

TOWN OF NORWELL  
TOWN CLERK

**Norwell Board of Selectmen**  
**12/9/20**  
**Open Session – Remote meeting**

2021 JAN 14 PM 1:58

**Present:** Ellen Allen, Alison Demong, Jason Brown, Bruce Graham, Rob Allen, Mr. Morin, Darleen Sullivan, Donna Mangan, Board of Assessors, Pam Davis

**Open Session**

The meeting was opened by Chair Ellen Allen at 7:03pm. She announced that all votes will be roll call votes as the meeting participants are using remote access software. The meeting is being recorded and the audio file will be available on the Town website. Ms. Allen noted that this meeting will be conducted pursuant to the Executive Order dated March 12, 2020 suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, Gen. L. c. 30A §20 et seq. and 940 CMR 29.01 et seq.

**Approval of Agenda**

*Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Bruce Graham, to approve the agenda as written.. Unanimously voted by roll call vote*

**BOS Reports**

Water dept. received an award for keeping the water clean. AAWC a series of virtual gatherings. Info will be posted on their page of the website.

**Town Administrator Report**

Mr. Morin wished Dave Osborne well for his upcoming minor surgery. The flag at TH was broken. Out for repairs and will be back up soon.

**Citizen Comments - None**

**Public Hearing – Tax Levy Classification 2021**

The Board of Assessors joined the BOS to present the calculation of the 2021 tax rate. Chair Rob Allen gave the background information for the power point presentation to set the tax rate. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Rull noted that the average tax increase of about \$400 is meaningful to many families in Norwell. The commercial tax base has shrunk almost a percentage point in the Town. The board expressed the hope that the businesses in the Town will be able to grow in the upcoming year. The pandemic will affect the residential property values favorably while the commercial base will get smaller. Questions were asked and answered about how the commercial property is assessed (sales based).

Mr. Dawe joined the meeting to ask questions. Why did the number change in the levy from the amount voted at Town meeting? Ms. Mangan replied that the number to be reviewed should be total appropriations from the two town meetings, and gave further components of the amounts that make up the levy. Also the previously voted on override for the library is now affecting the levy number. New growth in the town also affected the levy number. Discussion ensued about the components and calculation of the levy and the Town budget. Mr. Morin noted that the budget voted on in Article 2 is what the departments are adhering to. The overlay has increased under the levy so that people who are deserving of abatements can receive them.

Also this year had a subsequent increase in new growth that was added on to this year, which served to increase the levy and debt exclusion overrides like the library are included in that. Next question was about total assessed valuation, which increased \$89M, very large number. Prior two years, \$11M. RA noted that any improvements done on existing homes also adds to

the new growth. Don't consider this in an aggregate sense. Should schedule time with Pam Davis to discuss further.

Mr. Rull had questions re: tax rate. BOS has fielded many questions about the Assessors office over the past couple of years. Has some questions from residents as well as himself.

1. Meals tax-other smaller towns are waiving taxes on the small businesses, particularly restaurants. Any increase will affect those businesses. The meals tax would have to be re-voted at TM to be changed.
2. For PM – no conflict of interest between assessor and BOS Chair. RA – not the assessor, also no conflict per PM. has seen family members as parts of boards and it has never been viewed as a conflict. JR noted a perceived conflict of interest. There is no conflict of interest with financial benefit. JR asked if the paperwork has been completed with the clerk. PM noted that he feels that it's not necessary but will check with the Clerk. JO noted that she reached out to the state ethics board about serving on both the BOA and the BOS. She was told if no financial compensation was involved there was no conflict by the state ethics board.
3. BOA as a whole – have all members of this board completed and passed this assessor 101 course. 12 mos. After election. RA – yes. JO – all plus more. MH enrolled in the course now. PM also took and passed the course. Ms. Allen offered to have another meeting with the assessors in the future.
4. Has the town looked into turnbacks. PM – free cash – surplus operational money. When dept has an operational surplus swept into free cash. Also comprised of revenue surplus. If depts. don't spend they turn it into free cash for a nonrecurring need. If the next year's budget needs that surplus the budget it gets worked out.
5. Ted Dawe – talked about timing of BOA in other towns. Would it be possible to have this hearing sooner than ½ hour before the BOS meeting. Ms. Allen is hearing that residents would like more info about the composition about the assessment numbers. Suggested another muni budget 101 class for residents. PM noted it will be recorded and go on the website.

Motion: 1. To not adopt the open space exemptions. JB, BG  
2. not adopt the residential exemption, JB, BG  
3. not adopt the small business exemption, JB, BG  
4. Maintain the single tax rate, JB, BG, JR, opposed. No. 4-1.

Ms. Allen thanked DM and the BOS.

Resignation from ZBA – Roy Bjorlin.

With regret and thanks for his service, accept the resignation, JB, BG, unan.

#### **Advance in Lieu of Borrowing for the new library**

This will address a cash flow caused by a gap in the reimbursement from the state. Don't have the final amount of the project. Could also do a bond advance note or a grant advance note, but should hold off. A more advantageous position is to use reserves as collaterals to pay the bills, would still have 3M of the current 5M without incurring any costs for this money. DS was looking at cash flow for the upcoming months, looking at going to the bond market sometime in March. Gave the particulars of the upcoming cash flow analysis. Will make there is enough to carry through to the end of the fiscal year. JB asked – have done this before. There is a level of risk...unprecedented times right now. If for some reason this emergency affects the town's money what happens. Per DM, this higher amount of free cash is being used as collateral. PM noted that we would go ahead and borrow anyway, and when the state got back on its feet they would repay the amount.

Motion to approve the advance in funds in lieu of borrowing watch video.

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License renewals, see book.

12-16-20 Commemoration – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Norris Reservation gift from Eleanor Norris  
The presentation will be at 10am and R and B Gordon will reminisce with some others.  
The citation will be edited and then maybe put it in the kiosk near the parking lot. Someone will be present from the Trustees of the Reservations. EA and BG will attend.  
EA read the draft. Would the BOS come in for real signatures – yes. Office will let everyone know.

**Future meetings:**

The next BOS meeting will be on 12/30/20.

**Adjournment**

*Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Bruce Graham, to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:33pm, not returning to Open Session, to discuss personal contracts. Unanimously voted by roll call vote.*

*Ellen H. Allen*

Ellen Allen, Chair

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