



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

## **Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes February 8, 2024**

The Advisory Board was called to order by Chair Elizabeth Hibbard at 7:30 PM. Also present were Town Administrator Darleen Sullivan, Town Accountant Christine McCarthy, and Board Members Bob Perniola, Brian D'Souza, Thomas Sullivan, John LaCara, and Dane Hutchison. Unable to attend were John McGrath, Matthew Hanson, and Ed Maguire.

### **AGENDA**

*Motion by Mr. Perniola to approve the agenda as submitted. Seconded by Mr. La Cara and unanimously voted.*

### **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

#### **Minutes**

None

#### **Reserve Fund Transfer Requests**

None

### **FY 2025 BUDGET OVERVIEW**

#### **Board of Health - 512**

Health Agent Ben Margro present. The proposed FY 25 budget is "level service" except for contractual salary increases as well as increases in the fees to Waste Management and SEMASS for solid waste pickup and disposal. Mr. Margro noted that the Public Health Services line includes funds for public health nursing services and lab fees. Advertising provides funding for any needed legal notices. Professional Services includes food inspection assistance, and Environmental Consulting funds assistance with perc testing.

Ms. Sullivan noted there was ongoing discussion about moving trash and recycling functions to Highways/Trees & Grounds but nothing has been finalized yet. The recycling center is located next to the Highway Yard and utilizes Highway Department vehicles and equipment. Mr. Margro noted this would free up time for his limited staff to focus on the Department's other areas of responsibility.

All discussed ways to control trash collection and disposal costs, which Ms. Sullivan described as an increasing challenge. The SEMASS contract increases 2.5% each year; the Town is a founding member so it gets a lower rate. Mr. Margro noted that Norwell's road mileage increased its trash pickup cost compared to more densely developed towns.

Chair Hibbard asked whether the 8-9% Waste Management increase was contractual or market-based. Mr. Margro indicated the increase was based on cost predictions that were usually fairly

accurate. Ms. Sullivan added that the Town has a three-year contract with WM but there are opt-out provisions. Mr. Perniola asked about competition in the business; there was some on the hauling side but not much for disposal. Mr. Hutchison inquired about switching from residential pickup to a transfer station. Mr. Margro noted this would require a capital outlay to build, and there was not enough room by the Recycling Center. DEP permitting would be required, and they are discouraging the construction of new landfills. Mr. Perniola suggested that the Town consider giving residents the option to opt out of the Town pickup. Some area towns have private-only trash pickup services, but Mr. Sullivan stated this works poorly in Hull.

Mr. Margro added he was looking at adding new recycling center fees and increasing the existing ones, as these have not been increased in 20 years; other fee increases are also under consideration.

*Motion by Mr. Perniola to recommend the budget for Department 512, Board of Health, in the amount of \$1,735,934.92. Seconded by Mr. Hutchison and unanimously voted.*

## **South Shore Vo Tech**

### **390 - Assessment**

Superintendent Tom Hickey present along with liaison Dustin Reardon. The FY 25 assessment will be \$418,206, down from last year's \$479,753 assessment. Mr. Hickey noted that the Town's projected enrollment of 22 is down 4 from last year and "this year, towns whose enrollments went down saw assessments go down." About 70% of the assessment is driven by a Chapter 70 formula based on two factors: a minimum state assessment based on a town's "ability to pay", and the remainder from a combination of debt service and capital expenses based on student headcount.

Mr. Hickey anticipates about a 4.3% increase in the overall budget. State aid is up about 3%, while non-resident tuition is down. Marshfield joined the District as of July 1, 2023 and has enrolled three students so far, but Mr. Hickey anticipates a much higher enrollment moving forward, which will impact the assessments to other towns. The District owns its own buses and employs its own drivers; they are looking to sequentially replace the buses, which date back to about 2017. They are also looking to add a physical education teacher with a focus on health and wellness education, and are migrating some grant-funded positions into the budget. Mr. Perniola asked how the 4.25% SSVT budget increase compared to the Norwell Public School budget and those of neighboring towns. Ms. Sullivan noted that an "apples to apples" comparison was difficult but opined that the increase was roughly in line with those of other budgets.

All discussed why Norwell enrolls so few students compared to neighboring towns including Hanover and Scituate, which are similar in terms of income and population. Mr. Reardon thinks this has to do with its change from a farming town to a white collar bedroom community that doesn't emphasize the trades as a career option, but they are seeing a recent upward trend, and SSVT does well on outreach to interested families.

Mr. Hickey noted that they try to partner with the Norwell school system and would like to see enrollments from Town increase or at least ensure everyone in town is aware of what SSVT offers. More resources, possibly grants, to discuss career planning in middle school would help. Mr. Reardon observed it was hard to ask eighth graders to think about careers, and like to see more outreach to parents. Mr. Hickey believes the stereotypes around vocational education are disappearing over time.

*Motion by Mr. Perniola to recommend Department 390, South Shore Votech, in the amount of \$418,206. Seconded by Mr. Hutchison and unanimously voted.*

### **South Shore Regional Emergency Communications Center (SSRECC)**

Ms. Sullivan advised that the assessment from SSRECC, a Regional 911 call center, is \$529,017.89, up from \$487,359.49. The assessment is calculated by a formula based on the number of calls requiring dispatch and the town population.

Ms. Hibbard asked if other towns could join the Center; Ms. Sullivan agreed this could reduce the overall cost, but there may be better incentives for them to join other dispatch centers.

*Motion by Mr. Perniola to recommend Department 233, SSRECC, in the amount of \$529,017.89. Seconded by Mr. Hutchison and unanimously voted.*

### **Norfolk Agricultural School**

Ms. Sullivan advised that the Town had received an “out of district” assessment from Norfolk Agricultural for two Norwell students. There are no new enrollments this year to date, but students have until April to decide. The school offers training in agricultural trades as well as marine and animal science. Mr. Perniola suggested that the School Department inquire about possible circuit breaker reimbursement.

*Motion by Mr. Perniola to recommend Department 391, Norfolk County Agricultural, in the amount of \$52,710.00. Seconded by Mr. Hutchison and unanimously voted.*

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

Council on Aging, Facilities, and Recreation are scheduled for Tuesday; a Thursday meeting may not be needed if more budgets are not finalized.

### **FUTURE MEETINGS**

2/13, 2/27, 2/29, 3/5, 3/7, 3/12, 3/14, 3/19, 3/21, 3/26, 3/28

### **ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Perniola to adjourn at 8:34 PM. Seconded by Mr. Hutchison and unanimously voted.*

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