

Norwell Board of Selectmen

**Meeting Minutes
March 1, 2017**

TOWN OF NORWELL
TOWN CLERK

2017 MAR -9 PM 3:36

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Present: Jason Brown, Ellen Allen, Alison Demong, Peter Smellie

Open Session

All began a discussion about the Jacobs Farm proposed lease agreement with Norwell Farms for use of the farm and buildings.

The License will clarify which outbuildings Norwell Farms may use and will include the East Barn and parts of the Carriage Barn. This draft review will be continued later in tonight's meeting. Some draft editing remains to be done, so approval will be postponed to a future meeting.

Open Session

The meeting was called to order by Chair Jason Brown. Due to the absence of both Mr. McBride and Mr. Morin the meeting agenda will be amended and discussion of Agenda Items d), e), g) and h) will be postponed to next week's meeting.

*Motion; made by Ellen Allen, seconded by Peter Smellie, to approve the agenda as amended.
Unanimously voted*

Citizen Comments - None.

BOS Announcements - None

Town Administrator Announcements

Town Administrator Peter Morin is ill and unable to attend tonight's meeting.

Public Hearing for the License application for Extreme Pita

*Motion; made by Ellen Allen, seconded by Peter Smellie, to open the public hearing.
Unanimously voted*

Mr. Smellie read the notice of public hearing.

Mr. Brown stated that the landlord has not paid a portion of his outstanding property taxes and water bills, but added that this issue is not the responsibility of the business owner. Mr. Brown invited Mr. Avitable to speak, and he explained that all inspections are complete and he has submitted all license applications. Ms. Allen added that the Treasurer will address these outstanding payment issues with the landlord for resolution.

The Treasurer will let Ellen and Lynda know if Mr. Avitable needs to attend next week's meeting.

Motion; made by Ellen Allen, seconded by Peter Smellie, to continue this hearing to next week's meeting on March 8th at 7:35pm. Unanimously voted

Treasurer Department Budget

Ms. Sullivan stated that the General Expenses of her level draft budget were reduced by 3K, which is fine. She highlighted various line item expenses in her budget, as well as giving updates on tax title expenses and actions. She explained the cost/benefit of this particular line item. Office supplies remain at 6K, with a budget of 37.6K for total expenses. Departmental salary budget expenses include an increase for her, and a slight increase for some of her personnel.

Debt

Ms. Sullivan reviewed debt service costs, which dropped in this fiscal year. There is a new road bond proposed, but no principal yet, only projected interest. There will be more borrowing forthcoming. Debt service is what the Town owes in the aggregate for the annual principal and interest payments on outstanding debt.

Health insurance review

The average cost of the most popular health plan is 20K per year per employee, and the Town is paying 60-80% of that cost. Ms. Sullivan reviewed total health care costs with the board, and gave updates on specific plan increases. The budget is using 13% over actual cost for planning purposes. Health insurance line items were reviewed with the board. Life insurance costs are on budget and actually decreased slightly. A cost of just over 6M for health insurance makes this expense the second largest line item in the Town's budget.

Jacobs Farm License Changes – Draft Agreement with Norwell Farms

Ms. Demong gave an update on the progress of the license agreement with Norwell Farms over the specifics of their use of the farm. Changes include a diagram of areas approved for their use. The west barn will no longer be used by them, and group requests for use of this building will be overseen by the NHC from now on. Norwell Farms will use the east barn for their activities, including distribution of produce shares in season. Mr. Hornstra has removed all of his equipment from the carriage house, which freed up space for Norwell Farms. This has been a positive forward move towards more defined access and organized use of the property.

The Town will now charge Norwell Farms \$3K per year for use of the space in these specific outbuildings. This annual fee will help defray the higher cost of maintenance for wear and tear on the property from increased activities by Norwell Farms.

Final next steps before contract approval; review by Town Counsel and exhibits that need to be added before approval at an upcoming meeting.

Ms. Allen requested a copy of both the draft agreement and the license agreement with Mr. Hornstra before the March 15th meeting. Ms. Demong reminded all that his license agreement is not due for renewal at this point (there is an automatic renewal at the end of each license period if all are in agreement).

Kudos to Ms. Demong for all her hard work.

Vote Deficit Spending for Snow and Ice Removal

Motion; made by Ellen Allen, seconded by Peter Smellie, to approve deficit spending in the snow and ice budget. Unanimously voted

Accept resignation of Eric Thorbahn

Motion; made by Ellen Allen, seconded by Peter Smellie, to accept with regret the resignation of Eric Thorbahn from the Athletic Fields Committee. Unanimously voted

Accounting Department

Ms. Mangan gave a quick overview of her department's proposed budget. It includes some step increases for her two staff members for a total expense of 117.6K. Her salary increase has not yet been settled; Mr. Morin will make that decision. Expenses are level service. Annual audit costs are included under Professional Services. She has a proposal letter from Melanson Heath, the current auditors, of 24.5K for next year's audit, with additional costs for various add-ons. The Town has used this audit firm for 8 years. Their contract is up this year, so the Town will need to go out to bid or extend the engagement. All discussed the pros and cons of changing auditors. Ms. Allen suggested retaining them but using a different partner and audit team. The board will continue this discussion with the Town Administrator. Mr. Brown asked about the audit procedures of other towns. Ms. Mangan stated that she will defer to the board on their decision. All thanked her for coming in.

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Upcoming Agenda Items

1. Highway Surveyor, fees for road races
2. Norwell Farms license agreement
3. De-leading proposal for Jacobs Farmhouse
4. Marijuana discussion; moratorium and other issues

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Adjourn

Motion; made by Ellen Allen, seconded by Peter Smellie, to adjourn at 8:13pm. Unanimously voted



Jason Brown, Chair