

TOWN OF NORWELL
Town Hall Gym
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TOWN CLERK
2020 MAR -4 AM 10:43
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Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes 2/27/2020

The Advisory Board was called to order by Chair Peter Smellie at 7:00 P.M. Also present were Town Administrator Peter Morin and Board Members Mark Cleveland, Harry Solis, Susan Darnell, Jesse McSweeney, Karen Reynolds, Julie Sim, and Kate Steele. Unable to attend was Rick Goulding.

CALL TO ORDER/AGENDA

Motion made to approve the agenda as submitted. Seconded and passed 7-0-0.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Minutes – None

Bills – The following invoices were presented for approval:

Christopher Sullivan	Meeting Minutes	\$93.75
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Motion made to approve the invoice as submitted. Seconded and passed 7-0-0.

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests – None

Correspondence/Notices – None

Action Items / Discussions – None

FY 2021 BUDGET OVERVIEW

All parties reviewed the following budgetary proposals. Town Administrator Morin requested that no votes be taken at this time to allow for additional adjustments.

Building Department

Building Commissioner Thomas Barry discussed the Department's proposed FY 21 budget as well as procedural changes made over the past year. Mr. Barry expects that Departmental revenues will surpass last year's figures. On July 1st, the Department implemented an incentive for permit applicants to file electronically. They are considering adding functionality to allow the public to view active permits, and check application status and permit history online. Inspector compensation has been adjusted, and they are asking for an additional part-time administrative assistant. This year, the ZBA budget has been broken out as a separate category.

With respect to a reduction in inspector payments. Mr. Morin noted that inspectors had been collecting 85% of the inspection fee, with the remainder going to the town. As this did not yield sufficient revenue to cover departmental overhead, they have switched to a fee system comparable to what other area towns are doing; this is expected to generate greater revenues for the town. Mr. Cleveland asked about a proposed increase in Inspection Services. Mr. Morin indicated that an increase in inspection services would provide funding for backup/outside inspectors, on an as-needed basis, who will be needed on some upcoming commercial projects.

In response to a query from Mr. Smellie, Mr. Morin stated he supported the request for additional staffing, as it would help the Department keep up with the workload and improve customer service. Despite the online application process, tradespeople still tend to rely on staff support when filing for permits. Mr. Barry added that the additional admin support would free him up to spend more time in the field.

Zoning Board of Appeals

Mr. Morin noted that an increase in hours was proposed for the part-time administrative assistant to provide additional assistance to the public and ensure all the necessary supporting tasks could be completed in a timely manner.

Board of Assessors

Chair Rob Allen advised that they had recently posted the Chief Assessor position approved at the Special Town Meeting in February. They are looking to hire an experienced applicant seeking a long-term position; the position will pay between \$80-95K per year. Applicants will interview with Mr. Morin, Human Resources Manager Barbara Childs, and the Board of Assessors. Mr. Morin and the BOA will then jointly select a candidate.

In response to a query about vacation buyback expenses, Mr. Morin noted that this was a negotiated benefit that could recur on an annual basis if employees elect to use the benefit, but it would reduce the size of vacation time payouts when employees retire.

All parties discussed the assessment process. Mr. Allen stated there was a heavy statistical component to their analysis that considers comparable sales and analytics regarding neighborhood and style of home. The process is designed to produce assessments that are accurate to within plus or minus 10% so as to pass Massachusetts Department of Revenue audits. Mr. Morin commented that high property values in town and factors such as lot sizes and the significant number of antique homes made Norwell a challenging town in which to assess properties. As the process is driven by sales activity, assessments tend to slightly lag market values.

Facilities

Facilities Manager Ted Nichols noted that Police, Fire, and schools have maintenance staff on their own budgets, but Town Hall and Council on Aging maintenance is covered in his budget. The FY 21 budget adds funds for Council on Aging building supplies and maintenance, as well as for electrical maintenance in general, to reflect actual costs.

Mr. Nichols recently made repairs to trim and windows at the COA building, and fixed a basement leak. He is also performing necessary Town Hall maintenance in advance of renovation, and is involved in ongoing CPC-funded projects regarding the Jacobs Farm buildings including de-leading, roofing and trim repair, and handicap accessibility modifications.

Mr. McSweeney asked about the Dues and Meetings line item; this funds professional courses, licenses, and certifications. Ms. Darnell asked about a decrease in the Alternate line item. Mr. Morin indicated that a specific service had been transferred into the Selectmen's budget.

Warrant Articles Review

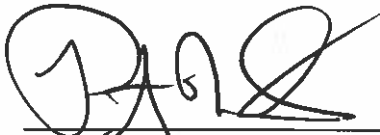
Mr. Morin will be sending out draft warrant articles for the Board to review in preparation for future meetings. The Special Town Meeting reduced the backlog of special articles. Chair Smellie suggested that Board members attend the School Committee meeting on Monday to prepare for its upcoming budget proposal.

FUTURE MEETINGS

March 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 19, 24, 26, and 31; April 2.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn at 7:57 P.M. Seconded and passed 7-0-0.



Peter Smellie, Chair

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