



TOWN OF NORWELL
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TOWN OF NORWELL
TOWN CLERK

2021 APR -6 P 12:25

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**Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
March 4, 2021**

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, Julie Sim, and Kate Steele.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Minutes – None

Bills – None

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests – None

Correspondence/Notices – None

Action Items / Discussions – None

FY 2022 BUDGET OVERVIEW

Harbormaster

Harbormaster Jeff Fitzgerald present; an increase to \$12,500, from \$5000 in FY 21, is proposed in order to purchase four navigation buoys and two “no wake” signs on the River Street Bridge. Mr. Fitzgerald noted that there was an increase in traffic on the river and complaints about speeding this past summer. He does not issue tickets on the river, but asks residents to call in with the registration number so he can follow up with the owners.

Mr. Morin noted that the job description has been revamped to be more administrative in nature, including permitting, mooring inspection, and collection of excise tax. If a mooring is out of place, Mr. Fitzgerald notifies one of the three mooring services covering the Norwell stretch of the river.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Harbormaster budget in the amount of \$12,500. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Veterans Services

The FY 22 budget includes an increase in Veterans Service Officer salary from \$12,000 to \$15,000. VSO Dave Osborne helps veterans apply for Federal and state-level benefits and provides assistance, where possible, with transportation to and from medical appointments.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Veterans Services budget in the amount of \$32,500. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Animal Control

The Town shares an Animal Control Officer with Hull and Cohasset, and contributes about 1/3 of the Officer’s salary; the FY 22 recommended budget is set at \$18,200, covering the Town’s share of the salary and motor vehicle costs. The position is currently vacant, but a candidate may be forthcoming out of Cohasset.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Animal Control budget in the amount of \$18,200. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Beautification Committee

Level-funded at \$2500. The funds go to beautify traffic circles and other areas of town, and the Committee provides recognition to town residents and organizations.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Beautification Committee budget in the amount of \$2500. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

CPC Administrative

An increase from \$67,500 to \$75,500 is proposed to cover increases in clerical salaries and professional services.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 CPC Administrative budget in the amount of \$75,000. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

DRAFT WARRANT ARTICLES - MAY 2021 TOWN MEETING

CPC Chair Julie Gillis gave an overview of the following draft warrant articles regarding CPC-approved funding requests.

Transfer to the Community Housing Trust

This article requests a \$400,000 transfer of funds to the Community Housing Trust to be used for prospective acquisitions to create and retain affordable units in town. Mr. Reardon, a former CHT member, advised that the Trust requested such distributions from CPC so they could be on hand when an opportunity to acquire a property arose. The funds are also used to engage consultants to answer questions that arise during projects. Ms. Gillis indicated this was not an annual transfer such as the required 10% distributions to reserve funds, and there was no such request from CHT last year. The Trust had about \$384,000 on hand as of June 30, 2020 but there had been some activity since then.

Mr. McSweeney asked why the article had been recommended for \$400,000 and whether there was a specific purchase coming up. CPC Vice Chair Bob McMackin stated the funds were not earmarked for a specific transaction, but to allow the CHT, a quasi-independent agency, to act independently to acquire properties when the opportunity to do so presented itself. Mr. McSweeney noted that \$784,000 was a lot of money to sit in an account and asked about CHT's average spend per year. Mr. Morin indicated that this could vary significantly by year, but 1-2 transactions could quickly wipe out the fund, as housing in Norwell was not cheap; the transactions are generally cash acquisitions; a typical transaction would be the purchase and resale of a condo unit with a deed restriction and below-market price.

Mr. Cleveland asked if the goal was for CHT to have funds to purchase a specific number of units; Mr. McSweeney asked Mr. Morin if he had a funding range in mind similar to what he had referenced for the School Department budget. Mr. Morin indicated there was no specific range, but the request was in line with what had been requested in the past, and regular replenishment of funding was essential for the CHT to do its job. Mr. Reardon added that the town would lose its 40B "safe harbor" if its affordable housing inventory dropped beneath a certain threshold.

Mr. Smellie asked if the Trust had any upcoming projects; they are putting together a request for proposals regarding 6.4 acres on Wildcat Lane, and are bringing forward a new article concerning a portion of the Carleton Property.

Motion made to recommend the Community Housing Trust article in the amount of \$400,000. Seconded but not passed 5-4-0.

GIS Mapping Equipment

Conservation Agent Will Saunders advised that this article would fund the purchase of updated GIS hardware and software, as the existing system is dated. Ms. Gillis indicated she had confirmed with Town Counsel that the request was fundable by CPC, as it is applicable to open space preservation. This article is not related to the drainage GIS mapping article discussed at the March 2 meeting.

Motion made to recommend the GIS Mapping Equipment article in the amount of \$14,000. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Wompatuck Parking Lot / Connector Trail

The article requests \$125,000 to complete construction of a connector to the Wompatuck Trail system off Grove Street, with a gravel lot for 36 vehicles. Ms. Gillis indicated that this would be supplementary funding to the \$350,000 approved by the 2020 Town Meeting.

Pathways Commissioner Brendan Sullivan advised that all bids for construction came in at a range from \$500,000 to \$900,000, higher than the \$350,000 initially budgeted. In response, the project has been redesigned to reduce costs; bids will be reopening in two weeks, and any funds in this article not needed for construction will be returned to CPC.

Mr. Reardon noted that the new connector will improve public safety access to the South Field section of the park, which is an active area in the summer.

Motion made to recommend the Wompatuck Parking Lot article in the amount of \$125,000. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Council on Aging Patio

The article requests \$68,800 to construct a patio in back of the Council on Aging building. Ms. Gillis noted that the amount had been adjusted upward from \$66,851 due to increased costs.

Motion made to recommend the Council on Aging article in the amount of \$68,800. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Tennis Training Backboards

This article, sponsored by the Recreation Department, requests \$8000 to purchase training backboards for the high school courts. Ms. Steele commented on the poor condition of the concrete on these courts; Mr. Morin indicated that Recreation was looking into resurfacing the courts in the near future.

Motion made to recommend the Tennis Training Backboards article in the amount of \$8000. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Woodland Trails Hazard Removal

The article requests \$26,000 to pay for Trees & Grounds workers to remove trail hazards such as leaning and fallen trees. Conservation Commissioner Robert Woodill advised this was part 2 of a four-year plan for hazard removal.

All parties discussed whether the work proposed was redundant to trail maintenance funded in the town budget. Ms. Gillis clarified that the proposed activity was beyond the scope of maintenance work, which cannot be funded with CPA funds. Mr. Morin added that the Town was behind on addressing trail hazards and this funding would allow Commissioner Ferguson to get caught up. Mr. Morin will edit the article language for better clarity.

Motion made to recommend the Woodland Hazard Trails Hazard removal article in the amount of \$26,000. Seconded and passed 8-0-1, Member Reardon having abstained.

Trail Expansion - Hatch Lots, Stetson

Mr. McMackin advised that this article allocated \$8000 for trail expansions including construction of a bridge over a stream at the Hatch Lots and a walkway over wetlands at Stetson Meadows. Mr. Cleveland asked whether the Boy Scouts could do the proposed work; the Commission utilized the services of Boy Scouts and other volunteers on certain projects under trail crew supervision.

Motion made to recommend the Hatch Lots and Stetson Trail Expansion article in the amount of \$8000. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Donovan Parking Lot

The proposed article allocates \$55,000 to expand the Donovan parking lot adjacent to the proposed Hemingway Flower Field to 26 spaces with two handicapped spots and two spots reserved for veterans. Conservation Commissioner Mott indicated the Commission was looking to expand its smaller lots over time, as all properties have seen increased usage over the pandemic that is unlikely to subside.

Motion made to recommend the Donovan Parking Lot Expansion article in the amount of \$55,000. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Pathway Boardwalk - Gaffield Park to Town Center

Pathways Commissioner Sullivan advised that this article requested \$300,000 for the construction of a boardwalk on helical piles through the woods adjoining Gaffield Park, which would extend the Pathway to River Street just outside the town center. A final section of sidewalk from 40 River to First Parish Church will eventually be funded by the Town, as it cannot be funded with CPA funds per Town Counsel.

Motion made to recommend the Gaffield Park Boardwalk/Pathway article in the amount of \$300,000. Seconded and passed 8-0-1.

CPC Reserve Transfer

This annual article authorizes distributions to the Affordable Housing, Open Space, and Historic Resources reserve funds of \$150,000 each, \$450,000 total. Ms. Mangan indicated these 10% distributions are mandatory.

Motion made to recommend the CPC Reserve Fund transfer article in the amount of \$450,000, \$150,000 to the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund, \$150,000 to Open Space Reserve Fund, and \$150,000 to Historic Preservation Reserve Fund. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

SSRECC Supplemental Funding

Mr. Morin advised that he reduced the allotment for the Town's SSRECC assessment in anticipation of a reduction that did not materialize; this article will allow the town to pay the assessment in full.

Motion made to recommend the SSREC Supplemental Funding article in the amount of \$29,176. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Revolving Fund - Annual Article

This article sets the following expenditure limitations for the Revolving Funds authorized under the bylaw created by Article 25 of the 2017 Annual Town Meeting: (1) \$25,000 for the Stetson Ford House, funded by rental fees; (2) \$80,000 for the Recycling fund, funded by "pay as you throw" bag fees; and (3) \$5000 for the Council on Aging, funded by programming fees. Ms. Mangan indicated that the Stetson Ford rental revenues generally covered any maintenance expenses, but they can deficit-spend for maintenance expenses.

Motion made to recommend the Revolving Fund authorization article setting limits of \$25,000 for the Stetson Ford fund, \$80,000 for the Recycling fund, and \$5000 for the Council on Aging fund. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Medicaid Reimbursement

This annual article authorizes funds for an outside vendor to file for the town to receive reimbursement from Medicaid for certain special needs services provided by the schools. The Town pays North River Collaborative to handle the paperwork for a 6.5% fee, which generally amounts to \$3000. Ms. Mangan indicated that the Town has paid out \$1000 in fees to date this FY and received \$16,000 in reimbursement.

Motion made to recommend the Medicaid Reimbursement article in the amount of \$3000. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

MISCELLANEOUS

The March 11 agenda articles have been moved to March 9, as Mr. Morin is not available on Thursday.

FUTURE MEETINGS

3/9/20, 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 8:38 P.M. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Peter Smellie, Chair