

Town of Norton
Finance Committee
Minutes of the Meeting
May 2, 1994
Revised

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NORTON TOWN CLERK

Attendance: Phil Zawasky, Chair; Tom Deluca, Vice Chair; Jackie Desrochers, Michael Fiore, Tim Phelan, Julia Sweet, Donna Summerfield and Paul Helmreich.

Call to Order: 7:31 pm by Phil Zawasky, Chair.

New Business

Solid Waste Advisory

They are proposing a Fixed Fee and Bag Fee similar to what is in place in Seekonk right now. They did look at a Flat Fee program also. Their first Article proposes the Fee and Bag charge. Their second Article is a Flat Fee proposal. The Solid Waste Advisory will recommend the Fee and Bag system because they like it better and feel it has its merits.

The Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) handed out a spreadsheet outlining both fee systems. The fixed cost figures include all the administrative costs, the billing will be done through the Town, twice a year (the Town then pays the contractor). Administrative responsibilities will be to answer questions and field complaints.

Donna Summerfield asked if there was enough money in the \$100 fixed fee charge to hire a person to work 19 hours a week. SWAC confirmed that this was included in the fixed costs.

Paul Helmreich brought up the concerns of disposing of large objects such as appliance boxes. The solution are stickers that are placed on the items or cartons that you want hauled away.

Paul Helmreich was also concerned that this proposal should not be included in Article 10 as a line item. Walter wants compliance with State law having to do with rubbish disposal--he feels that it could be self-funding like the Water department is. Paul Helmreich worries about putting this in with the Operating Budget---he sees it more as an enterprise system.

Mike Fiore's concern is where will a deficit be made up from if it should fall short of expectations? The technique they figured on using was to ask contractors to bid within their budget so that there would not be any shortfalls. The \$100 Fixed cost figure contains a \$15 cushion but they expect to be able to come in lower than these numbers.

Tim Phelan suggested to SWAC to possibly push the Flat-Fee system just to get the proposal passed--even at a higher price at first if recycling is

an objective.

A lengthy discussion took place asking SWAC what the incentive would be for people to vote for their Article when it does not sound like a better deal than what most people have already? Many people are pleased with their rubbish disposal companies so why would they want to change and pay higher costs for the Town do it? The size of the bags was also an issue for discussion because many people use the standard barrels you can buy anywhere and a 15 or 30 gallon bag will not fit these barrels. Paul Helmreich asked SWAC to research the cost of a 39 gallon bag because this is the size necessary to fit the standard garbage barrel. The limits on service were discussed---many people can put out up to 6 barrels a week whereas the new program limits you to approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$.

The cheapest way to handle a bag system is for the Town to go out for bid on the bags. They in-turn sell them to the stores. The store cannot add more than 3¢ to the price of the bags.

Paul Helmreich has trouble signing off money with so many questions still unanswered---there is no way for people to be able to tell if they are getting a good deal or not.

Water/Sewer Department

Article 8 & 9 on Special Town Meeting: Creating a new position, Financial Supervisor, but not a new person coming into the job. This is a substantial upgrade from Office Administrator. This person is responsible for the fiscal development of the department. She sends out the bills, oversees the collections and is overall the Financial Supervisor--her duties go far beyond that of an Office Administrator. Her current salary is \$23,294.44. Comparable salaries in area towns range from \$27,000-\$31,000. The Superintendent would like to raise her salary to \$28,000. The Superintendent would be looking to change it on the Warrant Article. He is looking for \$4,705 in Administrative salary (the \$23,294.44 should have been in budget but wasn't). He wants to stay within the town's restraints -- the increases in salary would come out of the Water Budget. She would only charge 7 weeks to Sewer instead of 8 weeks. This will not affect user rates. This will not be a union position.

Article 43

The Superintendent stated that we have a Water Protection By-law in place and it is more stringent than the one that is trying to be adopted. As long as our By-law is in place we have met the DEP's criteria.

Article 24 Water/Sewer Technicians

The department has always had technicians--the Superintendent wants to rejuvenate the position so that he may hire one. He has included this in his budget already. He has created new requirements for a Grade 2 Distribution Technician. The position of Foreman is vacant right now. This

is a move to put someone in a position where he belongs---an Assistant Superintendent. This position would be a salary position (no overtime) with a range of \$28,000-\$34,000. The Superintendent would offer \$31,000--this will save the department a potential \$1,400.

Article 31

Last year Town Council collected betterments to recoup costs--value has increased so we get taxed on it. The Town pays half then the residents pay half of the Town's cost back. This is a By-law for the rights to file for betterments to recoup the Town's cost back.

Paul Helmreich moved to reconsider Article 31 on the Annual. Seconded by Tom Deluca. Vote: unanimous. Paul Helmreich moved to recommend Article 31. Seconded by Tom Deluca. Vote: unanimous.

Tim Phelan made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Michael Fiore. Meeting adjourned at 9:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia C. Mello
Recording Secretary