

**Norwell Select Board  
Norwell Planning Board  
9-22-21  
Open Session minutes**

TOWN OF NORWELL  
TOWN CLERK  
2021 OCT 12 PM 2:37  
RECEIVED

The meeting was called to order by Chair Bruce Graham at 6:35pm.

**Approval of Agenda**

*Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Pete Smellie, to approve the agenda. Unanimously voted*

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

*Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Pete Smellie, to approve the Open Session Meeting minutes for 9/8/21. Graham, Brown, Allen, Reardon voting yes. Smellie abstained as he was absent from the meeting.*

**BOS Reports and Announcements**

Ms. Allen reported that the architect for the new library will receive an award for excellence for his design. Librarian Judy McConarty is retiring in November. She has done a great job and will be missed.

Mr. Smellie participated in a Police/Fire charity golf tournament.

In response to Mr. Graham's question from the Historical Commission (NHC) about "perambulating around the Town borders", most of the board will concede this privilege to the NHC. Mr. Graham will send them an email reply.

Mr. Brown reported that the Traffic Study Committee (TSC) met this morning for the first time since the COVID pandemic. The committee welcomed new Police Chief Ed Lee and new Fire Chief Dave Kean, caught up on events of the past year and a half and addressed the many complex issues on the table. There are three main topic categories; speeding/intersection road safety, Queen Anne's Corner/MassDOT, and the Mill Street/Hanover Crossing road conditions. The next TSC meeting will be held in the Fire/Police department training room on 10/20 at 9am. Committee members include: Chief Lee, Chief Kean, Ellen Moshier, Gregg McBride, Glenn Ferguson and Jason Brown. Traffic Officer Ken Camerota also attends meetings as an ex officio member.

Mr. Brown noted the following speed limit facts: for the state to consider reducing speed limits on local streets, 80% of traffic must travel under the posted speed, which seems counterintuitive.

The state has approved six to twelve speed limit reductions, including two sections of Main Street and parts of River Street. Per Mr. Brown, perspective is important as many residents have misconceptions about the board's ability to control speed limits in the Town. These topics will be discussed at upcoming TSC and Select Board (SB) meetings.

Mr. Reardon attended the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at the Council on Aging, which was a great success. It was very well attended and included a special guest, former Director Rosemary O'Connor. Norwell "sets the gold standard" for councils.

**Town Administrator**

Mr. Reardon and Mr. Morin attended a gathering at Jacobs Pond Estates to address the disparities in assessed values of the AH units at the property. Mr. Morin will follow up with the Assessors office to resolve these issues.

Mr. Morin hosted an in-person and Zoom neighborhood meeting with National Grid representatives and residents on Black Pond Hill and Captain Vinal Way to address the large number and frequency of power outages in that area. National Grid reps stated that a large amount of improvement work will soon be underway to upgrade poles and wires on Mt. Blue

Street, which should help to reduce the power outages in this neighborhood. The Highway/Tree & Grounds departments are using the bucket truck to clear problem trees.

New (interim) Town Planner Ilana Quirk has been hired to work 30 hours per week as a consultant. She is a municipal lawyer as well as a prior Town Planner in Norwell. A new administrative assistant will also be hired for the Planning Office.

Resident and committee member Linda Martin Dyer has passed away after a long battle with brain cancer. She was an active and caring member of the community and an excellent Capital Budget committee member. Our condolences to her family.

#### **Citizen Comments - None**

#### **Select Board/Planning Board**

Don Mauch was the only applicant to fill the temporary vacancy on the Planning Board. The Planning Office lost a board member, the town planner and the administrative assistant in the space of the last three months.

Planning Board Chair Brendan Sullivan explained the voting process of both boards, with Mr. Graham adding that Mr. Mauch will fill in until the next Town election. All agreed that he will do a great job.

*Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Pete Smellie, to appoint Don Mauch to the Planning Board for a term ending in May 2022 on the date of the annual Town election.*

*Unanimously voted*

*Motion; made by Brendan Sullivan, seconded by George Woodland, to appoint Don Mauch to the Planning Board for a term ending in May 2022 on the date of the annual Town election.*

*Unanimously voted by roll call vote: Sullivan voting yes, Woodland voting yes, Greenberg voting yes, Tobin voting yes.*

#### **Community Housing Trust (CHT) Update – AH properties and other focus areas**

CHT Chair Gregg McBride and member Cara Hamilton were present.

Mr. Graham gave a short recap of the 2 Wildcat parcels issue and other background information.

Mr. McBride reported that the Trust met on 6/28/21 with then Trust members Peter Shea and Liz Hibbard to discuss this issue. They met again on 9/13/21 with newly appointed member Don Mauch to opine on this same issue.

Mr. Mauch summarized for the Trust the 3 step process to make a decision on disposition of property (see CHT minutes for 9/13/21).

1. Ch. 40, sec. 15, 15a: board finds land is no longer needed for public or specific purpose (2004 vote may apply here). *To be completed by Select Board*
2. Put question before Town Meeting. *Met this step on 5/8/21, also Town Counsel's opinion that this has been met.*
3. Select Board determines the terms and conditions of the transfer. *To be completed by Select Board*

At their 9/13/21 meeting – the Trust had an open discussion about how the Wildcat land could be used.

- Does the land still have value? As the Town's AH count is still below 10%, the Trust voted 5-0-1 (Mr. Reardon abstained as a Selectman) that the land continues to be needed for this purpose.
- The Trust's opinion on conveyance of this land to conservation is as follows: should the Select Board decide that the parcels are not needed for AH, the land should be sold to the highest bidder and the proceeds be used for AH and conservation.
- In answer to Mr. Graham's question about this vote referring specifically to Wildcat: Mr. McBride stated that while the Town is at less than 10% any land should be considered for AH.

- Discussion ensued among the board members. Per Mr. Graham, this issue is tabled but not dead. To be discussed at a future time.
- Board questions included types of housing that might be considered – answer; anything larger than 2-3 small houses would probably not work.
- Reminder – the Master Plan strategy was to spread AH houses throughout the Town. The success of 40 River Street caused the Town to consider larger developments, but this may not be appropriate for other parts of Town.
- A conversation with Wildcat developer AW Perry took place about similar housing that blends in with market rate housing.
- For the small amount of developable upland, the other parts will always be protected wetland. The Trust thinks it should be used for AH. If not, then sell it for whatever it's worth. The Town would be giving away an asset if both parcels were put into open space which is only accessible to the Wildcat Hill neighborhood.
- The CHT hopes that this board would not give an asset away without realizing any benefit to the Town.

The board continued their discussion of decision-making issues with this land, making the following points:

- There is no rush to decide as this is a complicated issue
- All listed pros and cons of options open to the Select Board re: Town Meeting votes in 2004 and 2021.
- Mr. McBride noted that the CHT spent about \$50K in good faith on proposals for this property. From a fiduciary standpoint the Town should realize value out of this property.

Cara Hamilton (CHT member) made the following comments:

- Presented additional background information about Wildcat neighborhood concerns.
- Would like to see a proposal that helps to repair the strained relationships.
- The land in question is not part of the Conservation Commission's strategic plan.
- One option might be a small development which includes conservation land.
- Thinks there are some neighbors who might be amenable to an AH proposal.

More discussion ensued about giving away property with a value when considering taxpayers who are having financial difficulty. Could selling this property lighten some of the tax burden? Should there be another opportunity with a different project proposal?

All agreed that the board should tread carefully and get input from a range of interest groups.

The board continued:

- Per Ms. Allen, the Citizens Housing And Planning Association (CHAPA) has brought back their program to lead discussions about community housing. This program of community outreach could help explore all the issues and reach more residents. "There is no rush, the land can sit there while we try to right this ship."
- Per Mr. McBride, the CHT is long overdue for another guidance discussion. Engagement of the community is highly important.
- The Trust is still doing AH monitoring and trying to maximize affordability and other trust duties.
- None of the current CHT members have much interest in going through the process again without a community sense of purpose.
- The CHT could work with the SB and CHAPA to come up with a plan supported by the community. Options might include a review of all the Town owned parcels for potential sites, working with commercial developers (not currently in the Housing Plan).

Resident Tim Wall asked to respond to a comment made during the meeting that referred to his wife; "she did not like being called a NIMBY". Mr. Wall also expressed concerns about comments made at a Trust meeting. He opined that the neighborhood is *not* advocating for anything other than conservation land.

Mr. Graham reminded everyone that three municipal lawyers have opined that the Town Meeting Citizens Petition Article is not binding. The SB is doing their job as they swore to do. Resident Brian Carroll asked to comment. He was reminded by Mr. Graham that he was told before the meeting that he would not be allowed to speak. Mr. Carroll noted that he understood but wanted this recorded in the minutes.

The board discussed pursuing the CHAPA community meetings option. Mr. McBride reported that the CHAPA grant application from the CHT is due by 10/22/21. The SB will send a letter of endorsement. (10/20/21 SB agenda).

The CHT will be invited to another SB meeting to discuss their Focus Areas.

#### **Town Administrator Review**

Mr. Graham invited the board to give Mr. Morin feedback before his self-assessment, which he sent to the board prior to this meeting.

#### **Jason Brown**

"Mr. Morin has logged in two impressive years dealing with the COVID pandemic and the changing economic environment. Under very difficult circumstances, he has been flexible, adaptable to change and always accessible to me and other board members. I don't envy his position reporting to five bosses, which he does gracefully and tactfully. The board has been concerned about him overextending as he deals with all the Operations issues in the Town as well as the public! I would like to add an assistant Town Administrator position. This is being addressed by promoting Treasurer/Collector Darleen Sullivan to Finance Director and then hopefully Assistant Town Administrator. There have been some highly pressurized scenarios over the last year which Mr. Morin has had to resolve. Well done, Peter."

#### **Ellen Allen**

"Mr. Morin has upped his game over the last two years while doing his regular job and dealing with the pandemic and its challenges. He is a more efficient and effective worker. He has accomplished a great deal, much of which is not visible. He spends an enormous amount of time doing Human Resources work, which includes challenging and delicate employee matters. I am very pleased with the succession plan that he announced, promoting Ms. Sullivan to Finance Director and then Assistant Town Administrator. I think more resources are needed. Mr. Morin has made very good use of consultants. He could position department budgeting to create good resources."

#### **Peter Smellie**

"I worked with Peter on the Advisory Board and now the Select Board. He is very good about sharing information, has excellent budget and planning skills and does a fantastic job. I enjoy working with him."

#### **Bruce Graham**

"I found Mr. Morin very accessible. I am struck by how much he does that is not related to this board – basically everything else in the Town. We are very fortunate to have a Town Administrator with his wealth of municipal knowledge and extensive legal background, which is frankly irreplaceable. He will need to be a mentor to his successors going forward. I would like the Assistant Town Administrator to become a permanent position."

#### **Andy Reardon**

"Mr. Morin needs to work on his ability to say no! There are only so many hours in the day. Delegate more, ask for help! The board needs to be mindful of that. He does an excellent job managing the operations of the Town."

Mr. Morin thanked the board for their thoughtful comments and kind words. He reminded all that he has a rolling contract. The board has until January 30<sup>th</sup> of each year to decide; they can do

nothing and the contract renews automatically for another year. They can also notify him that they choose not to renew his contract. Currently the contract has two years left.

*Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Pete Smellie, to adjourn at 8:26pm. Unanimously voted.*

  
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Bruce Graham, Chair