



## TOWN OF NORWELL

Norwell Town Offices, Room 112  
345 Main Street  
Norwell, Massachusetts 02061  
(781) 659-8000

TOWN OF NORWELL  
TOWN CLERK

2022 APR -5 AM 11:29

RECEIVED

### Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes February 3, 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 Darlene Sullivan, and Board Members Mark Cleveland, Bob Perniola, Susan Darnell, Rick Goulding, Elizabeth Hibbard, Peter Leppanen, and Dane Hutchison.

#### AGENDA

*Motion made to approve the agenda as submitted. Seconded and passed 8-0-0.*

#### ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

##### Minutes

The minutes of the January 27 meeting were distributed and reviewed.

*Motion made to accept the Minutes of the January 27, 2022 meeting as submitted. Seconded and passed 7-0-1, Member Cleveland having abstained.*

Bills – None

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests – None

Correspondence/Notices – None

Action Items / Discussions – None

#### FY 2023 DRAFT BUDGET OVERVIEW

Town Administrator Peter Morin gave a brief overview of the following budgetary requests. He requested that no votes be taken at this time as there may be additional changes.

##### **Reserve Fund**

Each municipality in the state is required to maintain a reserve fund based roughly on one half of one percent of its annual operating budget. Mr. Morin tries to increase Norwell's proportionally to budget increases. The fund is used to pay for unforeseen expenses and emergencies, as well as to cover any deficits for snow and ice removal or omissions due to warrant printing errors.

##### **Debt**

This line item includes principal and interest payments for the Town loans. The Town currently has \$3,667,956 in total debt including a short-term, interest-only note for construction of the library.

Mr. Morin noted that the Highway Barn project went out to bid yesterday, and Mr. McSweeney asked if the increase in the cost of materials would have any impact on the total project cost; Mr. Morin indicated that it may, and Highways was trying to do as much work internally as possible to offset the increase. A placeholder article has been submitted in case more funding is required.

### **Town Meeting**

This line covers expenses associated with the Annual Town Meeting, scheduled this year for May 9, including printing costs for the warrant, sound system expenses, and pay for the check-in workers. Mr. Morin anticipates a total request of about \$11,500. The Town will try to hold the meeting inside this year; the increased cost to hold the 2020 and 2021 meetings outside was covered by CARES Act reimbursements.

### **Town Report**

This line covers the cost to print, copy, and distribute the annual report as per statutory requirements; a request of about \$3500 is anticipated. Ms. Hibbard asked whether this would be sufficient given the costs were higher in '20 and '21; Mr. Morin is comfortable with the figure, as there was a specific reason for the higher costs the two previous years that won't apply this year.

### **Plymouth County Retirement Fund**

An increase to \$3.3 million from \$3.1 million is anticipated, due partly to recent retirements of the former Police and Fire chiefs. The Fund has been increasing assessments about 8% annually in recent years, which partly reflects an effort to retire debt; this assessment currently comprises about 5.3% of the budget but is expected to increase to 7.5% by 2029, at which point the Plan is expected to be fully funded. Mr. Morin has expressed concern at the rate of annual increases to the County treasurer, and may use some free cash to "prepay" future assessments.

Mr. Perniola asked whether the Town took retirement costs into consideration when it adds employees; Mr. Morin indicated they have developed a metric to estimate this cost and mention it in the union negotiations. New employees contribute more towards their health insurance premiums, which helps lower overall expenses. The town had changed purchasing groups for health insurance recently, resulting in significant savings; he anticipates a relatively small increase this year, which will allow the Town to build a cushion against future increases.

### **OPEB**

The OPEB ("other post-employment benefits") Trust Fund primarily pays for retired employee health insurance and other benefits. All meals tax revenues are used to fund the Trust, but additional funds are needed to keep up with the cost. The Town directed more extra monies than usual to the Fund in FY 21 because meals tax revenues were lower than usual, but revenues had increased somewhat since then.

Mr. Morin noted that the Town had an ongoing practice of directing the payments for retired debt into the Capital Stabilization Fund to keep them from being absorbed into the Operating Expenses piece of the budget; these funds can then be used to level out increased debt payments in the future.

### **Select Board**

This line item includes the Town Administrator, Human Resource Manager, and two clerical salaries, which are set by contract, consultant fees, a travel stipend, and supplies. Mr. Morin anticipates an increase of about \$9K, reflecting contractually negotiated salary increases somewhat

RECEIVED  
TOWN OF NORWELL  
TOWN CLERK  
JAN 3 2022



offset by a reduction in the Consultant line. Mr. Morin indicated that the postage, copy machine maintenance, and phone costs for the entire Town Hall were captured under this line.

### **Legal Services**

This line item is currently set at \$65K, as the Town has never spent in excess of \$63K during Mr. Morin's tenure. These funds are paid to Town Counsel Bob Galvin, whom Mr. Morin characterized as a valuable resource, as well as KP Law and other firms for certain cases. As an attorney, Mr. Morin occasionally reviews or drafts documents to save costs. Any unused funds are returned to the general fund.

### **IT Services**

Mr. Morin anticipates an \$18K increase due to increased cybersecurity needs. Starting last year, the Town outsourced IT services to an outside vendor to update security systems and transition from server-based to cloud-based e-mail. Previously, the School Department's IT employees provided support to Town Hall.

Mr. Morin indicated the town had cybersecurity insurance, and all town employees received state-offered training; certain information remained on servers in order to provide redundancy in records. The increase in working from home last year increased IT costs, but most were covered by CARES Act funding thanks to the efforts of Ms. Sullivan and retired Finance Director Donna Mangan.

### **Committee on Disabilities**

This line is level-funded at \$3000; these funds are made available for brochures and other outreach. The Commission ensures that Town facilities and resources are accessible. The Town recently added closed captioning to the Annual Town Meeting and televised committee meetings as a result of their advocacy. Mr. Cleveland reviewed the Town Meeting transcript produced by the captioning, and found it to be accurate and informative.

### **Beautification Committee**

This line provides funds to beautify traffic circles and other areas of town, and the Committee provides recognition to town residents and organizations. Mr. Morin is recommending an increase to \$3000 from the \$2500 requested by the Committee, as they have an outsized positive impact to their small numbers and funding.

## **2022 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING ARTICLE OVERVIEW**

Mr. Morin advised that the Town Meeting Warrant closed last week. Articles for the Special Town Meeting will appropriate funds from the current Fiscal Year to cover unpaid bills and certain unexpected expenses, including any deficits from snow and ice removal. Another article will request funds for a water treatment plant on South Street so work can start earlier; this expense is eligible for ARPA reimbursement.

Articles for the Annual Town Meeting will include the standard budget articles and IT upgrade funds. CPC articles have not yet been finalized but include requests for invasives control, cemetery restoration, and funding for land acquisition. Other articles include a charter amendment to create an Assistant Town Administrator position, "circuit breaker" tax abatement for seniors, an Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw, and updates to the Demolition Delay bylaw and Special Permit durations. The Highway Department is requesting funding for a study on the use of composites on town boardwalks, and Recreation and Council on Aging are requesting funding for a study on

RECEIVED  
TOWN OF NORWELL  
TOWN CLERK  
MAY 11 2022

a joint Senior/Recreation center. Citizen petitions were due yesterday, and none have been received as of this date. The printing deadline for the warrant is April 4.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **Resignation of Member Galibois and Appointment of New Member**

Chair McSweeney asked the Board whether it wished to request a replacement for Robert Galibois, who resigned last week, noting that he was okay with or without one. Members Cleveland and Hibbard spoke in favor of requesting a new member. Messrs. Leppanen and McSweeney wanted any new member to be able to start as soon as possible; Mr. Cleveland, as liaison to the AB Nominating Committee, believed the process would move quickly as there were several strong candidates who had already been interviewed.

*Motion made to request that the Advisory Board Nominating Committee seek another Advisory Board member. Seconded and passed 8-0-0.*

Mr. Cleveland will convey the request to the AB Nom Comm.

## **FUTURE MEETINGS**

February 8, 10, 15, 17

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

No meetings February vacation week

## **ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn at 8:31 P.M. Seconded and passed 8-0-0.*

---

Jesse McSweeney, Chair

RECEIVED  
2022 APR -5 AM 11:30  
TOWN OF NORWELL  
TOWN CLERK