



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

TOWN OF NORWELL
TOWN CLERK

2021 APR -6 P 12: 26

**Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
March 2, 2021**

RECEIVED

The Advisory Board was called to order by Chair Peter Smellie at 7:00 P.M. Also present were Town Administrator Peter Morin, Town Accountant Donna Mangan, and Board Members Mark Cleveland, Bob Perniola, Susan Darnell, Rick Goulding, Jesse McSweeney, Andrew Reardon, and Kate Steele. Unable to attend was Julie Sim.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Minutes

The minutes of the February 23 and 25 meetings were distributed and reviewed.

Motion made to accept the Minutes of the February 23, 2021 meeting as printed. Seconded and passed 8-0-0.

Motion made to accept the Minutes of the February 25, 2021 meeting as printed. Seconded and passed 8-0-0.

Bills – None. The Board authorized Mr. Morin to sign vouchers to expedite payment for the meeting minutes; invoice copies will be provided to the Chair.

Motion made to authorize the Town Administrator to pay invoices for the minutes retroactive to January 1, 2021. Seconded and passed 8-0-0.

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests – None

Correspondence/Notices – None

Action Items / Discussions – None

FY 2022 BUDGET OVERVIEW

Board of Health

Chair Peter Dillon present along with Health Agent Ben Margro. The FY 22 budget is generally level-funded for non-contractual line items. An increase in the SEMass line reflects an annual 2.5% increase plus the addition of new homes. FY 22 will have no increases in the fee for solid waste disposal, and the \$6000 increase solely reflects new homes added to the trash/recycling pickup service. An increase in oil cost, which impacts the market for recycled plastic, has offset the cost of the extra bag allowed of households during the pandemic. Mr. Margro wants to continue offering the extra bag until at least the end of FY 21.

Mr. McSweeney asked about the Environmental Consulting line item. This line is to pay an outside consultant, Ralph Cole, to conduct perc tests when the Health Agent is not available. The Town charges \$400 for a new construction/commercial perc test and \$200 for a residential repair perc test; these fee revenues generally offset what the Town pays to Mr. Cole. Testing can take from two hours to a full day depending on site conditions. The Professional Services line, level-funded at \$10,000, pays for annual required food inspections at restaurants.

Ms. Steele asked about the ongoing Covid vaccine rollout and impacts on the Department. Mr. Margro indicated that much pandemic-related activity was being funded through CARES act grants as well as from the State; a portion of Departmental salaries has also been reimbursed through CARES Act funds for FY 21, and additional reimbursement will be sought in FY 22.

TOWN OF NORWELL
TOWN CLERK

Mr. Morin advised that he anticipated adding administrative help to the Department at some point in the fiscal year; additionally, during collective bargaining, he will probably be asking to have the Health Agent position removed from the union, which will require restructuring of the compensation, as the nature of the position has changed significantly over the last year.

2021 APR 16 12:26
RECEIVED

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Board of Health budget in the amount of \$1,349,467. Seconded and passed 8-0-0.

Board of Appeals

An overall 10.79% increase is proposed, reflecting increased administrative support to provide additional assistance to the public and ensure all the necessary supporting tasks can be completed in a timely manner.

Mr. McSweeney asked about what the ZBA General Expenses line encompassed; Mr. Morin believed it included legal advertisements and drafting decisions and minutes. Ms. Darnell had been advised by Chair Lois Barbour that they were adding \$2000 to their budget to review and revise their rules, and asked if this increase was included in the budget. Mr. Morin indicated the Department had requested an increase in General Expenses to \$3700 and he approved an increase to \$2500; he thinks this figure will allow them to get started on the revisions. Any involvement of Town Counsel in this effort can come out of the Legal budget.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 ZBA budget in the amount of \$25,030. Seconded and passed 8-0-0.

Commission on Disabilities

Level-funded at \$3000. Mr. Morin noted that the funds are made available for brochures and other outreach, and to produce minutes. The Commission deals with and educates on accessibility issues in the town. The Town has added a sign-language interpreter to the Town Meeting budget and funding for clear face masks at Town Hall, and will be adding closed captioning to televised meetings as a result of Commission advocacy.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Commission on Disabilities budget in the amount of \$3000. Seconded and passed 8-0-0.

Conservation Commission Budget Vote

Mr. Morin recommended that the Board vote on the Town Administrator approved Conservation Commission budget provided on Tuesday. Funding for Gator maintenance and repairs discussed at Tuesday's meeting will likely be added to the Trees & Grounds maintenance budget, as they use the Gator in question and maintain two of their own.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Conservation Commission budget in the amount of \$139,946. Seconded and passed 8-0-0.

DRAFT WARRANT ARTICLES - MAY 2021 TOWN MEETING

Mr. Morin gave an overview of the following draft warrant articles. Mr. Reardon abstained from voting for articles sponsored by Highways and Trees and Grounds.

Acceptance of Town Reports

An annual article by which the Town Meeting the reports of standing committees or Boards created by bylaw.

Motion made to recommend the Acceptance of Town Reports article. Seconded and passed 8-0-0.

Main Street Sidewalks

This article, requested by the Complete Streets Committee, requests funding to continue construction of the Main Street Sidewalk to the Town Center. Mr. Morin recommends a funding amount of \$400,000 towards the design, permitting, and further construction of the sidewalk between Paradise Drive to Central Street. Funding would primarily be from Free Cash. Complete Streets is seeking additional state grant funding.

Mr. Smellie asked whether it is fiscally prudent and feasible to fund the article at the amount proposed. Mr. Morin believes sufficient cash is available from several different sources and adequate revenues are coming into the town from the tax levy and state aid, and thus is comfortable with the recommendation.

Mr. Cleveland noted that the School Department is foregoing hiring another music teacher due to fiscal constraints and commented he would prefer to fund the music teacher position to funding the article in the amount recommended. Mr. Morin doesn't disagree regarding the importance of education funding, but notes the music teacher position would be a recurring expense whereas the sidewalk construction is a nonrecurring activity being funded with nonrecurring revenue, and funding a recurring staff position with nonrecurring funds would jeopardize the town's bond rating. The funds for this article became available as a result of reductions made at the start of the pandemic last year, before the CARES Act had been passed. Mr. Morin further notes that he funded the School Department budget at the level requested by the Department, and spending within the budget is ultimately up to them. He did give guidance as to a general budgetary amount but received no feedback that more funding was needed.

Mr. Perniola asked what would happen to the \$400,000 in funding if this article does not pass, and asks if the work is fundable through CPC. If the article does not pass, the funds would remain where they currently are, most likely Free Cash, Capital Stabilization, or Overlay Surplus. Mr. Morin notes that in 2015, the Town attempted to use Community Preservation funds for the sidewalk; ten residents brought suit and prevailed in Plymouth Superior Court, which ruled that CPC funds could not be used for the entirety of the sidewalk. However, CPC funds could be used to create a recreational pathway across the Carleton Property stretch of Main Street. The pathway must meander, be wide enough for bicycles, and have certain other characteristics. This article could potentially fund the stretch from Paradise to Lincoln Street, by the Carleton Property.

Peter Bloomfield, Chair of the Complete Streets Committee advised that total estimated cost, per Highway Commissioner Ferguson, is now \$1.13 million as opposed to \$1.3 million as previously stated by Mr. Morin. They intend to use these funds initially on where the current sidewalk ends, just west of Paradise Drive. The Committee is in talks with the Conservation Commission regarding design of the stretch along the Carleton Property. He was just advised today that the Committee's two grant applications to the state had been rejected, but they will continue to apply for additional funds. He and Vice Chair Ellen Mosher met with Representative Patrick O'Connor last week, who will try to assist to this end. Mr. Bloomfield feels the project has been a success so far and that there is support to see it completed in full, but being able to get to the Carleton Property would be a good first step.

Mr. Reardon asked if they had received any feedback from the state regarding the grant application. Representative O'Connor is trying to set up a meeting with Department of Transportation to review the application. Mr. Cleveland asked what the state grants could be used for; they can be used to supplement local funds to construct the sidewalk. Had they received the two grants, they probably would have had enough funds to complete the sidewalk to Norwell Center. Ms. Steele asked if the sidewalk might encroach on private property in areas where there is not much frontage to the street. Mr. Ferguson normally needs 11-12 feet off the fog line of the road, and in most areas he has that without any encroachment. He is planning to construct a precast stone wall along the area west of Paradise where space is narrow, but wants to ensure there is adequate funding before he continues the work.

Motion made to recommend the Main Street Sidewalk article in the amount of \$400,000. Seconded and passed 7-0-1, Member Reardon having abstained.

Road/Parking Lot Resurfacing Bond

The purpose of this article is to provide the Highway Surveyor with bonding funds for road and parking lot resurfacing. This is done every few years to ensure there are sufficient funds on hand for the work. Mr. Morin recommends this article in the amount of \$1.5 million. Bonding is one of the three funding sources for road repairs, the other two being Town Meeting articles and Chapter 90 funding from the State.

Mr. Ferguson typically needs \$1.5 million a year for road resurfacing. There are about 80 miles of roads in Town, and the roads last up to 15 years. Mr. Ferguson believes he needs to resurface about 5.3 miles a year to keep up with maintenance, and the work can only be done 4-5 months out of the year. Upcoming projects include Pond Street, Circuit Street, and the Cole School lot. In response to a query from Mr. McSweeney, Mr. Ferguson indicates that the moratorium on road openings after paving is five years.

Motion made to recommend the Road and Parking Lot Resurfacing article in the amount of \$1.5 million. Seconded and passed 7-0-1, Member Reardon having abstained.

Highway Yard Cleanup

Mr. Morin notes that the \$250,000 in funds requested by this article will allow for construction site preparation, temporary facility relocation, and construction traffic flow mitigation. Highway Commissioner Ferguson has been effective at cleaning up and maintaining the yard.

Motion made to recommend the Highway Yard article in the amount of \$250,000. Seconded and passed 7-0-1, Member Reardon having abstained.

Road Safety Equipment and Improvements

This article requests funding to purchase signage, lights, and other road safety equipment.

Mr. Cleveland asks about the effectiveness of the blinking traffic safety signs that have been installed. Mr. Ferguson believes they are working where they have been put up, as there have not been any major accidents in these areas. He receives many more requests for signs than he can meet, and tries to place them where they will have the most impact.

Motion made to recommend the Road Safety Equipment and Improvements article. Seconded and passed 7-0-1, Member Reardon having abstained.

Stormwater Compliance

This annual consent article requests funds for the purpose of complying with the EPA's 2020 MS4 Stormwater General Permit. Mr. Morin recommended that it be approved for \$20,000.

Motion made to recommend the article entitled EPA MS4 Stormwater Compliance in the amount of \$20,000. Seconded and passed 7-0-1, Member Reardon having abstained.

Chapter 90 Funding Acceptance

This annual article allows the Town to raise or borrow funds in anticipation of 100% state reimbursement under M.G.L. Chapter 90. Mr. Morin anticipates that the town's reimbursement this year will be \$450-460K, with possible supplements from the legislature.

Motion made to approve the Chapter 90 Acceptance article, exact amount to be determined later. Seconded and passed 7-0-1, Member Reardon having abstained.

Drainage GIS Mapping

This article requests funding to enter culverts and other drainage infrastructure into a GIS system, so the Highway Department can plan for maintenance. Department workers perform the data entry when time allows; Mr. Ferguson estimates they are about a third of the way to mapping the entire system. A portion of the funds will be used to purchase a GIS Loran system, which will be shared with the Water Department and will ultimately save funds.

Motion made to recommend the article titled Drainage GIS Mapping in the amount of \$30,000. Seconded and passed 7-0-1, Member Reardon having abstained.

2021 APR -6 P 12: 26

RECEIVED

Drainage Funding

The culverts in town are in need of significant repair, and this has been an ongoing project. Mr. Morin recommended that this year's article be approved for \$100,000. Mr. Ferguson noted that about a dozen culverts need to be repaired before he can resurface the portion of Mt. Blue Street between Lincoln and School Streets.

Motion made to recommend the article titled Drainage Funding in the amount of \$100,000. Seconded and passed 7-0-1, Member Reardon having abstained.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. McSweeney asked Mr. Ferguson about the status of drainage on Green Street; it is a challenging area due to the topography and new construction; he is looking at some new piping in the area.

FUTURE MEETINGS

3/4/21, 3/9/20, 3/11/21, 3/16/21, 3/18/21, 3/23/21, 3/25/21, 3/30/21, 4/1/21

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn at 8:35 P.M. Seconded and passed 8-0-0.

Peter Smellie, Chair