



TOWN OF NORWELL
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2021 JUL 28 PM 12:59
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**Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
1/28/2021**

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, Susan Darnell, Rick Goulding, Jesse McSweeney, Andrew Reardon, Julie Sim, and Kate Steele.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Minutes – None

Bills – None

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests

None; Mr. Morin indicated there may be a request next week related to the police chief search.

Correspondence/Notices – None

ACTION ITEMS / DISCUSSIONS

Board Position - Nominate and Approve New Clerk

Mr. Smellie advised that Elizabeth Feeherry had to step down from the Board; Mr. McSweeney is on the Advisory Board Nominating Committee and indicated they were considering two candidates to fill the seat.

Mr. Reardon agreed to serve as Clerk for the current fiscal year.

Motion made to nominate Andrew Reardon as Advisory Board Clerk for the current fiscal year. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

2020 TOWN MEETING ARTICLES UPDATE

Zoning

Marijuana Zoning

Mr. Smellie inquired why this zoning update was not on the ballot for the November election.

Mr. Morin checked with Town Counsel, who advised that such updates are approved at the next municipal (not state/national) election, which is set for May. The owner of the proposed facility in Accord Park is still planning to move ahead once the update is approved.

Accord Park

A for-profit memory care facility on Cordwainer Drive is in the permitting process. A Tesla maintenance facility is moving into the former BMW dealership location.

Major Projects

Mr. Morin gave the Board a brief update on the following projects:

Highway Barn

Specifications are done and financing is being arranged. Construction will take about 18 months start to finish. Ms. Mangan talked to Highway Commissioner Ferguson, who anticipates putting the project to bid in the fall.

Town Hall

Moving forward with some delays; current focus is on temporary worker facilities and the gas pump.

Library

Nearing completion and should be completed by Spring; there were some Covid-related delays. The new facility is designed to support multiple community functions at once.

FY 2021 BUDGET YTD OVERVIEW

Town Administrator Morin advised that the Town had received preliminary cherry sheets from the Mass. Department of Revenue showing the FY 22 Governor's proposed aid and assessments; these include an increase in Chapter 70 (Educational) aid from \$4 million 11K to \$4 million 92K but a reduction in charter school tuition reimbursement from approximately \$80,000 to \$48,000, resulting in a slight increase in educational aid from \$4.09 million to \$4.14 million. General government aid is proposed to slightly increase from \$1.21 million to 1.24 million.

Assessments and charges are proposed to increase from \$1.375 million to \$1.508 million, with the largest increases being in charter school sending tuition (\$303K to \$327K) and retired teacher health insurance (\$869K to \$985K). Mr. Morin noted that the latter changes from year to year based on number of retirees, utilization, and recent retirements.

Mr. Morin indicated this would be another challenging fiscal year for the Town, but made easier because of actions taken last year to bolster its cash reserves; these remain untapped, and local tax revenues are coming in with low default rates. Mr. Morin added that he had anticipated a larger local aid reduction; he has checked with Representative DeCoste and Senator O'Connor, who indicated the House and Senate aid proposals were likely to be modestly higher, but he intends to bake the Governor's numbers into the projections underlying the Town budget, which he anticipated would be ready by next Thursday. He has asked all departments to submit "Level Services" budget proposals. At this point believed that Town could fund a 2% COLA for employees.

Mr. Smellie asked about police and fire hires. Mr. Morin indicated that Fire had recently filled an opening and was looking to hire additional personnel. Police currently has two officer vacancies; there is funding to fill these positions, but the Department has held off so far to allow the new Chief to be involved in the process. Mr. Smellie also inquired about using a FEMA SAFER grant to hire the additional firefighters. This is an option, but the Town would have to plan for the grant funds to taper off after four years.

Ms. Steele thanked Mr. Morin and Ms. Mangan for their fiscal management, as the Town appears to be in a relatively stable position. Mr. Cleveland added that he hears from other towns that

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Norwell is well managed. Mr. Morin in turn thanked the Board for its part in vetting the budgetary requests each year.

In response to a question about the school budget, Mr. Morin advised that the Superintendent is looking to return to full in-person learning by fall, possibly earlier. As the town received more aid than anticipated, he expects the School Committee to seek a corresponding restoration of funding.

MISCELLANEOUS

Member McSweeney asked about the timing of this year's town meeting; Mr. Morin anticipates it will be on or around May 3rd, either indoors or outdoors. Additional CARES Act or PPP funding may be available to fund another outdoor meeting.

The February 2 meeting was canceled, as the budget is not yet finalized.

FUTURE MEETINGS

2/4/21, 2/9/21, 2/11/21, 2/23/21, 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

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn at 745 P.M. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Peter Smellie, Chair

These minutes were approved at the 2-4-21 meeting.