



TOWN OF NORWELL
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TOWN OF NORWELL
TOWN CLERK

2021 APR -6 P 12: 27

Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
2/25/2021

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, Julie Sim, and Kate Steele.

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 9-0-0.

Bills – None

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests – None

Correspondence/Notices – None

Action Items / Discussions – None

FY 2022 BUDGET OVERVIEW

Cushing Center

A level services budget is proposed except for contractually funded salary increases. Covid has impacted revenues for functions, but all offices remain rented.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Cushing Center budget in the amount of \$68,760. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Conservation Department

New Conservation Agent Will Saunders present along with Chair Marynel Wahl. The agent's salary line is down about 16.78% over FY 21 due to the new hire, but the Tuition and Dues and Expenses lines are funded this year, up from 0 last year, to assist with training.

All parties discussed funding for maintenance and repairs to the Gator, a four-wheeled vehicle that can be operated on the trail system. Ms. Mangan reviewed the request with Mr. Morin, and both concluded that this could be paid for out of the Conservation Fund. However, Ms. Wahl noted that the fund had not been used for this purpose for the past 10 years, and felt it was not best practice to use the Fund to pay for expenses normally covered in the town budget. Mr. Morin did

not object to this being part of the Conservation budget, but pointed out that this year was the first time he had heard this request. Ms. Wahl explained that until recently, the Gator had been stored at the Fire Department and was being used by several departments; based on its current condition, she feels each department assumed that another department was handling maintenance. Mr. Reardon's understanding, when he was Fire Chief, was that his staff were maintaining the Gator and will look into what was done. He agrees that the Gator is important from a public safety standpoint, as it can be used to recover injured hikers.

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All parties also discussed the Trail Maintenance Wages line item, which the Department had requested to increase to \$20,000 but remained at the FY 21 level of \$5,000 in Mr. Morin's recommended budget. In response to a query from Mr. Reardon, Ms. Wahl indicated \$5,000 was insufficient to make progress in maintenance of the trail system and stated the Commission had applied for CPC and state grants to fund aspects of the work. Mr. Morin replied that he had increased this line item in the past and the extra funds were not used; he did not want trail workers from the Council on Aging doing heavy work on the trails, and did not think the Commission could recruit enough workers to use a \$20K allotment; he suggested that the heavier work be contracted out to Trees & Grounds, which had \$16,000 set aside for trail maintenance, or another entity.

Ms. Darnell asked if the Highway and Conservation allocations for trail maintenance, \$21,000 total, would be sufficient; Ms. Wahl believed some additional grant funding would be needed to cover certain repairs. Trees & Grounds Commissioner Glenn Ferguson noted there was still about \$2,500 remaining in a trail maintenance account established in 2016. Mr. Smellie recommended that the Commission work with Messrs. Ferguson and Morin on a plan for trail maintenance.

Mr. Morin advised that a \$10,000 allotment to the Engineering Services line was a one-time expense to help prepare for stormwater impact reviews the Commission will be undertaking as a result of passage of the new stormwater bylaw last year. Mr. Saunders indicated the Commission would be sponsoring Town Meeting articles regarding demolition of the Stony Brook cottage and construction of a bench and osprey stand, Jacobs Pond weed treatment, and funds for transfer and recording of a recently donated parcel of land. Mr. Morin asked that the Board postpone voting on the budget until Tuesday so he can revisit funding for Gator repairs and maintenance.

Planning Department

Town Planner Ken Kirkland present. The proposed FY 22 budget is level-funded except for contractually negotiated increases for staff, an increase for office supplies to cover the purchase of reference manuals canceled last year, and a slight increase in the Advertising line item due to increased ad costs. Professional Services is reduced to \$2,500 based on historical expenditure.

Mr. Smellie thanked Planner Kirkland for his thorough response to Board queries, and asked about sponsorship of Town Meeting articles. The Planning Board anticipates sponsoring two street acceptance articles and four zoning bylaw amendment articles.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Planning Department budget in the amount of \$114,446. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Highways / Trees & Grounds

Highway and Trees & Grounds Commissioner Glenn Ferguson present. Member Reardon recused from the discussion and abstains from voting. The FY 22 budget is mostly level services aside

from contractual increases to staff. The Department is currently down one employee and this salary has been redeployed to other line items, such as maintenance, which has been an issue lately.

Mr. Smellie asked about hiring staff to handle maintenance in-house. Mr. Ferguson was in favor of the idea initially but now thinks it better to outsource given the associated equipment expense and payroll issues. Mr. Smellie also asked about plans for the new highway. Schematics have been completed and the design phase is next; work will hopefully start in the fall.

Mr. McSweeney asked about snow and ice expenses, which were currently about \$100,000 over what had been budgeted for due to recent long-lasting storms. Mr. Morin explained that when the town gives a budget number for snow and ice, it can't go under that number the following fiscal year; furthermore, towns are allowed to deficit-spend and carry forward debt for snow and ice removal, so the budget number is set purposely low (\$259K for FY 21 and 22). Any debt resulting from this practice is retired through a reserve fund transfer.

Mr. Smellie also asked about capital budget requests; the Department is requesting a backhoe, pickup truck, Bobcat, and Gator. The 10-wheel truck approved last year will soon be on the road. Ms. Steele thanked Mr. Ferguson for the Department's efforts to maintain the roads.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Highways budget in the amount of \$1,228,592. Seconded and passed 8-0-1, Member Reardon having abstained.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Trees and Grounds budget in the amount of \$565,939. Seconded and passed 8-0-1, Member Reardon having abstained.

FUTURE MEETINGS

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

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn at 8:02 P.M. Seconded and passed 9-0-0.

Peter Smellie, Chair