



TOWN OF NORWELL
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**Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
2/11/2021**

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, Jesse McSweeney, Andrew Reardon, Julie Sim, and Kate Steele. Unable to attend was Rick Goulding.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Minutes

The minutes of the February 4 and 9 meetings were distributed and reviewed.

Motion made to accept the Minutes of the February 4, 2021 meeting as printed. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Motion made to accept the Minutes of the February 9, 2021 meeting as printed. Seconded and passed 7-0-1 by roll call, Member Sim having abstained.

Bills

None

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests

None

Correspondence/Notices

None

Action Items / Discussions

None

FY 2022 BUDGET OVERVIEW

Treasurer/Collector

Treasurer/Collector Darlene Sullivan present to discuss her FY 22 departmental budget as well as the Town's debt budget.

Departmental

The proposed budget includes increases to the Salary line items that include step increases and a 4% raise which includes a 2% increase this year plus reinstatement of a 2% increase which was frozen last year. Additionally, one employee opted to use a vacation buyback. The remaining expenses were "level-serviced," as per Mr. Morin's request, except for an increase in Professional Services from \$49K to \$68K. Ms. Sullivan advised this increase was to purchase additional payroll

servicing from ADP to include various HR and benefits recordkeeping. This will assist with employee onboarding and tracking policy compliance.

Ms. Sullivan feels these additional services will be needed to keep up with ACA regulatory requirements, as the law is unlikely to be repealed at this point. She was able to negotiate about \$19,500 in discounts as well as two years of no fee increases, with a 1% increase for the third year. She feels the package will save the Department time and money, could be extended to the School Department for similar savings, and will ultimately pay for itself. Ms. Darnell and Mr. Morin both indicated Ms. Sullivan had consulted with them, and both agreed that the purchase of these services was justifiable.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Treasurer Collector Budget for \$442,586 as presented. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Debt

This line item includes principal and interest payments for the Town loans. The Town is borrowing short-term, through a bond anticipation note, to finish construction of the library; two grants of \$1.2 million each are coming in that are associated with this project. The Town will arrange for long-term financing once the final cost of the library is known.

Ms. Sullivan works with Mr. Morin to try to coordinate the assumption of new debt with the retirement of old debt. Any funds not used for current debt service are transferred into a reserve to pay for future debt. This and other good financial practices have helped the Town weather Covid-related economic disruptions.

Motion made to approve the FY 22 Debt Service budget for \$3,069,316 as presented. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Group Insurance

This line item includes Health and Life Insurance for employees and retirees. The "opt-out stipends" line has been reduced to \$240K from \$269K based on estimated usage; the stipend encourages eligible persons to get their insurance elsewhere, at significant savings to the Town. Mr. Morin is recommending \$5.5 million for employee health insurance, as he anticipates a surplus in the account after the payment of FY 21 premiums and has been told the town will get a one-month "premium holiday" this upcoming year. The Town is part of a joint purchasing group that has helped keep premium increases manageable.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Group Insurance budget for \$6,233,000 as presented. Seconded and passed 7-0-1 by roll call, member Reardon having abstained.

Accounting

Town Accountant Donna Mangan briefly discussed an FY 21 expense report as of January 31, 2021. The Town has received \$422,000 in FY 20 CARES Act reimbursements to date, and is owed about \$1.2 million in FY 21 not yet reimbursed. The Town is eligible for up to \$1.7 in reimbursements under the current funding. Emergency accounts set up for each department as well as "State of Emergency" budget line items help identify reimbursable expenses, and staff is proactive in identifying expenses eligible for reimbursement.

Mr. Cleveland asked whether Covid-related expenses had been a net negative for the town, or if they had been largely covered by reimbursements; Ms. Mangan indicated the reimbursements largely covered the expenses assuming they continued to be processed. The County treasurer, whose office administers the reimbursements, has indicated that all currently outstanding requests will be processed. Ms. Steele asked whether any additional CARES Act funding was pending for FY 22; this was uncertain at the time of the meeting.

Mr. McSweeney asked about \$10,500 spent by the Highway Department for Engineering Services versus \$1000 allocated. Mr. Morin was unsure of the reason for the overage; if Highways provided such services for another department, it could be addressed with a line item transfer.

Departmental

A "level services" budget is proposed except for contractually negotiated salary increases and employee vacation buybacks, as well as increase in Professional Services to cover an anticipated increase in cost of the annual town audit due to Covid-related expenses. An additional Federal audit will be required due to the Town receiving above a certain threshold of Federal grants in FY 21; this approximate \$4K expense is eligible for CARES Act funding, and the Town has filed for reimbursement. Ms. Mangan praised departmental employees for their efforts over the previous challenging year.

Motion made to approve the FY 22 Town Accountant budget in the amount of \$315,463. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Town Clerk

Town Clerk Patricia Anderson present to discuss her proposed budgets.

Town Meeting

The FY 22 Budget reflects an estimated two nights of Town Meeting plus additional chair rental in case of overflow.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Town Meeting budget for \$10,540 as presented. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Departmental

The FY 22 budget reflects contractual salary increases for staff.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Town Clerk budget for \$187,401 as presented. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Elections

Projected FY 22 election expenses are reduced by approximately half over FY 21, as there will be fewer elections this year. The Town received a \$5000 grant from the Center for Technology in Civic Life for election-related expenses, as well as additional funding for the presidential primaries and extended hours for elections.

In response to a query from Mr. Reardon, Ms. Anderson indicated that universal mail-in voting tends to increase the Department's workload, as some people show up to vote in person despite having received a mail-in ballot.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Elections budget for \$15,145 as presented. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Board of Registrars

A \$100 increase is proposed.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Board of Registrars budget for \$5350 as presented. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Mr. McSweeney asked whether remote meetings for town boards and committees will be allowed to continue after the State of Emergency has ended. Ms. Anderson hasn't heard either way from the Secretary of State, but Mr. Morin indicated the Mass. Municipal Association has asked to continue the option because it has enhanced public participation in meetings.

Facilities

Facilities Manager Ted Nichols indicated that his proposed FY 22 budget was slightly reduced overall from FY 21; it includes contractually negotiated increases for staff but a reduction in anticipated overtime and Covid supplies such as sanitizer. The Department is getting ready for the upcoming renovation of Town Hall, and is trying to get by with the existing infrastructure as much as possible until renovations begin. Mr. Nichols will request a reserve fund transfer if a major repair becomes necessary.

Mr. McSweeney asked about the difference between the \$7500 spent and the \$21K appropriated for building maintenance in FY 20. Mr. Nichols indicated this was due to a relatively light winter and the ability to use leftover supplies, as well as a request from Mr. Morin to refrain from unnecessary expenditures after the state of emergency was imposed.

Mr. Morin commented on Mr. Nichols' additional work at the Jacobs farmhouse and the Council on Aging.

Motion made to recommend the FY 22 Facilities budget for \$215,750 as presented. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

MISCELLANEOUS

No meetings are scheduled for February school vacation week.

FUTURE MEETINGS

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 8:45 P.M. Seconded and passed 8-0-0 by roll call.

Peter Smellie, Chair