

**Finance Committee Minutes
September 26, 2006
Municipal Center - Selectmen's Meeting Room**

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NORTON TOWN CLERK

Call To Order

Meeting was called to Order at 7:35 p.m.

Present: Chairman, Paul Helmreich; Vice-Chair, Lee Tarantino; Mike Thomas, Tom DeLuca, Mike Fiore, and Philip Zawasky. Jackie Desrochers and Donna Summerfield were absent. Town Manager was also present.

1. Approval of Minutes

MOTION was made by Mr. Fiore to accept the Finance Committee Minutes of Meeting of June 19, 2006 as written. Second by Mr. Zawasky. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

MOTION was made by Mr. Fiore to accept the Finance Committee Minutes of Meeting of July 12, 2006 as written. Second by Mr. Zawasky. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

2. New Business

School Committee

Mrs. Donna Gradie thanked FinCom for allowing school to present. She discussed Article 9-construction and renovation for Norton High/engaging consultants = \$65,000. 1) feasibility study and public presentation; 2) funding regs document and hoped FinCom will allow school officials to do this. Otherwise cannot talk to State.

Mr. Kevin O'Neil of School Committee spoke of school building authority scope/timing and amount; a moratorium on schools by State to not accept any school projects. Treasury took over from State. 20% of state income tax to fund school business projects.

Mr. O'Neil said they need to file a "statement of interest form" to identify what needs are and to review with Board of Selectmen to show consensus proves community has a need. If State feels it has merit they will work on it with Town and give Town direction. He said they will submit a statement of interest within next month or so. They want to get on file and hopefully they will send reps out etc. New England Schools and Colleges want written report by April 1, 2007 advising them of deficiencies being addressed (science lab, etc.). They want some funds available to go forward if able to do so. He said in May the Town Meeting is busy so asking for it now. There are 730 students today and in three years looking t 900 students. Space requirement would be short; these are not plans to build new high school but study options of expansion.

Mr. Helmreich said he applauded the School Committee for moving forward with application and spoke of wisdom of holding in reserve \$65,000 and waiting until spring; may need it before then. Mr. Helmreich asked if this was in terms of appropriation of funds. Enrollment increase questioned; is it a "bubble" or not?

Mr. O'Neil said he understood financial condition of Town. He said they began addressing a lot of items/deficiencies. Facility itself is not addressed. This is the next step they believe. \$65,000 is a bit high; possibly \$20-\$30,000 would be a better number. They are planning ahead and have a lot of work to do.

Mr. O'Neil referenced the "bubble" question; the Town's largest class is in grade 7; 27 average class size at High School. K-3 have 27 children and will sustain. A lot of work at high school involves space.

Mr. Thomas discussed enrollment-not a large number increase.

Mr. O'Neill spoke of home sales/birth rates. They are looking at current actual enrollments and using factor. State reimbursement rates are multiple/different variables. He would think about 55-65%. He said if other facilities are maintained a bonus is given to towns for that. A fraction of what was introduced several years ago is being proposed.

Mr. O'Neil said this funding would hire a licensed architect and could possibly use amount lower than \$65,000.

Mr. Fiore spoke of this being the "cart before horse". Appears they want to go to Town Meeting to reserve money Town may or many not need.

Mr. O'Neil said the School Committee is working their hardest to keep off of probation and would rather not learn "the hard way".

Mr. Fiore said stronger case on actual dollar amount needed. Mr. O'Neil said to do accurately need to put out to bid.

Mr. DeLuca questioned the State's turnaround time and possibly holding up \$20,000. He said the FinCom knows he is not an advocate of "studies".

Mr. Tarantino stated response to override was so overwhelming; people of Town do not want it. Need reserve money for things already set out there for (not for something that "may" happen).

Mr. O'Neil said they need to plan despite political climate. They never looked at expanding high school before.

Mr. Purcell spoke of 1) an appropriation right now; would like to see if looked at more favorable if money available;

2) it is a difficult regulatory climate for businesses. Possibly scope of article could be broadened (bid specs, etc.). He said they put money aside for Ch40B defense fund; possibly a like purpose for this or any schools in need (i.e., \$25,000).

Mr. Thomas commended School Committee. However, he said unless things change, Town will probably lose staff next year due to financial climate as of now. He believed no money could be put aside for this.

Mr. O'Neil said there is a greater need now; a thin line with Accreditation Association.

Mr. Helmreich agreed with Mr. Thomas, Town is in dire straights. He said they could file letter of interest and come back to FinCom. However, he did not see funding being available.

Mr. O'Neil said he was glad to see Board of Selectmen Chairman in attendance at his meeting because in order to submit letter they need Board of Selectmen's support.

Mrs. Gradie referenced the "bubble" issue and said last year in March Mr. DeLuca asked how Town can keep students in Norton; this is one way to keep students in Norton. She said also feasibility study not done for renovations of high school in past.

Planning Board Articles

Mr. Helmreich referenced a report in FinCom's packets from Planning Board dated today with Planning board votes and should be taken in order presented to FinCom.

1. Article 19: Lot Shape Factor

Planning Board voted in favor of this Article (7:0).

MOTION was made by Mr. Fiore to recommend Article 19. Second by Mr. Zawasky. Vote: All In Favor, except for Mr. Thomas abstaining. MOTION CARRIES.

2. Article 12: Off-Road Vehicles

Planning Board voted in favor of this Article (7:0)..

It was noted word "snowmobile" was deleted and a sentence added.

Mr. Zawasky said he objected to this deletion and spoke of pollution on water bodies, etc.

Mr. Helmreich said a snowmobile is not an all terrain vehicle. Enough of FinCom not understanding this deletion. Mr. Purcell will get report of this. Will meet again on October 2 and can get clarification.

NO Action taken by FinCom on Article 12.

3. Article 17: Derek Hay

Planning Board voted 7:0 in favor of this Article.

Mr. Tarantino suggested to wait until spring to clean it up and to know what all of facts are. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Purcell said he views this as extension of present zoning district (not spot zoning). He said he suggested it abuts village commercial district.

Mr. Purcell said it appears to be contiguous to village commercial is his opinion. Discussion ensued. Discussion ensued.

MOTION was made by Mr. Fiore to recommend Article 17. Second by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All In Favor, except Mr. Tarantino who voted. no. MOTION CARRIES.

4) Article 16: Mr. Fallows

Planning Board voted in favor of this Article 7:0.

Mr. Helmreich said if changed to commercial could be any commercial use. It does need site plan approval and other approvals.

MOTION was made by Mr. Fiore to recommend Article 16. Second by Mr. Zawasky. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

Article 14 and 15: Street Acceptances-Foster Drive and Fletcher Way

MOTION was made by Mr. Thomas to recommend Article 14. Second by Mr. Zawasky

Discussion: Mr. Purcell said tomorrow evening the Board of Selectmen is taking a position on it (vote to layout as public ways).

Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

**MOTION was made by Mr. Thomas to recommend Article 15. Second by Mr. Zawasky.
Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.**

Article 18: Kilburn Glass

It was noted Planning Board voted 3:3 with one abstaining and motion did not pass.

It appeared some Planning Board members' belief was due mainly to pollution and extensive wetlands.

Mr. Yarworth of Yarworth Engineering was present and said they went to Planning Board last night and direct abutter of Planning Board abstained. He explained it is an industrial piece of land and expansion of factory desired and gave further explanation. He said there was some neighborhood opposition. Houses (one to two) to be built is best scenario for neighbors

Mr. Helmreich said he had a letter from William and Evelyn Darling who are abutters and Mr. Helmreich read letter. They were encouraging R-40 change. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Yarworth said it was 200-300' of distance from proposed area to nearest property line.

Mr. DeLuca said second house is 20' from landfill.

Mr. Helmreich spoke of concerns; wetlands with road coming in, and spoke in terms of access and landfill area. Question is if it will remain industrial or residentially developed.

Mr. Fiore said this Town does not have enough industrial land to give it way.

Mr. Roach said property has been for sale for five years. He said potential sales fell through mainly because wanted businesses closer to higher traffic area. Drawback is there is no sewer.

Mr. Roach said they spent in excess of \$500,000 of engineering studies on site and remediation of \$900,000. Jim Bagley of DEP in charge of that area and today he works in Toronto, Canada currently (e-mail distributed to FinCom and attached as attachment to these minutes). Discarded equipment of landfill; not a source of groundwater contamination to site.

Mr. DeLuca asked why not samples on opposite side where plan is to build a house? A representative sample needed as sample could show it is perfectly clean.

Mr. Roach discussed discards as grass clippings, sand, silt, boulders, tree limbs, some iron, one sink, and a little plastic. 4' drop was capped.

Mr. Helmreich said they need to do what is in best interest of Town. Question is if Town is better served for future use for industrial or residential?

Mr. Roach said Planning Board saying pollution exists when it is not polluted. According to State of Massachusetts, First Statute, (Brownfields legislation referenced), they could have went to DEP and could have done condos/40B's as legislation is such they could have gotten permission to build on land where plant is.

Mr. Tarantino said he was a member on former Master Plan Steering Committee and not enough industrial in Town and many parcels of industrial are in wrong areas. Best use is to rezone it residential as fits with character of that area.

Mrs. Debbie Burgess, of 102 So. Worcester Street, said there is a lot going on behind the scenes. She was told they tried to sell but did not because of groundwater contamination which was said at other meetings. She had a lack of trust in owners and asked why they are trying to develop little piece of property.

Mrs. Burgess said if they were certain only two houses would be built they would not be in opposition to zoning. Encroachments on this land by three neighbors and questioned if this is contingency upon zoning being changed or depends upon if houses are approved? She asked what other caveats are? She asked what does this contract also include? She asked about any plans and why four acres?

Mr. Helmreich said some of these questions go beyond FinCom's purview. Needs to go through permitting process (simple zoning change from industrial to residential).

Joyce Lewis of 97 So. Worcester Street referenced Planning Board meeting and the proposed uses of two house lots. She said pollution issue was addressed by Mr. Roach. She said she does not want designated as a hazardous waste site; and does not want another Prosser next to her. She said already Sysco trucks driving by. She said she never heard any sounds from this plant; and will not "slam" anyone's character. She suggested to change part of it only to residential; current company is doing well. She said herself and her husband, Nancy Poirier, Bud White, the Darling's and Howard Hinton also support this change and are all direct abutters. Discussion ensued.

MOTION was made by Mr. Fiore to recommend Article 18

Second by Mr. Zawasky.

Discussion: Mr. DeLuca said very rarely does FinCom go against Planning Board's recommendation. Planning Board vote was split in half and he looks to them for decision.

Vote: All In Favor, except for Mr. DeLuca who voted no (5:1) MOTION CARRIES.

Article 9: School Committee - Request of Funding (\$65,000)

MOTION was made by Mr. Thomas to recommend Article 9. Second by Mr. Zawasky.

Discussion: No specific sum determined at this particular time.

Mr. Purcell said he would recommend if scope of article can be brought to \$25,000 for architectural drawings, engineering or school building allotment/capital improvements, he would be interested in doing.

Mr. Helmreich said this was for high school specifically.

Mr. Purcell said school will continue to need capital improvements. Schools should have sum of money available for renovations.

Mr. Helmreich said at this time not something to be done and would not sit well with Town voters. Between now and Annual Town Meeting not necessary to do.

Mr. Tarantino said Town emphatically told us "don't spend money unless you absolutely have to."

Mr. Purcell said he does not know many people who don't feel renovations are needed to schools. Broadening scope of this particular article to get on ground floor would be helpful. 40B defense fund was \$25,000 and townspeople gave them feasibility. A modest appropriation to do this.

Mr. Helmreich said a letter of interest needed, application and if needed before to put before Annual Town Meeting. A general fund is a good idea but not not the time nor need.

Vote: All Opposed to Article 9. MOTION DENIED.

Mr. Purcell spoke of \$414,816.00 in tax levy capacity. \$185,000 in new income as a result of water and sewer commissioners adjusting sewer rates. Some bills due now to Town of Mansfield for some capital project.

Mr. Purcell reviewed funding worksheet/unpaid bills discussed.

F07 capital budget/capital planning committee (rescue boat). It was voted to recommend purchase and at least half be funded through ambulance reserve account.

Article 4: operating budget supplements-\$14,000 for data processing budget (virtual Town Hall). Volunteers were relied on in past; Town site needs to be more robust. This is not a luxury it is a necessity.

Unemployment Compensation was discussed by Mr. Purcell. Mr. DeLuca asked if School Dept. can tell him how many people got let go? COBRA was discussed.

Mr. Helmreich said next Monday night's FinCom meeting will take final action on these amounts (financial articles) and an answer on snowmobile (deletion) issue article for Planning Board.

Adjournment

MOTION was made by Mr. Zawasky to Adjourn at 10:45 p.m. Second by Mr. Thomas. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.