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TOWN OF NORTON

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Municipal Center – Selectmen’s Conference Room

MARCH 4, 2019

7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

I. 7:00 P.M. Call to Order

The March 4, 2019 meeting of the Finance Committee was held in the Board of Selectmen’s Room and was called to order beginning with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 P.M., by Mr. William Rotondi, Chairman.

Members Present:

Mr. Stephen Evans, Vice-Chair, Mr. Peter Carignan, Mr. Tom DeLuca, Mr. Richard Dorney, Mr. Michael Fiore, Mr. Paul Helmreich, Ms Aimee Sawyer, Mr. Aaron Smith, and Ms Bonnie Yezukevich.

Also in attendance was Mr. Mike Yunits, Town Manager.

Absent: Mr. Walter Eykel

II. New Business

Proposed FY20 Budget Reviews:

Mr. Yunits authorized expenditures in excess of available FY19 funds according to GL chapter 44 section 31D for snow removal.

#420, 423 – Highway/Cemetery/Snow Removal – Mr. Silver began with salaries, explaining why he is requesting 2 new employees. One of the reasons is that the Storm Water Job is becoming a full time position which leaves him shorthanded for other department responsibilities. He will still use Seasonal Help but wishes to increase the hourly rate.

- Snow removal – always an estimate
- FY 20 Budget Discussion - Mr. Silver stated reasoning behind each increase.
- FY20 Capital Request – Mr. Silver reviewed the items on the 5 yr. capital project list.

Questions asked throughout the presentation:

1. Do you cross train employees? Yes

2. Tell us about the new cemetery, scope of work. It is open and in use at this time. There is ½ acre still being worked, the Newcomb Street side looks very nice. The roadway needs more work.
3. When did the cemetery open? August was the first burial.
Do you have any idea as to the anticipated revenue for the cemetery? Are there any cremation plots? It is hard to tell about revenue, there are 3,500 full size spots in one section. This should last about 142 years. Mr. Kimball stated that there are no cremation spots yet. Today you can bury 3 urns in one plot. All the fees have increased and you can now purchase a lot ahead of time.
4. Is the overtime mostly seasonal? No, during the winter on windy days many limbs and trees fall. These need to be removed right away and would be an example of overtime. We also use overtime for the recycling coverage every other week.
5. What do you do when someone is out on vacation or sick? Do you just work with 1 man down? Yes

Mr. Silver continued with Operating Budget. He added that he is trying to purchase iphones for everyone, as some still have flip phones and it is difficult to communicate, take photos, GPS while on the road with these older units.

#241 – Inspection – Mr. Yunits introduced Chris Carmichael, building commissioner. Chris went over his budget and reasons for increase request. He would like to add a part time local inspector. The fees have increased to address online permitting. There is an increase for Bio Hazard homes are being boarded up and homes with liens as well. There have been about a dozen houses this year.

Questions asked of Mr. Carmichael:

1. Is there a reason why the Mileage is down? We are using cars and many of the guys are using their own cars and not charging for reimbursement.
2. Board of Health also asked to board up some houses? Yes, both departments help. Board of Health has the right to board up also.
3. Why ask for new hires? We are doing all this work now and doing all the additional work at this time. I am asking for help.
4. Should we set up a revolving Fund for the boarding up of houses? Mr. Yunits said he would look into this.
5. Is there a job description? Yes and I am asking for \$30/hr for part time to inspect. They must know codes.
6. Is 19 hours below benefits? Mr. Yunits – yes
7. Are building permits all online? Yes and this has increased productivity immensely. It is much easier today.
8. It would be helpful to have some examples on the site to help the public fill in these forms and would eliminate phone calls to your department for assistance. – Mr. Carmichael – I'll see if we can add them to our FAQs.

#541 – Council on Aging – Mr. Yunits introduced Beth Rossi, Director. Today we are more of a total human resource center than just a Senior Center. Ms Rossi handed out copies of the new brochure showing some of the services provided through the Senior Center. One of her main increases is for clerical support and to increase the hourly rate of her current outreach person. She currently relies on volunteers and while she appreciates them it is difficult to have consistency and a strong knowledge base.

Questions asked of Ms Rossi:

1. Is this current outreach person in the Union? No. Mr. Yunits, this person is not considered eligible.
2. Are there statistics as to the number of people using the Senior Center? Yes, I can get details for you, but we have at least 50-60 people a day.
3. How can we get the word out as to services available? Ms. Rossi sends out a newsletter every other month and mailed to every home where someone is 60 or over. Also, if someone is watching and needs assistance or want to know what services are available. Please call.
4. Is the newsletter posted anywhere else? Yes, in the Town Hall. We try to advertise on the board outside as well.
5. Is the newsletter on the Website? We would need additional help to get this done. I do not have the bandwidth at this time. I do use facebook because it is easier.

#141 – Assessors – Mr. Yunits introduced Denise Ellis, director. He stated that there has been a slight decrease in her expenses and a slight increase in Personnel services as she is requesting an increase in hours for her part time person. He also stated that there has been a new growth increase of from \$200,000 to \$600,000 since she arrived. Ms Ellis explained that March through October (building season) she is out every day for permits. She also must assess homes. If she had a new assistant then she could be on the road more. There are many properties assessed incorrectly. Right now she is working to correct the Condominium's as they are either under or over assessed. Almost everything comes through this office; Excise tax, senior tax discounts, TIF's, PILOTs, etc. She needs coverage to answer phone and public questions while she is out.

Questions asked of Ms Ellis:

1. Will this new hire mean benefits? Mr. Yunits, Yes as they are over 19 hours. It is difficult to hire and keep someone for 15 hours a week.
2. How do we confirm that there is an assessment on every homes and excise taxes (from registry)? We are required to do assessments from the state, being on the road, we found many homes/businesses not on the books.
3. How many are being corrected? Not much, but I am working on Commercial property right now and consider $\frac{1}{4}$ of the condominiums done.
4. Would you say that currently we are not getting the tax dollars we should? Absolutely.
5. Is hiring someone for 28 hours going to be enough to help you do what is required and that will benefit the town? We hope it will cover for her when she is on the road.

#147 – Treasurer/Collector – Mr. Yunits introduced Ms Van Dyne, Treasurer. Ms Van Dyne stated that the increases are contractual; getting payroll online is very helpful. Time sheets were all done by

hand and we want to automate. We started with the Police Department as they are more complicated because of irregular hours, detail shifts. The officers can now update hours from their phones. This allows verification with companies to show and validate hours on details, much easier and efficient. This automated system also keeps track of sick and vacation time. An added benefit with the new online permitting system is finding people that owe taxes when they apply for permits. It comes to our attention and we can halt the permit until they pay their taxes.

Questions asked of Ms Van Dyne:

1. What is the longevity increase? That is for me as I am now over 5 years.

#158 – Tax Title/Collector – Ms Van Dyne holding this budget consistent, Tax Title foreclosures to auction, tax collections are also up from last year.

Questions asked of Ms Van Dyne:

1. How long is the list of foreclosures? That is difficult to answer as some of them are conservation and cannot be auctioned. She is working with Mr. Kimball to go through the list and take off land we cannot sell.
2. How long has it been since the last auction? It has been 2 years and 5 before that. It is a costly process (approximately \$15,000), but we do get most back and sometimes much more. Last time we brought in \$400,000 and hope to do as well again.

#711 – Maturing Debt – Ms Van Dyne said that the final borrowing in October, she is not sure the amount but the sheet reflects a rough estimate, based on an interest rate of 5%. Short term rates last year the rate were 1 ½% this year it is up to 2 ½%.

Questions asked of Ms Van Dyne:

1. What is the Bond Rate? We are AA. We should be getting a new rating this year.
2. What % would help our rating? There is a formula but not sure. We need to increase the OPEB by \$5,000 per year though to keep our current rating.
3. Does the packet show all owed at this time? New borrowing: Windows for the school, Water mains, HVC for library, water shed cleanup.
4. What % are we at in our borrowing capacity? Not even close.

#750 – Debt Interest

#910 – Employee Benefits – Ms Van Dyne spoke of retirement, insurance anticipated at 2% increase for active employees, Medicare up 4%.

Questions asked of Ms Van Dyne:

1. Opt out is showing an increase? Nine people using the Public Employee Committee out of 20 have chosen this and it does save the town in benefit dollars because we are not covering medical benefits or them.
2. Contract for co-pay reimbursement, HRA spending about \$20,000 per year? It will continue if contracted again.

#220, 230, 240 – Fire Department - Mr. Yunits introduced Chief Schleicher, Sr., Fire Chief. Budget based on level service, many increases are contractual. Asking for one addition Firefighter/Paramedic anticipating his retirement. The Department is now an OSHA facility as of February 1st and this requires much more documentation. He is trying to staff 9 per shift and could be funded by stabilization budget. Also spoke about the Capital Improvement Budget. Chief is also requesting the second set to continue to protect firefighters from contamination. Chief addressed the condition of the building, floor drains, and that the thresholds need to be redone as well as the vehicle floor. He is also hoping to continue maintenance of the Chartley building so it doesn't end up like the Winnecunnet station. He is also requesting a heating shelter to get some equipment under cover. He noted there is a typo on pg 6, the header should be Fiscal Year 2020 not 2019. Ambulance now has to pre-treat at home before transport this causes multiple call situations.

Questions asked of Chief Schleicher, Sr.:

1. How are we billing for Ambulance? Now billing as Medicare bills, which means we are at the high end. Insurance wants to regulate Ambulance fees, but today are still able to set rates.
2. How do we compare in staffing with Mansfield/Foxboro/Easton? We get the same number of calls. Mansfield has the same # of firefighters, 1 Chief, 1 deputy, 2 day captains, and 1 day lieutenant; Foxboro has same # of firefighters, 1 chief, 2 day deputies; Easton has same # of firefighter, 1 Chief, 1 deputy, 1 day captain. Norton is lean on the top.
3. We understand that the Regional Call center will not impact us? Correct

#911 – Unemployment – Mr. Yunits request is the same as last year.

#940 – Miscellaneous – Mr. Yunits, gas , oil and diesel has increased. Insurances – no set numbers from companies yet, these are just estimates.

#543, 692 – Veterans/Memorial and Vets – Mr. Yunits – Ms Flett has no increase in personnel, the increases are contractual. She is requesting addition in veteran benefits. We have always rec'd 75% for Chapter 115 benefits from the state. Currently has 31 vets receiving these benefits.

Memorial budget is the same.

Questions for Mr. Yunits:

How do the vets know they can come to us? Estelle is out in public, at the senior center every month, she goes to meetings, tries to get some of the younger people involved and informed.

How can we get more of the veterans aware of services? Mr. DeLuca stated that the VFW has a mailing list ready with information regarding benefits available. The list was acquired from the checkbox on this year's census. Only the mailing address was gleaned off the census. No personal information.

#155 – Data Processing – Mr. Yunits stated professional services increased due to online permitting software program for full service, that includes licensing and support, and electronic receipt processing so we can take online payment now.

Equipment line increase because we have 22 PC's operating on Windows 7 and this operating system will no longer be supported by the end of this year. Due to this we hope to replace 17 of these computers this year rather than the 5 per year due to the Windows 7 issue.

Questions for Mr. Yunits:

1. Is the 5 per year a good number for replacement per year? We will look at that for future use.
2. On the other hand we don't want to replace a good unit just because it is in the 5 year range. Right

General question: Many of the budgets this year are asking for additional staffing. Do you know how close we are to being able to doing these things? Mr. Yunits is just about done with the budgets. We are realistically looking at 3% increase in town. Then we will have to see what we can and cannot do?

Can we get a wish sheet? Mr. Yunits will be showing his recommendations. He also stated that there is a Capital request to replace the server as it is 7 years old.

III. Old Business

Mr. Rotondi asked again for minutes that were taken by members that might not have been submitted yet.

Mr. Rotondi will check with Mr. Gouveia to see if he wants to come to this next meeting.

IV. Open items

Ms Sawyer requested that we get the agenda and packets before the meeting so that there can be an early review? It is difficult to listen to the presentation and review the line items at the same time. Mr. Rotondi will ask if this can be done.

V. Minutes

Mr. Rotondi passed out minutes for February 25, 2019 meeting for review of the committee.

Motion to accept minutes as written by Mr. DeLuca

Second by Mr. Evans

9 yes – 0 no - 1 Abstain due to absence at the meeting being reviewed.

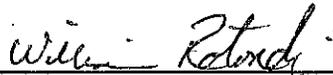
VI. Adjournment

Mr. DeLuca motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 P.M.

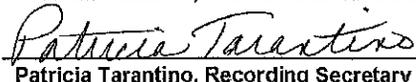
Seconded by Mr. Evans

Unanimous

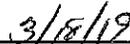
Respectively submitted by:



William Rotondi, Finance Committee Chair



Patricia Tarantino, Recording Secretary



Date Approved