS. Ms. Allen noted the importance of keeping the Town Administrator in the communications loop.

In response to board members' questions, Mr. Rull recapped the phone meeting with Mass DOT, listing meeting participants and noting that Rep. DeCoste was a participant. The Mass DOT representative in the phone meeting confirmed that any action to rescind the truck ban on Bridge Street would have to "reverse" the steps of the approval process. All agreed that it will be beneficial for the Highway Surveyor to have a new contact within Mass DOT. The request and implementation procedures required to provide a barrier wall for the residential abutters of the Route 3 widening project were discussed.

The board discussed the Zollin property on Mt. Hope Street, which will be coming out of Chapter 61. It would cost the Town about \$200K to purchase the land, which may have recreational value. The Conservation Commission invited the BOS to attend both its Executive Session (at 6:30pm) and the Open Meeting following on 10/16/18. The BOS will be posted to attend both sessions.

The board discussed the Racewire half marathon application. Mr. Morin explained that the application was not filed in a timely manner by the company that purchased Racewire, therefore the Police Chief and Deputy Police Chief are reluctant to allow the race to occur on their proposed date. The decision is pending and will be discussed at next week's BOS meeting.

Future Meeting Agendas

Next Week: 10/10/18

Executive Session

1. Contracts and potential litigation
2. Potential litigation issues

Open Session

1. Racewire half marathon request discussion
2. Sign Bylaw review and discussion

10/17 – apply for community compact grants, come up with ideas

Next few weeks – schedule Electronic Voting Committee

Open Session, Continued in Osborn Room at 7:35pm

Ms. Allen opened the meeting, noting that it will be televised and recorded.
All rose to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion; made by Gregg McBride, seconded by Alison Demong, to approve the agenda as written. Unanimously voted

Selectmen's Reports and Announcements

Ms. Demong reported that she, Mr. Morin and Ms. Allen met earlier this week with Fire Chief Reardon and Capt. Simpson about the Municipal Vulnerability Program (MVP). The hope is to move the planning process along in time to apply for grants.

Ms. Demong reported that the Pathways Committee met with the North and South River Watershed Association to consider a connector path behind the High School to the Hanover Mall location. The hope is that the Mall developers might underwrite a portion or all of this project, but conversations are just beginning.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Morin announced that the Town has contracted with Green Pages to do an assessment of the town's IT structure and equipment and make recommendations for more efficient operations. This project is being done within the current IT budget and will be starting shortly.

Jacobs Farm House – National Historic Register application

Wendy Bawabe updated the board on the status of this application process which began several years ago. The farmhouse is already on the state historic register because of the preservation restriction, which occurred when the process for national registration had already begun. The Norwell Historical Commission has hired PAL in RI to complete the application process. The NHC got the Mass Historical Commission (MHC) involved, and they have requested a BOS letter of support for this application. Ms. Bawabe added that the application review by the MHC will be a lengthy process. Mr. Brown asked if this registration would be of benefit to the Town; per Ms. Bawabe – not really. Ms. Allen directed the board's attention to the letter draft in the packet.

Motion; made by Gregg McBride, seconded by Alison Demong, to authorize the BOS Chair to sign a letter of support to add the Joshua Jacobs farmstead to the National Registry of Historic Places. Unanimously voted

Ms. Bawabe asked that the letter be addressed to the MHC, who will edit the application. Once the edits are completed, Ms. Bawabe will come back to the BOS for an update.

Barbara Childs, Human Resources – Discrimination Policies Overview

Ms. Childs summarized reasons to update the existing sexual harassment policy to include all 13 protected classes, becoming a full Discrimination Policy. These draft policy updates were reviewed by a respected consultant who also shared other towns' policy templates with Ms. Childs. The board discussed some edits to the policy drafts.

Ms. Childs reported that discrimination policy training was completed for the Police and Fire Department; training for other Department heads will take place later this month. Mr. Morin added that there will be additional training sessions as well as updated information on the Town website. Questions were asked and answered by the board and Ms. Childs.

Motion; made by Gregg McBride, seconded by Alison Demong, to approve the updated discriminatory harassment policies as provided with one edit; when specific names are referenced add the phrase "or their successors". Unanimously voted

State Auditor Discussion

Ms. Allen invited Mr. Rull to recap his reasons for including this discussion topic on the meeting agenda. Mr. Rull noted that the Town's finances appear to be in order, but he would like to have

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the State Auditor audit the finances. He is not suggesting that the BOS write a scope at this time, but rather to invite them here to learn about their services. When questioned about the purpose, Mr. Rull said he would like to find best practices and ways to save money. He used the recent audit of the State Police as an example. Mr. Brown stated that, as an AB member of many years in addition to his BOS terms of office, there are always places to improve efficiency. However, he would have a hard time identifying any areas of waste. The Town chooses to have high quality services. He also reviewed the Town's annual independent audit procedures, which includes the rotation of audit personnel. He reminded all that the Town has a AAA bond rating. In Mr. Brown's opinion, the Town operates well, and he wouldn't look to the state to identify areas of waste. All reminded Mr. Rull that the Town's high taxes are the result of voters' choices both for the high level of services and no zoning changes that could fuel economic growth, which is an opportunity cost. If residents paid less tax, there would be fewer services. An expanded commercial tax base would provide opportunities to lessen the residential tax burden.

Ms. Demong added that the Town has qualified for the state's Comprehensive Annual Financial Review (CAFR) award and status two years in a row. As such, Norwell is one of only ~30 towns in the Commonwealth to do this review. Per Mr. McBride, this is an old conversation. Every new BOS member has had the same goals to reduce taxes without loss of services. Mr. Rull noted that some residents are suggesting a review of the finances. Other board members don't see a reason for such a review. Mr. Morin added that the state auditor retained the accounting firm of Ernst and Young to do a comprehensive audit of the state police payroll system and records. He added that Gov. Baker's administration set up the Office of Outside Audit for the state police investigation, which involved fraud occurring in paychecks. Ms. Allen explained the difference between an audit and a cost containment study. The state auditors are just that-auditors, not cost efficiency consultants. They also charge for their services. The Town has used consultants before to do these types of studies. If such a project were to be considered, it would be beneficial to look at other sources for a review. Ms. Allen added that she would encourage Mr. Rull to remind constituents that the schools are 2/3 of the Town's total budget. Any proposed process utilizing the State Auditor would have to be approved by the BOS, School Committee, Advisory Board and Town Meeting.

Both Mr. Morin and Ms. Allen have discussed offering a 'Budgeting 101' class for AB members and residents. Ms. Allen talked about ClearGov, a financial software program available to all on the Town website, which analyzes financial data for Norwell and comparable towns. For example, Norwell gets less state aid than neighboring towns. Mr. Rull could encourage his constituents to come to AB and BOS meetings, in addition to meeting with Mr. Morin to discuss any financial questions or concerns. Ms. Allen doesn't see the value in asking the state auditor for a quote at this time, adding that the cost is dependent on the scope.

Mr. McBride clarified that the Town reviews its finances from multiple angles. Residents are making contradictory choices with regard to their taxes by investing a lot of money in its schools, but voting not to expand its economic base. Mr. Rull would like to act on pushing this information out to residents. Mr. Brown reminded all that this is a town run by volunteers, not career bureaucrats. There is always room for improvement, but if there were a specific area of Town operations to audit the state auditor would not be the first choice.

Mr. Morin thanked Mr. Rull for bringing up this topic, adding that the Town's finances and budget process are a point of strength for the community and pride for him. He would welcome hearing about the services of the state auditor, who is a wonderful public servant. Mr. Morin suggested that the Dept. of Revenue's Division of Local Services (DLS) would be a better choice. He would be happy to talk about the budget on an individual or group basis. The Town ended each of the last 3 fiscal years with a \$2M+ surplus. Operational savings (not from the school side) have provided approximately half of that surplus. This surplus has provided the means to fund projects and capital purchases through Warrant Articles.

The Advisory Board (AB) financial review process is exhausting, but necessary. For example, the upcoming IT audit came from an AB recommendation. Mr. Morin would welcome talking to DLS. He added that the Town departments and committees do their jobs very well, in fact,

better than the state and federal government. The Town wouldn't be able to address its legion of road issues if the budget weren't in line. Mr. Morin suggested that the Board invite the State Auditor and DLS to explain what services they can provide to towns. He would like to invite the AB to the meeting as well.

Motion; made by Gregg McBride, seconded by Alison Demong, to invite the State Auditor and DLS to come to a meeting via letter from Mr. Morin. Vote was 3-2 in favor. Motion carried

Draft DOT letter re: Bridge St. Truck Ban

All reviewed Mr. Morin's draft letter to Mass DOT. A lengthy discussion ensued, with the board noting that traffic counts should be done before truck bans are addressed. Ellen Moshier and the Traffic Committee members have put together a scope of work.

Mr. Rull added that he is in favor of sending the letter. Mr. Brown is in favor of sending the letter, noting that the Bridge St. temporary ban was somehow made permanent. Mr. Rull asked about taking this letter into account at Mass DOT when Chapter 90 money is allocated. Mr. Morin replied that the Town's allocation won't be affected by this heavy truck use spending issue. He explained the inclusion (in the letter) of the Town's funds spent on River Street to add data to support the assertion of the dire situation on River Street. The board will discuss Community Compact grant ideas on the BOS agenda in two weeks, and maybe ask for money to work on this project. Ms. Allen read the draft letter to the meeting attendees. The board discussed how the final draft of this letter should read and the pros and cons of sending it to Mass DOT, voicing frustration over the lengthy process. Mr. Brown reminded all that, although slow, this is the correct method to effect change on a government level. Per Mr. Morin, we are stuck with this process because of the Open Meeting law. He elaborated on the strict procedure.

Questions were asked and answered about the truck ban signs (which will be reinstalled when they are received by the highway surveyor), the weight capacity for the culvert on River Street, the Town's bylaw prohibiting the use of jake brakes for the whole Town and traffic signage bylaws. Mr. McBride reported that the Traffic Committee will put together an Article for Town Meeting that addresses speed limits in the Town. Mr. Ferguson did an inventory of street signage in the Town. The board will follow up with Mr. Ferguson to get the data. All would like to continue the enforcement of the Town's current speed limits with the assistance of the State Police, and would like to have Chief Ross update the board on state police enforcement data for trucks. Mr. Morin will follow up with Mr. Ferguson about posting detours for Town residents.

Committee Vacancies

Ms. Allen reviewed the list of current open seats. This list will be posted on the BOS page of the town website tomorrow. She invited residents to apply to serve on one or more committees.

Adjournment

*Motion; made by Gregg McBride, seconded by Alison Demong, to adjourn at 8:57pm.
Unanimously voted*



Ellen Allen, Chair