



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

2022 APR -5 AM 11:29

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Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes February 10, 2022

The Advisory Board was called to order by Chair Jesse McSweeney at 7:00 P.M. Also present were Town Administrator Peter Morin, Finance Director Darleen Sullivan, and Board Members Bob Perniola, Susan Darnell, Mark Cleveland, Elizabeth Hibbard, Peter Leppanen, and Dane Hutchison. Mark Cleveland arrived after the vote to approve the agenda. Unable to attend was Rick Goulding.

AGENDA

Motion made to approve the agenda as submitted. Seconded and passed 6-0-0.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Minutes

The minutes of the February 3 meeting were distributed and reviewed.

Motion made to accept the Minutes of the February 3, 2022 meeting as printed. Seconded and passed 7-0-0.

Bills – None

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests – None

Correspondence/Notices – None

Action Items / Discussions – None

FY 2023 BUDGET OVERVIEW

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

Treasurer/Collector

Finance Director Darleen Sullivan present. Mr. Morin advised that the Select Board had tasked him to work on succession planning, and as part of that he would like to change Ms. Sullivan's title to "Finance Director and Assistant Town Administrator." A charter amendment to allow this will be voted on at the Town Meeting. He will then seek an experienced candidate to assume the Treasurer/Collector position.

Mr. Morin praised Ms. Sullivan's administrative ability and noted that many towns utilized their Finance Director in an Assistant TA capacity. Creation of the position will be good for the Town's bond rating, as it shows stability in succession, reduce the need for consultants, and free him up for higher-level, strategic tasks.

An increase in the Salary line in Ms. Sullivan's proposed departmental budget reflects her promotion to Finance Director, contractual increases for other staff, and vacation buybacks. An increase in the Professional Services line reflects the use of financial advisors and actuaries to assist with certain filings, and a switch to ADP for payroll services as well as HR and benefits recordkeeping. Mr. Cleveland asked whether this line would be expected to decrease in the future; Ms. Sullivan believes they will remain the same or increase unless the Town drops a vendor. She is satisfied with their services but tries to negotiate on pricing.

Mr. McSweeney asked about having one "Office Supplies" category in the budget for all departments. Mr. Morin indicated that all departments used the same vendor, so the Town qualifies for volume discounts, but the expenses are broken out by department in line with the tenets of "Program Budgeting."

All present discussed the tax title collection and foreclosure process. There is a significant financial benefit to pursuing these, but the Town tries to work with residents who fall behind in their payments. Ms. Sullivan primarily pursues old balances and has not foreclosed on any occupied properties to date. Expenses include filing fees, legal notices, and postage, but returns to the Town greatly exceed the initial outlay.

Accounting

Mr. Morin introduced Town Accountant Christine McCarthy to the Board, noting he had hired her back from Marshfield after Donna Mangan's retirement. Ms. McCarthy's budget reflects contractual salary increases and vacation buybacks by staff. There is an increase in the Professional Services line due to renewal of the auditor's contract and increased audit activity due to ARPA and Covid grant funding. An increase in the Office Supplies line partly reflects the implementation of DocuSign, which Ms. McCarthy would like to expand to all departments in the future. The Dues and Meetings line is up, as she expects meetings and conferences to restart and encourages staff to attend.

Board of Assessors

Principal Assessor Meredith Rafiki present; her proposed budget reflects contractually negotiated salary increases and a 12.5 hour increase for the office's part-time employee. With site visits resuming, she wants all of her staff to be trained to do inspections. An increase in the Engineering Services line reflects a quote from a new mapping company, and an increase in the Professional Services line reflects formerly one-off expenses, paid for through articles, that have become annual. Travel expenses are increased by \$500 to cover mileage for in-person inspections, but the Office Supplies line is lowered to reflect actual use. The Books/Periodicals and Dues/Meetings lines remain the same from the previous year. The "Other Expenses" line includes \$350 for a MLS subscription, which helped the Department bring in about \$29K in revenue last year.

Ms. Darnell noted that the Salary line on Mr. Morin's recommended budget was lower than in Ms. Rafiki's proposed budget. Mr. Morin indicated this is what he thinks the Town can afford, and it would be up to Ms. Rafiki how she utilizes the funds ultimately approved. Mr. Perniola asked if the increase in hours for the part-timer would result in an increased benefit cost; this would only occur if hours per week went over the 19.5 hours likely to be recommended by Mr. Morin.

Town Clerk

Town Clerk Patricia Anderson present to discuss her proposed budgets. The proposed Clerk's Office budget reflects contractual salary increases and expenses for office supplies and dues and

meetings. The Department assesses fees for various services, including dog licensing and business fees, which are checked against those offered by other towns.

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Election expenses, including printing, security, and setup, fluctuate depending on the year; this year's midterm elections will increase costs. Ms. Anderson anticipates a significant amount of mail-in voting.

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MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. McSweeney is working with Fire Chief Kean to arrange a visit to the SSREC Communications Center.

FUTURE MEETINGS

February 15, 17

March 1, 3, 8, 10, 15, 17, 22, 24, 29, 31

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn at 8:00 P.M. Seconded and passed 7-0-0.

Jesse McSweeney, Chair