



TOWN OF NORWELL
Norwell Town Offices, Room 112
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Norwell, Massachusetts 02061
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TOWN CLERK

2021 APR -6 P 12:24

Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
March 25, 2021

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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, Rick Goulding, Jesse McSweeney, Andrew Reardon, Julie Sim, and Kate Steele. Mark Cleveland arrived at 7:25 PM. Unable to attend was Susan Darnell.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Minutes – The minutes of the March 18 meeting were distributed and reviewed.

Motion made to accept the Minutes of the March 18, 2021 meeting as printed. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call.

Bills – None

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests – None

Correspondence/Notices – None

Action Items / Discussions

Mr. Smellie reached out to Town Counsel regarding his social media post soliciting questions to ask the School Department; TC replied that soliciting questions to ask was compliant with the Open Meeting law, but back and forth discussion should be avoided in the post. Mr. Morin added it was okay to announce upcoming discussions but to proceed cautiously beyond that.

FY 2022 BUDGET OVERVIEW

Assessors Department

Principal Assessor Meredith Rafiki present. Ms. Rafiki noted she started this position in the beginning of February. The FY 22 budget is level-serviced aside from contractually negotiated salary increases, for a 4.78% overall increase overall. She and Mr. Morin will look at staff hours and salaries over the next year.

Mr. Smellie asked about citizen complaints about inaccuracies on property cards. Ms. Rafiki noted that she had received 88 abatement applications and is currently working through them; the ongoing pandemic presents logistics challenges. She tries to work with and educate residents as part of the review process. Mr. McSweeney noted that he had recently gone through the process and was pleased at how efficient it went.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Assessors Department budget in the amount of \$175,064. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

MAY 2021 TOWN MEETING ARTICLES

Assessor Funding

The article requests \$20,000 for professional contractual services related to an interim revaluation of property in the Town.

Motion made to recommend the article titled Assessor Funding for \$20,000 by roll call. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call.

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Article 1: Unpaid Bills

This article requests \$849.00 to pay for bills incurred in prior fiscal years that came in too late to process.

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Motion made to recommend Article 1 for \$849. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call.

Article 2: Line Item Transfers

The item requests \$25,000 additions to budget line items for street lighting, workers compensation, and liability insurance. Regarding the street lighting, Mr. Morin explained he had reduced this budget in anticipation of an abatement from National Grid that was late in arriving.

Motion made to recommend the Article 2 as printed. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call.

Article 3: COVID Supplemental Funding

This article requests transfers of \$600,000 to reimburse the School Department for its Covid-related expenses and \$375,000 into the Reserve Fund to cover Covid-related expenses from January 1 through the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Morin advised that the Town was anticipating an additional \$800,000 in CARES Act reimbursements from the County that he has been told will arrive by June 30. These funds will go into Free Cash. Ms. Mangan anticipates total CARES Act reimbursements for FY 21 and 22 will total about \$1.275 million.

Motion made to recommend Article 3 as printed. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Article 4 Union and Personal Contracts Funding

This article requests the allocation of \$30,000 to allow the Town to meet any mid-year obligations with respect to union and/or personal contracts.

Motion made to recommend Article 4 as printed. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Article 5: Personnel Plan Funding

This article requests \$30,000 to allow the Town to meet obligations for the compensation schedule under the Personnel Plan for non-union employees.

Motion made to recommend Article 5 as printed. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Article 6: Capital Expenditure Stabilization Transfer

The article requests the transfer of \$145,500 to the Capital Expenditure Stabilization Fund, which is used to smooth out payments for building construction or renovation, and other large projects

or purchases. The Town tries to replenish any withdrawals within a two-year period, and its existence helps the Town's bond rating.

Motion made to recommend Article 6 as printed. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

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Article 7: Stabilization Transfer

This article requests the transfer of \$250,000 to the Stabilization Fund, established in accordance with state law, to cover a severe loss of income. The Town tries to maintain this fund at between 3%–5% of the operating budget; the amount proposed will help the Fund keep pace with growth in the Town budget.

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Motion made to recommend Article 7 as printed. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Article 8: OPEB Transfer

The OPEB ("other post-employment benefits") Trust Fund primarily pays for retired employee health insurance, a significant ongoing expense for the Town. Currently, all meals tax revenues are used to fund the Trust, but additional funds are needed to keep up with the costs. Credit rating agencies look closely at how towns address this expense.

The article requests a transfer of \$160,080 from available funds to the OPEB Trust Fund based on actuarial recommendations and to offset reduced meal tax revenues this past year.

Motion made to recommend Article 8 as printed. Seconded and passed 7-0-1 by roll call, Member Reardon having abstained.

Town Hall Phone System Updates/Upgrades

The article requests \$35,000 to upgrade the Town Hall phone system, which Mr. Morin characterized as antiquated and lacking proper call routing. The transfer request is based on estimates from vendors, including those who upgraded the police and fire phone systems.

Motion made to recommend the phone system updates/upgrades article as printed. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

MISCELLANEOUS

Community Housing Trust articles are on the March 30 agenda. An article regarding zoning for estate lots has been indefinitely postponed by the Planning Board.

Mr. Perniola learned that the petitioners for the Wildcat transfer article would be speaking with the Conservation Commission, and that some residents were unable to get into the Advisory meeting at which the article was discussed. He suggested that the Board discuss the matter with the Commission and then reconsider the article. Mr. Smellie indicated that the motion would have to be made by one of the majority "no" voters. Mr. Reardon noted for the record that he would make the motion in the interest of allowing the Board to hear the additional information.

Motion made to reconsider the Wildcat Citizens Petition. Seconded and passed 6-1-0 by roll call, Member Sim having voted no.

Mr. Smellie will reach out to Conservation Commission Chair Marynel Wahl after their meeting with the petitioners.

Mr. Reardon congratulated Town Accountant Donna Mangan and Finance Director Darlene Sullivan on the positive audit report presented at a recent Board of Selectmen meeting. Mr. Morin thanked the Board for the oversight it provides on town spending.

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FUTURE MEETINGS

3/30/21, mid-April

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn at 8:00 P.M. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

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Peter Smellie, Chair