

**Norwell Board of Selectmen
Open Meeting Minutes
1/15/20**

TOWN OF NORWELL
TOWN CLERK
2020 FEB 13 PM 3:50

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

RECEIVED

Open Session – 6:45pm

Motion: made by Jason Brown, seconded by Alison Demong, to approve the Open Meeting minutes for 12/4/19 and 12/11/19. Unanimously voted

Motion: made by Jason Brown, seconded by Alison Demong, to approve the Executive Meeting minutes for 12/18/19. Unanimously voted

Ms. Allen discussed the issue of allowing hunting on the Carleton property. The BOS has care and custody of this property, but they will ask Con Com for a recommendation on this topic. A ban on hunting does not require a Town Meeting vote; whoever has custody of the land can make the ruling. The board would like to postpone this decision until the May Town Meeting vote to transfer a large portion of this land into conservation. At that point, Con Com can make the decision to allow or ban hunting. The board discussed requesting the hunters not to hunt on this land for now. Ms. Allen will follow up with Nancy Hemingway to discuss next steps. Town Counsel informed Mr. Morin that the BOS could vote to ban or allow hunting on Town land, but the board would like to postpone the decision.

The board decided not to apply for the current round of annual MAPC grants but will apply next year.

The board discussed the 40R project and the draft MAPC bylaw for Accord Park. Ms. Allen informed the board that the edited bylaw draft for Accord Park will go back to the MAPC for a second review. Next week is the review of the draft 40R overlay district bylaw. The board discussed potential changes to the draft, but might postpone this bylaw for a year until there is a tangible project. They would like to assess the traffic issues further. MassDOT is going to do traffic study on the entire length of Route 53 in Norwell. The board discussed ideas to enhance this potential zoning change.

All Are Welcome Committee membership

Ms. Demong reported that Ass't. Principal Jen Greenberg requested a commendation letter from the board for student committee member Anulika Nnadi, who has served on this committee for two years. In addition, Ms. Greenberg asked the board to approve a seat for an alternate faculty member to serve on the committee, which will help when a quorum is required for votes.

Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Alison Demong, to expand the All Are Welcome committee to include an Alternate School Faculty member. Unanimously voted

Open session, cont'd., Osborn Room

The 7:30 Open Meeting session continued in the Osborn Room. Chair Ellen Allen noted that the meeting is televised and recorded. All rose to recite the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

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

Citizen Comments - None

BOS reports and Announcements - None

Town Administrator's Report - None

Personnel Board Appointment – Jane Stout

Ms. Stout has agreed to again serve on this 3 member board to fill a lengthy vacancy.

Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Bruce Graham, to appoint Jane Stout to a 3 year term, expiring 6/30/22. Unanimously voted

Complete Streets Committee (CSC) Update

Chair Peter Bloomfield was present to discuss updates from the committee.

1. Regretfully, the Town (again) did not receive a Complete Streets grant to continue the sidewalk project. The CSC applied for annual grants of \$400K and then \$200K but were turned down after being awarded \$200K two years ago. The grant programs have become too popular and are now much more competitive. The CSC is frustrated, because the Town has complied with the program's rules. The Town voted \$250K towards this project at the last Town Meeting, but with no matching grant this phase will be postponed for a year or two. If the Town had received the grant, the combined total of \$450K could construct the sidewalk all the way to Lincoln Street. Mr. Bloomfield discussed options considered by the committee before choosing to construct the full sidewalk as far as the \$250K will go. Construction will start as soon as snow season is over. The board discussed the possibility of meeting with the state grant agencies to see if anything could be done to enhance the Town's grant applications and better the chances of a grant award. Mr. Morin did not receive a reason for the application rejection. He stated, "to put this grant program in a proper context, when the municipal reform act went in, the best practices funding was more generous. The programs give you some money up front and then wean you away from the funding. The Town is competing with other communities who get breaks from the state. Norwell needs to do a better job of coordinating with the state level decision makers." Ms. Allen will reach out to get better information on this process. The Town is receiving a large amount of traffic study money from the state for its project on Route 53 in Norwell. Mr. Rull will also follow up with his contacts about the state grant process.
2. Construction of a sidewalk from the Hanover/Norwell town line going towards Assinippi Corner. There are safety concerns in this area, including heavy potential pedestrian traffic (including kids) walking to the new Merchants Row from the Woodworth fields. The portion of Main Street/Webster Street with no sidewalk is a big gap, which is entirely located in Hanover. Norwell can't do much. Police Chief Ross has had good conversations with Hanover Police Chief Walter Sweeney about this project. Mr. Brown noted that the area is a busy section with all these shopping areas, and is connectable with a sidewalk. All discussed crosswalks and other options. Ms. Demong added that she reached out last April to the Hanover Town Manager about this project. The Hanover Board of Selectmen is expecting this letter (see draft) from the CSC. All discussed who should receive a copy of this letter signed by both the CSC and BOS Chair. As there are a number of competing projects, this particular one might be a stronger application to the Complete Streets grant program as it connects the two towns. The letter will be sent to the large group listed in the cc section. As Mr. Brown leases a store in the Merchants Row mall, he will recuse himself from this vote on the letter.

Motion; made by Alison Demong, seconded by Joe Rull, that the BOS accept, co-sign and send the letter from the CSC to address the issue of a sidewalk connector on Main Street/Webster Street. 3 members voted yes, 1 abstained (Brown). Motion carried.

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Traffic Study Committee Update

Committee members

Chief Ted Ross, Chief Andy Reardon, Hwy. Surveyor Glenn Ferguson, Ellen Moshier, and Gregg McBride were present to discuss current traffic issues in the Town.

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Hanover Mall Project – traffic study report

The board received the report on a traffic study commissioned by the mall developer PREP. The mall will have a much more significant impact on traffic in the Town than originally predicted. The board reviewed the report with the assistance of the BETA group, noting significant potential traffic impact on South Street, Main Street, Prospect Street, Pleasant Street and other areas of the Town. The report suggested some mitigation ideas that didn't accomplish much. The recommendations included looking at the Pleasant/South intersection, the Main/South intersection with a potential traffic signal and widening South Street approaching Main Street with a left turn lane. The suggestions didn't address the land needed to make these changes. The BOS began discussions about financial support for mitigation of these issues. The ball-park total cost of these recommendations could be \$3M or more, per Mr. Ferguson, whose observations included the following points:

1. A 20-30% increase in traffic is predicted over the next several years on the roads listed above. The Town should start planning for this impact on its roads.
2. The Mill Street access is very narrow. A mitigation project should be jointly underwritten by Norwell and Hanover.
3. Consider adding a new entry to the high school on Main Street to ease traffic on South Street. Making South Street one way (exiting the high school) or a dead end would be options to review in more detail. Adding a traffic signal at South and Main would help.

The impact of the mall development will be a significant change to the character of Norwell. Ms. Demong added that the TSC is compiling a list of ideas to address the increased traffic. The board discussed the pros and cons of this project. Mr. Morin reminded all that the Town's ability to negotiate was severely limited by its limited standing in any case that could be filed. The settlement agreement does not preclude how the Town spends the money. It does not prohibit any traffic mediation by Norwell, who can take whatever measures that they choose. Main and South is currently a poorly functioning intersection. If money is needed to fix this, the Town has the tools to address the job. The settlement agreement preserves the rights of the Town to address the issues any way they wish. Ms. Allen noted that all of the surrounding communities are doing big new economic development projects, and the Town needs to get on board with a project like the 40R zoning bylaw at Queen Anne's Corner. All discussed frustrations with the ability to get anything done in the Town as opposed to the Route 53 corridor in Hanover and Hingham. Hopefully the Route 53 traffic study will produce good data. Mr. Morin will review the terms of the agreement for spending authority on the settlement and seek input from the TSC for the best use of these funds. Mr. Brown reminded all that the property was a mall to begin with, so this is not a new concept. The whole area on Route 53 is expanding from Hingham into Pembroke. There are many preexisting conditions with accompanying problems. There is not enough state funding to expand these regional roads, but Ms. Allen reminded all that there are options that can still be addressed to work on these issues.

The board discussed the Winter STM Article for the bylaw to allow the BOS to set and/or lower speed limits on Town roads, with suggestions from the TSC. Per Mr. Morin, this applies to those roads that meet the definition of thickly settled, which are still being evaluated. Chief Ross will present this Article (which gives options but not requirements) at Town Meeting,.

The Queen Anne Corner/Pond Street traffic studies and the economic development project state study looked at the current traffic situation in this area of Route 53. Ms. Allen reviewed some ideas that could be implemented with developer funding, such as adding turn lanes and traffic signals on Pond Street. Widening Pond Street was suggested along with retiming the traffic signal at the Route 53/Pond Street intersection. Additional lanes would hopefully be

required on Route 53. Any developer building into the corner lot would want another traffic signal to attract customers. One area that should be included in any traffic study is the intersection of High and Grove Streets. Questions were asked about potential funding for Route 53 upgrades from Mass DOT, to which Mr. McBride reminded all that the price of state funding would be to give up control. Discussion ensued about this development topic, which may be on the May Town Meeting Warrant, but could also wait until next year's Town Meeting.

Other TSC projects of note:

Chief Ross reported that the committee is continuing to work with traffic consultant Jeff Dirk on speed limit changes for River and Grove Street, adding that the additional information requested by the state has been sent. The committee is working on a proposal for a Town-wide traffic calming policy. When the policy is ready for implementation, Town residents will need to be informed. The policy and procedures could be posted on the website. This might be ready to include on the May Town Meeting Warrant. The dedicated traffic officer (Will Crowley) will be starting his job on Monday, January 20. Chief Ross gave an overview of his job description and shift schedule. He will be addressing all traffic complaints in the Town.

Ms. Allen thanked the TSC on behalf of the board.

Ms. Allen recapped the Hanover Mall project settlement agreement between the mall developer PREP and the Board of Selectmen.

Highway Barn Project Update

Mr. Ferguson updated the board on the Winter STM Warrant Article for the highway barn project. He gave a short presentation of the project highlights, which has a cost estimate of \$5.5M, including a contingency. There is a lower project sq. ft. cost because the current buildings will provide a pretty good base. Some of the project components have already been funded. The new building will allow Mr. Ferguson to provide better service to the Town and his employees and also provide storage for the new equipment that has been purchased. He will look into solar panels for the new building to see if there is a cost savings in addition to the planned energy saving features. If the Town votes to pass the Warrant Article, Mr. Ferguson will compile an RFP to hire an architect for the project. He outlined a proposed timeline for the project, with the goal of having complete building plans by December 2020. The ground breaking is projected for spring of 2021. Mr. Ferguson will act as the OPM. This project will not be funded with an override; Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Mangan will be working on the financing. Mr. Morin complimented Mr. Ferguson on his hard work to do this project affordably under the levy. All agreed that this will produce a clean, safe, efficient workplace for very important Town workers! There is a cost savings benefit to combining two facilities (Highway and Tree & Grounds) into one location. The excellent capital planning to initiate this project is an integral part of the prudent spending plan that has been exercised over the last several years. Mr. Ferguson thanked board for their support on this much needed project.

Future Meetings

Ms. Allen reported that the board will not meet next week. The next scheduled meeting will be Wednesday, 1/29/20.

Adjournment

Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Bruce Graham, to adjourn at 9:02pm. Unanimously voted

Ellen Allen, Chair