



TOWN OF NORTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MUNICIPAL CENTER,
70 EAST MAIN STREET, NORTON, MA 02766

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**Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
January 10, 2019**

I. Call to Order by Chairman

The January 10, 2019 meeting of the Norton Board of Selectmen was held at the Norton Middle School in the 7 White Wing Staff Room and was called to order at 6:00 P.M., by Mr. Robert W. Kimball, Jr., Chairman. Member(s) present: Mr. Robert S. Salvo, Sr., and Ms. Mary T. Steele. Also in attendance: Mr. Luke Grant, of the Water Sewer Department. The joint meeting with the School Committee was called to order at 6:30 P.M. Board of Selectmen member(s) present: Mr. Robert W. Kimball, Jr., Mr. Robert S. Salvo, Sr., and Ms. Mary Steele. Mr. Michael Flaherty arrived at 6:45 P.M. Also in attendance: Dr. Joseph Baeta, Superintendent of Schools along with Ms. Sheri Cohen, Ms. Kathleen Stern, Mr. Deniz Savas, Mrs. Carolyn Gallagher, and Mr. Daniel Sheedy of the School Committee.

II. Licenses and Permits

III. Announcements

IV. Appointments/Resignations/Retirements

V. Business

A. New Business

i. Shared Positions

Ms. Cohen of the School Committee brought up the topic of Shared Positions from the School Committee's Agenda. Dr. Baeta stated that him and Town Manager, Mr. Michael Yunits, have been speaking about this. Their contracts are expiring on June 30th. Dr. Baeta provided the schools' contract information to give the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager time to review before the next joint meeting scheduled for January 24, 2019 where they will discuss this more. Mr. Kimball added that this makes a lot of sense to try and work together with the schools regarding shared positions (such as janitorial services, HVAC systems, and elevator services) because it will be beneficial cost wise to both the schools and the Town.

ii. Review of Town Meeting Articles

Mr. Kimball gave a summary of the Articles on the Warrant for the Special Town Meeting as follows:

Article 1 is regarding prior year bills. Since there are no prior year bills, no action is being taken at this time.

Article 2 is to rescind borrowing that was done. Mr. Kimball explained that over the years there have been a series of projects, such as the Norton High School renovations, where the Town still has money on the books. In order to cleanup the unissued portions, they have to go back to Town Meeting to rescind these votes. Mr. Savas asked about “negative borrowing authority” and if it will have an effect on the Town’s credit rating, which Mr. Kimball addressed that it would and is why they are trying to get the excess borrowings off of the books.

Article 3 is an article for the Town Common. At the October 23, 2017 Town Meeting, Mr. Kimball explained they were very specific as to how the money collected would be used specifically for the Town Common fence only. However, because they were creative on the work that was done, there is money leftover that cannot currently be used for anything else but the fence. This article would allow the Town to use the remaining funds on anything relating to the Town Common, such as lighting, the gazebo, landscaping, etc. Ms. Cohen asked if they will be putting speaker systems in, which Mr. Kimball replied that at the end of the Town Common work they are looking into installing wireless speakers.

Article 4 is due to developers looking to change the bylaw to allow the use of solar panels on [active] cranberry bogs. They are using the bogs for solar farms with the understanding that the cranberries will still be growing under the panels. Mr. Kimball added that the Town also owns the Slattery property with the bogs, and will be able to use this land to install solar panels. So, this article is looking to negotiate between the Board of Selectmen and NextSun Energy to build this facility with a PILOT Agreement. This is a privately-owned property, so in lieu of taxes NextSun Energy is going to pay an annual fee of \$200,000 per year for 20 years to the Town. Mr. Kimball explained that the Town is trying to become a “green community”; so, under this amended solar bylaw it will allow the Town at the Spring Town Meeting to adopt a Stretch Code bylaw for zoning and will make Norton a “green community” which in turn will make the Town eligible for more programs and grants.

Article 5 is the article that will actually be changing the zoning to allow the solar photovoltaic installations. Mr. Kimball stated that they forwarded this to the Planning Board and they approved the bylaw change. Ms. Sterns asked if the cranberry bogs will stay under the solar panels and remain as cranberry bogs [and not taken to develop houses], which Mr. Kimball answered was correct. He added that they may not produce as many cranberries, but they will remain cranberry bogs.

At this point Mr. Michael Flaherty has joined the meeting (approximately 6:45 P.M.)

iii. Ms. Cohen then addressed the Cost for Substitutes.

Dr. Baeta explained that one of the line items that does not get a lot of time in discussions is “long-term substitutes” and health benefits. This is the area of long-term substitutes for medical coverage of personnel who may in fact still be earning their salary while the School Department is also covering that position with a secondary salary, which could be \$80-\$100 per day or in areas of need an actual per diem, which Dr. Baeta stated he tries

to negotiate differently from these contracts. He pointed out that these are non-union positions. He mentioned that the cost for a substitute is \$80.00 per day and that employee typically get on average between 12 and 15 sick days. Dr. Baeta continued this discussion and emphasized that there are three main line items they are addressing, which are maternity leaves, health leaves, and personal days. He stated that they are projecting a \$30,000-\$40,000 increase from last year. Dr. Baeta stated that he believes this is a perfect example of a School Department overtime line item. Ultimately, they would like to figure out the best way to allocate this money.

Dr. Baeta stated that maternity leave is very special to them because they are a female-oriented field. The issue becomes a problem where sometimes they have 6-7 people out or another year 13-14 people out. He added that he understands and they are pro-family, but they cannot predict this. Dr. Baeta mentioned that they don't really have another place to go for accounting/paying for this. The only time where this really works for him budgeting wise is when that person takes their maternity leave at the end of the year and then takes a leave of absence; this gives anywhere from 30%-40% of that person's salary to put into this line item. For our attendance, he stated for staff they are at about 95%, which he explained is right where they should be which is also a good thing because it means that they aren't abusing this. This also includes family sick time, so if that teacher's child was sick, they can use sick time to take care of their child.

Mr. Kimball stated that he saw an article about a lack of substitute teachers and in turn asked if this seems to be a problem for the School Department. Dr. Baeta stated that as a matter of fact yes it is. Dr. Baeta provided an example of an English teacher leaving for a year to pursue a career. In that circumstance, they account for \$40,000 instead of the full \$80,000. He added that another problem they are having is they cannot get a crossing guard. They have been advertising for a crossing guard after theirs retired, but still no one. A proposal they had was having a substitute teacher be the crossing guard for the first 30 minutes then come right in and teach. The conversation then digressed to how the Norton Middle School can get the lights that Wheaton College has at their crosswalks there.

Mr. Salvo addressed Dr. Baeta's question since he has been a Chairman for the Housing Authority. He stated that they approached the State, got approval, and they paid for it because they bought the system. Mr. Salvo added that it isn't cheap and is maintained by a company and there are only a few in the state that can work on them. He told the School Department to send a letter to the State requesting this. Mr. Kimball added that it is a state highway, so they would need to get permission to do so first. Ms. Cohen asked if they could also change the one by the High School to the flashing lights instead of the red stop sign, which Mr. Kimball stated they could. Mr. Salvo stated that back in 1998 they asked for this from the State, but the State said there wasn't enough foot traffic at the time, so they are probably going to have to get some engineering done and collect information. Dr. Baeta added that the first reason for the need of a crossing guard is to direct the foot traffic of people crossing the street, and the second reason is to direct the school buses in and out to create good flow of traffic.

iv. Discussion on Demolition of Campbell House and Barn and Use of Property

Mr. Kimball mentioned that a letter was sent to the Historical Commission, and a reply was received that there is no interest in saving the property because it is too far gone and there is no historical value left. He added that they are looking for funding at the Spring 2019 Town Meeting to tear down the house and the barn. This property is still under the Board of Selectmen and Mr. Kimball suggested once they do tear down the house and the barn possibly creating a second egress there. Some other ideas Mr. Kimball presented were using the property as a possible drop-off area, additional parking, or storage of equipment. Ms. Cohen added that she thought it would be good for the playground to have more parking. Dr. Baeta agreed especially because that the visits to the playground are during the school days. Mr. Sheedy expressed his concerns of creating a roadway right next to the playground because it would be putting the children at risk.

v. Special Education

Dr. Baeta brought up possibly having to transfer students in the district and that this continues to be a topic of concern. He expressed his appreciation to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee for their support at the May Town Meeting. Dr. Baeta stated that at this point, they are stable, but at any point this could become problematic. He noted that they do not have an article for Town Meeting, but posed the idea of the School Department adding one as a placeholder just in case they miss the deadline of when articles are due. Their concern is the number of spaces a collaborative has for students is getting smaller and smaller every day.

Dr. Baeta mentioned there is another specialized program potentially moving to the Henri A. Yelle Elementary School, which would be the first time in Norton that pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade has instruction in specialized programming. He reminded everyone that it is the district and the family making the decision. In terms of the healthcare budget, it is not directly connected but there are 4 recommendations within the Foundation Review Committee Study of which two of those recommendations will give \$0.00 increases. So, in turn Dr. Baeta has made it evident that the other two recommendations offering \$600,000 in yearly increases from the State is their only options. Dr. Baeta pointed out that the total increase from the State in the past six years is \$300,000. In other words, the schools have been getting \$25 to \$50 per student, which he stated doesn't come close to paying for anything. Dr. Baeta thanked Mr. Kimball and the Board of Selectmen for their support and asked them to please keep mailing their two state representatives.

vi. Election Scheduling

Mr. Kimball stated that the Town Clerk explored the possibility of holding the election at St. Mary's, but this location is not adequate and it is too far into the election timeline to do so at this point. The Norton High School is the best venue that meets the election criteria. It is suggested that the School Committee consider election days when scheduling professional development days. As for the April election, there will be a police presence in the school.

In response, Dr. Baeta stated that they have to think of pre-k to twelfth grade. He stated that they had moved their professional days to the first two days before Labor Day, but there may be another look at their calendar as far as starting before Labor Day. Dr. Baeta mentioned that part of the issue is determining how many elections the Town will have; this past year Norton had four. He added that if they are going to be closing the High School every time this happens this will extend the school year for the High School; however, kindergarten through eighth grade would be unaffected. Dr. Baeta added that the High School's gym is an internal facility. The only building that has an external building/room to use for elections is the Norton Middle School. This would eliminate the security issues at elections as far as access to the rest of the building. The only big concern would be in the afternoon with sports and activities, but it would be fewer kids than at the High School. Dr. Baeta concluded by saying he has never worked with a better Town Clerk and that they would like to have further discussions with the Town as far as using the Middle School as an option.

Mr. Kimball responded saying he doesn't have a preference as to where elections are held, but he believes the only place that can handle the traffic is the schools. He added that they have looked at Wheaton College and St. Mary's but there are so many restrictions. Mr. Kimball emphasized that this is probably another reason to check out the Campbell House property and that it makes perfect sense to use the Middle School due to the layout and location. Dr. Baeta replied that his biggest concern is the parking lot due to the poor traffic flow pattern it creates. Dr. Baeta agreed that the biggest issue is the gym in the High School where the elections are held is a room located at the core of the building. Dr. Baeta explained that once you are in the gym you have four exits, which requires a police officer at each exit; then, you step out and there is another officer there directing people how to get out. Mr. Kimball pointed out that he is a firm believer in having one consistent location where elections are held for transparency. He told the School Committee it is their buildings, so they need to tell the Selectmen what works best for them.

Mr. Kimball also brought up Spring Town Meeting, and mentioned an error was made on their part. The Town Moderator informed them over the summer that he would be going away for 2.5 weeks and wouldn't be around the second Monday of May. The Moderator asked the Selectmen to consider moving the Town Meeting to Wednesday (May 15th) instead of Monday (May 13th). He added that if they do not reschedule Spring Town Meeting, they would have to appoint a special moderator. Mr. Kimball suggested speaking about this more in a couple of weeks at the next joint meeting to determine how to handle this. Dr. Baeta replied that he didn't see this as a problem as long as they are given enough notice, which they have received.

vii. Transportation

He referenced the spreadsheet for appropriation of funds for transportation. There are \$787,478.00 in appropriations, \$191,830.00 in revolving funds that comes from the ridership figures, and \$86,069.00 for athletics and field trips. This is a million-dollar line item that is growing every year. Dr. Baeta stated they would like to look at making transportation internal; there would be significant savings on the School Department side,

but there would be some costs to the Town side. The two major concerns they have is hiring of bus drivers and having to provide them with healthcare if it is over 20 hours per week. He informed the Selectmen that currently transportation is a third-party and procurement process. Dr. Baeta mentioned that one curve ball they had was because some families are on MassHealth it is considered a “financial benefit” and actually kicked about 38 families out of receiving free and reduced lunch. The School Department then had to work with these families in order for them to be able to pay the \$350 to take the bus. Ultimately, it is an increase of \$30,000 per year and the only other options they have are to either increase the \$350 fee to take the bus or eliminate the buses in certain areas.

A woman in the audience asked if there is a reason for the two-mile limit, and Dr. Baeta answered it is a state statute. Mr. Kimball added that a big safety concern is there aren't enough sidewalks, making walking to school unsafe. He added that the sidewalks they do have are very narrow and are not ADA compliant. Mr. Kimball mentioned that they have been working on putting sidewalks in around the schools themselves.

Dr. Baeta transitioned to Safety Routes as listed on the Board of Selectmen's Agenda. He stated that they did submit a \$430,000 grant request for transportation. Ms. Cohen emphasized the misconception that the \$350 per kid covers the cost of transportation, which it doesn't even come close to doing so. Mr. Salvo proposed in the future for leasing out busing because there is a reason why other schools and districts are doing this. Dr. Baeta agreed with Mr. Salvo and added that the question is do they put together a financial plan that might not be great at the beginning, but be the best solution in the long run.

vii. Social Emotional Learning/Trauma Sensitive Schools

Vinny Cerce, head of this program, introduced himself and highlighted some of the key points in the handout provided to the School Committee and Board of Selectmen. He emphasized that these issues cut across socio-economic statuses, race, etc. Mr. Cerce stated that suicide is the third leading cause of death in teens and it is a growing concern in suburbia; 1 in 5 teens suffer from depression before age 19 and aren't treated (even with students that have good insurance). Anxiety is another growing issue of districts in the area.

Mr. Cerce went on to describe some of the skills employed in students relating to social emotional learning and transitioned to the 2017-2018 crisis district statistics. He mentioned that the high school has a bridge program and last year there were 36 students in that program and that was the first year. Mr. Cerce stated that one reason why they are doing this is there is a financial benefit. For instance, students are at significant risk of out of district placement, which would result in \$150,000 per year for out of district costs including transportation; increase cost for in-district special education services and staff; and a decreased chance of grants and other financial incentives due to the impact on attendance, drop-out rates and test scores.

Mrs. Stern stated that a great thing from these seminars is that that person might not recognize the signs of crisis, but their peers could recognize it and report it. Mr. Cerce supported this sentiment stating that teachers have said that without the education from this program they may not have known what questions to ask or what students to flag. Ms. Cohen addressed the Selectmen explaining the School Department thought this would important for them to hear this because this is more than just a school/child issue. This is a community issue.

Dr. Baeta restated that this isn't a socio-economic demographic issue and that it hits all types of families. In the past, Dr. Baeta stated Norton had one of the highest drop-out rates in the area (about 19 students/year or 6.26%); now it is nearly 0. He suggested getting the bridge program at the Middle School so they will learn these tools and maybe not need them in the High School. Mr. Kimball thanked Mr. Cerce for the work he is doing.

viii. Update on Town Hall/COA Feasibility Study

Mr. Kimball announced that they have reached out to two companies to determine what criteria they need to construct these buildings. So far, the architects have put together some designs that are very preliminary, but they are hoping to have a report by the May Town Meeting. The other issue is where to put the buildings. There is a piece of land on the other side of the 495 overpass as a possible location. Mr. Kimball mentioned another proposed location is behind the current Town Hall. The property adjacent to the police station is another option, but is unlikely due to a difficult land owner. Therefore, the most likely location for the new Town Hall and Senior Center is the Reed & Barton location on Elm Street. Mr. Kimball stated that the DEP and EPA are in the process of cleaning up the property. When the DEP and EPA are done, the current owners of the property want the Town to take over the property for no consideration. Mr. Kimball explained that once the property is turned over to the Town, they have to tear the building down. He added that they have already had other companies come to the Town saying they will take it down for free in exchange for materials inside (beams, etc.). Mr. Kimball assured everyone that by the time it is done it will be clean with no contamination, but once the Town owns the property on Elm Street the property is the Town's forever.

ix. Update on East & West Main Street Improvements Projects

Mr. Kimball stated they will be working on the bids in July. He added that most of the work won't commence until 2020 and that it will take about 5 years to complete the project. He explained that the possibility of doing night work has been brought up. With night work, they can knock about 2 years off the project timeline. Mr. Kimball stated he wanted to bring this up to the School Committee because this will have an impact on their bus routes and on West Main Street in front of the schools where they will be doing work such as installing new sewer lines and tying in the High School and Yelle School). Mr. Kimball informed the School Committee this will be happening in the late summer/early fall of this year (2019).

x. Blue Star Industrial Park Development

Mr. Kimball stated that they are anticipating construction of the first building by the Fall of 2019. The developers are still working with the Planning Board to get everything done and there are 8 buildings involved in this project. The sewer line will include from Leonard Street to East Main Street "hump" and be done by Spring/Summer of 2019.

Dr. Baeta on a side note mentioned that he gave the Selectmen the line items for the School Lunch Privatization for them to review prior to the next joint meeting on January 24, 2019. He added that after February 1, 2019, the government shutdown will have an effect on the schools from the cost of free and reduced lunch because the reimbursement costs may grow.

B. **Old Business**

C. **Town Manager's Report**

V. **Selectmen's Report and Mail**

VI. **Meeting Minutes**

VIII. **Warrants**

Report of Chairman Robert W. Kimball, Jr. on the following Payroll and Invoice Warrants:

- A. Approve Payroll Warrant PR19-14, for the week ended December 29, 2018, Warrant dated January 3, 2019, in the amount of \$1,281,534.04.

MOTION was made by Mr. Salvo to approve Payroll Warrant PR19-14, for the week ended December 29, 2018, Warrant dated January 3, 2019, in the amount of \$1,281,534.04. Seconded by Ms. Steele. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

- B. Approve Invoice Warrant AP19-27, dated January 3, 2019, in the amount of \$1,281,534.04.

MOTION was made by Mr. Salvo to approve Invoice Warrant AP19-27, dated January 3, 2019, in the amount of \$1,281,534.04. Seconded by Ms. Steele. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

- C. Approve Invoice Warrant AP19-28, dated January 10, 2019, in the amount of \$1,130,285.13.

MOTION was made by Mr. Salvo to approve Invoice Warrant AP19-28, dated January 10, 2019, in the amount of \$1,130,285.13. Seconded by Ms. Steele. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

IX. **Other Business**

There was no other business to discuss.

X. **Next Meeting's Agenda**

The next meeting will be another joint meeting with the School Committee, which will be held on January 24, 2019. At this time, they will be discussing a new program the State adopted with a company called Trane; this company comes in for infrastructure improvements. Trane would take over the electricity cost if the Town put solar panels on top of their buildings. A representative from Trane will come to the schools to talk about this. Also, on the next agenda will be a discussion about time clocks and committee reservation.

XI. **Executive Session**

To discuss collective bargaining strategy with SENA-B.

XII. **Adjournment**

Declaration by the Chairman, Mr. Kimball, was made as follows:

"I declare, under General Laws Chapter 30A, §21A(a)(3), that the purpose of the executive session will be to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining concerning SENA-B, because a discussion of the strategy in open session could compromise the purpose of the executive session and with the Board to return to open session at the conclusion of the executive session."


MOTION was made by Ms. Steele at 6:06 P.M. that the Board go into executive session under G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3) for the purposes and reasons declared by the Chairman and with the Board to return to open session thereafter. Seconded by Mr. Salvo. Vote: Mr. Kimball – Yes; Mr. Salvo – Yes; and Ms. Steele – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

MOTION was made by Ms. Steele to adjourn the executive session at 6:19 P.M. Seconded by Mr. Salvo. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

MOTION was made by Mr. Savas to adjourn the School Committee meeting at 8:49 P.M. Seconded by Ms. Stern. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

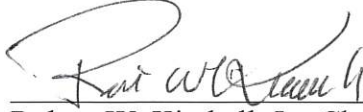
MOTION was made by Ms. Steele to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting at 8:49 P.M. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

Respectfully Submitted by:



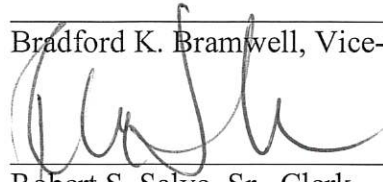
Jennifer Reid, Office Administrator

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES OF MEETING
JANUARY 10, 2019**



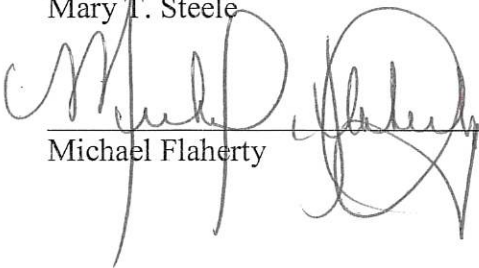
Robert W. Kimball, Jr., Chairman

Bradford K. Bramwell, Vice-Chairman



Robert S. Salvo, Sr., Clerk

Mary T. Steele



Michael Flaherty

Minutes Approved by Board on: 2 / 21 / 19