



**TOWN OF NORWELL**  
Norwell Town Offices, Room 112  
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Norwell, Massachusetts 02061  
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2021 APR -6 P 12: 26

**Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
2/23/2021**

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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 Bob Perniola, Susan Darnell, Rick Goulding, Jesse McSweeney, Andrew Reardon, and Kate Steele. Unable to attend were Mark Cleveland and Julie Sim.

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

**Minutes** – The minutes of the February 11 meeting were distributed and reviewed.

*Motion made to accept the Minutes of the February 11, 2021 meeting as submitted. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call vote.*

**Bills** – None

**Reserve Fund Transfer Requests** – None

**Correspondence/Notices** – None

**Action Items / Discussions** – None

**FY 2022 BUDGET OVERVIEW**

Town Administrator Peter Morin gave a brief overview of the following budgetary requests.

**Building Department**

Mr. Morin advised that the FY 22 proposed budget moved money from Inspector Salaries to Inspection Services, increasing the latter from \$30,000 to just over \$80,000 and reducing the plumbing, wiring, and gas inspector lines to zero, with the total reduction roughly equaling the increase. Mr. Morin noted that the previous compensation system for inspector derived from percentage of value of building permit, resulting in insufficient revenue to town. The new structure, where inspectors are paid a flat rate per inspection, is more typical in the area.

The proposed budget also increases the backup building inspector salary line from \$9396 to \$14,000 and includes contractually negotiated increases for the building inspector and administrative staff, for an overall increase of about 3.97% or \$240,000 for the year. Mr. Morin anticipates that permit revenue will increase in the coming year as FY 21 revenues were impacted by Covid.

*Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Building Department budget in the amount of \$240,560. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call vote.*

### **Council on Aging**

Council on Aging Director Sue Curtin noted that the Council, which provides services and programming for residents 60+, had taken on some additional services this year including a drive through Covid vaccination clinic whereby 169 people were vaccinated.

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The proposed FY 22 budget includes contractual negotiated salary and step increases and reflects an increase in Program Director hours to full-time from 30 hours a week. A \$465 increase in the Cellular Phone line item reflects an increase in usage, with staff working remotely, justifying a change to a plan with more minutes. Under the previous plan, the Department incurred about \$300 in overage charges which they were able to get waived. A \$625 increase in the Contractor Services line reflects price increases and the moving of one service to this line. Building Maintenance is proposed to increase by \$1710 to fund increased cleanings at the center due to Covid.

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Members Darnell and Steele praised the Council for pivoting its functions in response to the pandemic and maintaining engagement with the Town's seniors. Ms. Curtin thanked her staff, who has kept busy conducting resident outreach and revamping events such as in-house meals to "grab and go" events and broadcasting exercise classes on Norwell Spotlight TV.

Mr. McSweeney asked why individual departments were purchasing their own cell phones and plans as opposed to there being a centralized plan that may save money. Mr. Morin believes most cell phone expenses, except for those related to transportation services, have been consolidated; Ms. Mangan stated that there weren't many employees with town-issued cellphones, but plans and costs did vary for those who did. Mr. Reardon believes the existing system was put in place under previous Town Administrator Boudreau. Ms. Mangan adds that most cell phones go to first responders, and Mr. Morin ultimately approves who receives a cell phone. Mr. Morin noted that a cost-saving effort several years ago yielded about \$20,000 in savings; he is willing to take another look at this issue.

Mr. Smellie asked Ms. Curtin about capital requests; they have put in a CPC funding request of about \$68,000 for a patio in back of the Council building.

*Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Council on Aging budget in the amount of \$311,120. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call vote.*

### **Fire Department**

Fire Chief Jeff Simpson and Deputy David King present. Mr. Simpson discussed the challenges facing the Department over the past year, beginning with planning and execution of the outdoor Town Meeting and standing up a testing program in the Department to maintain safe staffing levels. The testing program has since been offered to personnel in surrounding towns.

Norwell has a large elderly population, and the Department has fielded hundreds of Covid-related calls; additionally, the Department handles 911 transport of patients from nursing homes and South Shore Medical Center. Maintaining adequate PPE supplies has been a challenge, but state assistance has helped. Over the past year, the Department has expanded its functionality from primarily fire and rescue to include many pandemic management and transport functions, and Chief Simpson expects the Department will continue to adapt with the conditions.

### Departmental

The FY 22 budget is increased 2.09% overall from FY 21, with the largest line item increases being to Longevity (10%) and holiday pay (63.7%). Longevity is a contractually negotiated entitlement that Chief Simpson has little control over until the next negotiating session. Holiday Pay is another negotiated benefit whereby employees have the option of receiving extra pay for working certain holidays; the budget number reflects estimated usage. The Educational Director's line is reduced 25.42% from FY 21; this amount fluctuates depending on the educational attainment of staff. The uniform allowance line, funded this year for \$22,000, represents a change in procedure whereby staff receive a dollar amount in their pay to be used for uniforms, as opposed to the Department being billed by the uniform provider. Staff are responsible for their allowances and for maintaining a standard of appearance.

Typically the Department runs with four groups of five firefighters each, with five firefighters on duty at any given time; this past year, however, the Department ran with four firefighters on duty in many instances, below National Fire Protection standards. Chief Simpson would like to get staffing back up to the "five firefighters" level as soon as possible. In response to a query from Ms. Steele, Mr. Simpson indicated the Department recently hired two new recruits but two fighters are out on long-term leave, one for sickness and one on deployment. They are hoping to hire two additional firefighters this spring.

### Capital Spending

Chief Simpson has delegated to Deputy Kean the task of upgrading radio communications, especially in the south part of town. The current system, first implemented twenty years ago, is obsolete and equipment upgrades are needed, as firefighters are having to take extra steps during calls to communicate. The Department has negotiated a fair price to upgrade the system and secured grant funding to assist with the cost, which is estimated to be \$270,000 to modernize the entire system. An estimated \$40,000–\$50,000, for police details and other incidentals, will not be eligible for grant funding.

Mr. McSweeney asks what will be involved in implementing the upgrades. SSRECC, the town's 911 communications center will be submitting the grant on the Town's behalf, and a reply will be received by June or July; once the grant funding is approved, work can begin. The vendor doing the upgrade is familiar with the issues of the current system, and undertook a full evaluation with recommendations. The Department had other vendors do the same evaluation and they came back with essentially the same recommendations. In response to a comment from Mr. Perniola, Chief Simpson confirmed that the new system will improve communications with other towns, as the town relies on some level of "mutual aid" for most calls.

Ms. Darnell asked how the summer reply date for the grant will impact the capital funding request which will be voted on at the May town meeting. Mr. Morin has included a request for the full funding amount in Article 3, but can de-commit any excess funding if the grant goes through. If they hear back regarding the grant before Town Meeting, he will withdraw the capital request or adjust it downward. Chief Simpson is confident they will receive at least some grant funding based on his conversations with SSRECC.

Mr. Morin indicated there would be an additional capital funding request for \$25,000 related to repairs and maintenance of the Pine Street station, which is an essential operational/communications link to that part of town.

### Ambulance

A level-funded budget is proposed of \$104,900, same as for FY 21. The town's new ambulance, approved last year, will be delivered soon.

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### Emergency Management

Level funded at \$12,000. Chief Simpson would like to increase this line in the future, as the mix of what Fire Departments do has changed over the years. He anticipates Department involvement in multiple vaccine clinics moving forward this year.

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### Regional Dispatch Services

7.45% increase to \$567,593 from \$528,250 in FY 21. The Town is assessed by SSRECC based on total call volume; Norwell currently has the second largest volume of calls into the Center.

*Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Fire Department budget in the amount of \$2,640,250. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call vote.*

*Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Ambulance budget in the amount of \$104,900. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call vote.*

*Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Emergency Management budget in the amount of \$12,000. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call vote.*

*Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Regional Dispatch Service budget in the amount of \$567,593. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call vote.*

### Recreation Department

Recreation Superintendent George Grey present. The proposed budget includes contractually negotiated increases but less anticipated vacation buyback. Playground repairs and maintenance is increased from \$5000 to \$6000, which was the FY 20 (pre-Covid) appropriation, and General Expenses are set at \$9500; this is up \$1000 over the FY 20 appropriation due to a switchover to a different software management system; the new system will reduce processing fees paid by the town and residents from approximately \$24,000 a year to \$5000 a year. First-year implementation charges are being paid out of revolving fund reserves.

Mr. McSweeney asked why the software expenses weren't categorized as such on the worksheet. Mr. Grey indicated he would eventually like to support the software expenses out of the revolving fund, which is comprised of fee revenue from those who utilize Recreation programs. Ms. Mangan indicated that a second line item for software could be set up, and Mr. Grey had no issue with the possibility; if one were set up, the Software line would be \$5000 and General Expenses would be reduced to \$4500.

Ms. Steele asked Mr. Grey for an update on projects discussed at last year's meeting. There are currently two CPC-funded projects underway; one involves the addition of handicap parking in back of Town Hall, an asphalt pathway leading from those spaces to the East Field soccer fields, and additional fencing. A second CPC project involves repaving the Gaffield Park lot and adding handicapped parking spaces plus a pathway from the playground to the Town Pathway on Forest Street.

*Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Recreation Department budget in the amount of \$104,995. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call vote.*

**MISCELLANEOUS**

The Conservation, Planning, and Highway Department budgets will be discussed on February 25.

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**FUTURE MEETINGS**

2/25/21, 3/2/21, 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

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**ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn at 7:11 P.M. Seconded and passed 7-0-0 by roll call vote.*

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Peter Smellie, Chair