



TOWN OF NORWELL
Norwell Town Offices, Room 112
345 Main Street
Norwell, Massachusetts 02061
(781) 659-8000

Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes March 2, 2023

The Advisory Board was called to order by Chair Jesse McSweeney at 7:00 PM. Also present were Town Administrator Darleen Sullivan, Town Accountant Christine McCarthy, and Board Members Mark Cleveland, Bob Perniola, Brian D'Souza, Elizabeth Hibbard, and John LaCara. Unable to attend were Peter Leppanen, Ed Maguire, and Dane Hutchison.

AGENDA

The Pathways and Complete Streets discussions will be held at a future meeting.

Motion by Ms. Hibbard to approve the agenda as amended. Seconded by Mr. Perniola and unanimously voted by roll call: La Cara aye, Perniola aye, McSweeney aye, Hibbard aye, D'Souza aye, Cleveland aye.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Minutes

None

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests

None

FY 2024 BUDGET OVERVIEW

Highway/Tree and Grounds Department

Highways and Trees & Grounds Commissioner Glenn Ferguson present, noting this was his seventh year in the position. The Highway Department takes care of about 80 miles of public roads, 10 miles of sidewalk, and 90 miles of subsurface drains, and 1600 catch basins. Trees & Grounds maintains the two Town cemeteries, 80 acres of playing fields, and the grounds of all town buildings. Warming temperatures seem to be weakening the trees in town, and Mr. Ferguson tries to stay on top of the imminent hazards. T&G also staffs the Recycling Center and works with the Conservation Commission to maintain conservation lands, including the recent clearing of the field edges at the Carleton Property.

Mr. Ferguson noted there was culvert work pending on Dover and River Streets, as well as ongoing gas line work by Eversource up River Street. The residents of new developments regularly seek to make their roads public streets maintained by the Town, which adds to the Departmental workload. The 100 culverts in town also require frequent maintenance. Additional funding has been approved to complete the highway barn, and the new building should start to take shape by October.

Mr. Ferguson's proposed Highways budget is \$1,387,408.43, up from \$1,262,328.00 in FY 23; Trees & Grounds is \$628,550.46, up from \$563,288.00. These budgets reflect contractual salary

increases and vacation buyback by staff; an increase in the Electricity line reflects increased rates and a reduction in the Gas line reflects lower rates. An increase and Repairs and Maintenance reflects an aging fleet; Mr. Ferguson thinks storing vehicles inside the new Highway Barn will increase their service life. The Equipment line in Trees & Grounds better reflects the actual annual cost. The Town receives about \$450,000 in state funding for roads each year, and former administrator Peter Morin recently provided some bond funding.

Snow and ice removal is level-funded; the Town's practice is to budget conservatively in this area, as it can deficit-spend if needed. Highways has a large supply shed that allows Mr. Ferguson to stock up on supplies when they are cheap.

Ms. Hibbard asked about the possibility for synergies between Highways and Pathways work projects. Mr. Ferguson noted that they were working together to finish Phase 5 of the Pathway, from Homestead to Norwell Center.

Mr. McSweeney asked about the impact of the new Highway Barn on utility costs; Mr. Ferguson thinks these may decrease due to the building and its systems being more efficient. Mr. Cleveland asked about maintenance at the library. Currently a private contractor handles landscaping and maintenance of the basins, as there is not enough Highways staff to do so, and Highways plows the lot. Ms. Sullivan will check further into the arrangement.

Mr. Cleveland commented favorably on Mr. Ferguson's performance, noting that he "seems to be everywhere" in town, and suggested that Ms. Sullivan think about further increasing his salary if possible.

Cemetery Committee

Chair Wendy Bawabe present with Denise Nestor/ they are requesting a \$500 increase to \$5500 to cover the increased expenses (inc. fuel) of maintaining the two cemeteries off Washington & Stetson Streets, and the resumption of in-person conferences. The cemeteries generated fees of \$97,852 in FY 22 and about \$121K in FY 21 that go into the general fund.

Ms. Bawabe noted that a CPC grant application to restore a section of the Washington Street Cemetery had been approved and was on the warrant. Trees and Grounds Commissioner Ferguson recently installed a columbarium at the Washington Street cemetery, for the storage of cremation urns; this will bring additional fee revenue to the Town.

FUTURE MEETINGS

3/7, 3/9, 3/14, 3/16, 3/21, 3/23

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Perniola to adjourn at 8:48 PM. Seconded by Ms. Hibbard and unanimously voted by roll call: La Cara aye, Perniola aye, McSweeney aye, Hibbard aye, D'Souza aye, Cleveland aye.

Jesse McSweeney, Chair