

**Town of Norwell
Select Board
Open Meeting Minutes
10/12/22**

Present: Ellen Allen, Jason Brown, Bruce Graham, Andy Reardon, Pete Smellie, Peter Morin

Town Counsel Bob Galvin, NHC members,

Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Pete Smellie, to approve the agenda as presented. Unanimously voted.

Meeting minutes: 9/28/22, open session minutes

Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Pete Smellie, to approve the 9/28/22 Open Session minutes. Unanimously voted

The 9/28/22 Executive Session minutes will be voted at the next Select Board meeting.

Select Board Reports

Ms. Allen attended the dementia friendly training held at the COA. She found it very educational and encouraged all to attend this series of seminars. The hope is for a grant to underwrite the cost of a dedicated professional for this program. Upcoming is a dementia program presentation at the high school for all students.

Mr. Brown reported that the Complete Streets Committee reviewed and discussed the current status of the sidewalks construction project, which is scheduled for completion to Town Center. The committee made plans to develop a residents' survey with a choice of 4 to 5 potential sidewalk construction areas in the Town that would connect to existing or planned sidewalks. The survey results will be presented at a public meeting.

Town Administrator Reports

Mr. Morin was pleased to announce that the ARPA money received by the Town can be used to purchase the Town's new fire truck. He thanked Ms. Sullivan, Ms. Carter and Ms. McCarthy for a great job getting the funds approved. This is a big plus for the Town as well as significant savings on interest costs.

Citizen Comments - none

Potential property acquisition – offer to purchase St. Helen's property

Mr. Graham recapped the purchase details, adding that the price is much higher than the anticipated amount of \$3M-\$4M. The Town offered \$250K more than the highest offer, which was \$8.8M, making the sale price \$9.050M. 8 bids were submitted.

Mr. Morin stated that the Town is in excellent financial shape and has several options to make this purchase. Any property acquisition requires a 2/3 vote at Town Meeting for approval. The Select Board does not make this decision but does sign the P & S after tonight's vote.

Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Pete Smellie, that the board authorize the chair to sign the Purchase and Sale agreement between the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston and the Town of Norwell for the St. Helen's property. Unanimously voted.

Mr. Graham noted that the board will continue to meet in Executive Session to discuss this purchase and its potential uses. They will also invite residents, neighbors, the Town Planner and committees such as the Community Housing Trust and the CPC to participate in future discussions. Per Mr. Graham, "It would be impossible to come up with a specific use plan for an 11 acre \$9M property on such short notice before a Town Meeting, but it will definitely not be a golf course, it won't just sit there, and it won't include a skyscraper."

Norwell Historical Commission

Mr. Graham gave a recap of the meeting held with NHC members, Building Inspector Tom Barry, Mr. Morin and Ms. Sullivan. The main topic was a review of the draft of the demo delay bylaw, whose wording in its current form is causing a difference of opinion. Mr. Graham opined that homeowners should only have to go through the demo delay application process once, and the decision should travel with the property if it is sold. Discussion ensued about definitions of terms in the draft such as 'partial demolition'. NHC members stated that they used the Hingham bylaw as a model. Regardless, it is still up to Mr. Barry to decide on the application.

A simpler solution was proposed; just add the Hingham bylaw text that was omitted the first time. This draft might be on the Warrant at a future Town Meeting. The board asked for clarification on the Hingham bylaw wording.

NHC member Jim Kelliher commented with NHC Chair Nancy McBride, noting that it is a confusing bylaw. Any draft should be written so that a homeowner can actually read and understand it. He expressed the hope this gets going soon, and hopes that NHC members can be part of a subcommittee between NHC and the Planning Board (PB).

Ms. McBride reiterated the purpose of the bylaw, adding that the NHC should be involved in this reworking. She would like 'partial demo' as part of the review process so that the NHC could talk to homeowners, look at plans and make suggestions. The committee can't tell them what to do. Per Mr. Graham, until the law changes, Mr. Barry decides. This should incentivize the NHC to help rewrite the bylaw.

Further discussion ensued about the difficulty of finding examples of a good demo delay bylaw and how to determine historic status of a house. All noted that the state system is flawed.

Mr. Brown would like the homeowner to know the historic status of property, "yes or no". This is a delay bylaw, not control and doesn't mean that the NHC can decide what you can do with your house.

Wendy Bawabe said that the Mass Historical Commission discourages homeowners from using an inventory form in favor of an age-based threshold.

The board directed both the PB and The NHC to choose a subset of both groups and work this out. Ms. Allen suggested Ms. Bawabe be a part of the group as well as NHC member Laurie Detwiler.

Jacobs Farmhouse Rental Discussion

The board discussed the rental unit of the farmhouse and potential renters. Mr. Graham cited the P & S residential clause stating that the house is still full of lead paint, although it has been through remedial lead paint removal treatment up to the height of 5 feet to comply with the child safety laws. It is compliant but not actually safe for kids and not covered by general liability insurance. It is currently empty, with the option to rent for maybe office space for the farm renters.

Health Agent Ben Margro cited public health laws noting that plaster cracks are against the state health code and it might be wise to hold off on residential and probably commercial rental for now. He would like the board to consider this before renting to any party.

Ms. Allen cited the complexity of the HNE agreement and asked Mr. Morin to ensure that the property is allowed to rent to non-residential renters. More discussion ensued about the house and the lead paint content, commercial insurance for a municipal entity and state compliance rules (the house complies with state law). Per NHC members, the house needs rental income to perform deferred regular maintenance tasks.

CPC member Susan Powell opined that a very large amount of money has been spent to restore this house over the years, roughly \$500K.

Mr. Morin will contact HNE tomorrow to see if commercial rental is possible.

Special Town Meeting; proposed Warrant Articles discussion, tentative dates

All discussed the January timeframe, which would make more sense given the upcoming holidays.

Choices for dates are: 12/19/22, which is too close to the holidays and a very tight turnaround for the Warrant. 1/9/22 or 1/23/22 are available January dates. After discussion with Mr. Ferguson regarding the timing of his RFP, 1/9/22 was the first choice, 1/23/22 the second choice. The board agreed on the 1/9/22 date, pending the availability of the Town Moderator.

PB Chair Brian Greenberg would like to have 2 Articles on this STM Warrant as they address fairly pressing issues.

Motion: made by Jason Brown, seconded by Pete Smellie, to set the date for the Special Town Meeting as January 9, 2023, subject to the availability of the Town Moderator and open the Special Town Meeting Warrant. Unanimously voted

Mr. Morin reviewed the list of potential Warrant Articles with the board as follows:

- Approval of Purchase & Sale of the St. Helen's property
- Purchase & Sale of 93 Longwater Circle to serve as new Town offices
- Home Rule petition to remove Norwell Police Department from Civil Service
- Payment of Prior Year Bills
- Appropriation of Transportation Network Company (ride share) funds
- Supplemental funding of Reserve Fund
- Supplemental funding of Personnel and Contract Articles
- Planning Board – 2 Articles (pending)

Mr. Morin recapped the history of the Town Hall study and the subsequent decision to relocate. The price of \$11M to renovate 345 Main Street far exceeds the purchase price of \$4.5M for a new building with modern construction at about 1/3 the cost. Both the highway barn and this Town Hall purchase would be financed under the levy. The down payment on 93 Longwater Circle could be made with \$1M of ARPA money. The balance of the building purchase could be financed with a 20-year bond, smoothing the debt for 2 ½ years with capital stabilization (without impacting reserves). The purchase is well within the Town's means. There will be some negotiations for the final purchase price.

Mr. Morin noted that all the other municipal buildings in the Town have been renovated and upgraded except the Town Hall. This project has taken a great deal of planning. To be able to do this and augment the highway barn funding at the same time is a real

home run for the Town at a reasonable cost. The Town's finances are in excellent shape. He is hopeful that voters will support these Articles at the STM.

Future meetings

October 26th

November 9th

November 30th

December 7th

December 14th (if necessary)

December 28th

Adjournment

Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Pete Smellie, to adjourn at 8:45pm.

Unanimously voted

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bruce W. Graham', written over a horizontal line.

Bruce W. Graham, Chair