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**TOWN OF NORTON
FINANCE COMMITTEE
Remote Participation Meeting
June 1, 2020
6:30 P.M.**

MINUTES

I. Call to Order

The June 1, 2020 meeting of the Finance Committee was held via Remote participation and was called to order at 6:32 P.M., by Mr. William Rotondi, Chairman of the Finance Committee.

Finance Committee Members Present: Mr. Peter Carignan, Mr. Walter Eykel, Mr. Aaron Smith, Mr. William Rotondi, Mr. Richard Dorney, Mr. Thomas DeLuca, Ms. Bonnie Yezukevich, Ms. Aimee Sawyer, Mr. Michael Fiore and Ms. Paula Daniels.

Absent: Mr. Stephen Evans.

II. New Business

Norton Public Schools – FY21 Budget Presentation, Discussion and/or Vote

Dr. Baeta stated that the budget has been scrapped from its original one, due to Covid-19. He stated that many staffing changes will occur as a result from the pandemic, granted that the Norton Public Schools is requesting a 2.5% increase (\$748,941.00), compared to the original proposed budget of \$1,646,279.00.

Dr. Baeta stated that administrative savings will be \$120,000.00. He emphasized that there are no specifics from the Commonwealth, and any updates regarding the new school year, won't happen 4-5 weeks from now.

Dr. Baeta stated that he has no idea what will happen with Chapter 70 and they will decide this in the fall. But he stated that he will have no idea what the budget will look like in October. He added that they will have to purchase at least 3 months of PPE for the schools.

Dr Baeta has created three steering committees for the fall, tasked with remote learning, staggered opening and the hybrid model, so all options can be studied and explored with detail.

Dr. Baeta stated that this new budget is reasonable, and they are hoping for some hope from the federal government to get additional funds to pay for some of the 1:1 purchase, upgrades to laptops.



Mr. Rotondi asked if the \$750,000 increase in budget includes layoffs. Dr. Baeta stated that it does, but the numbers haven't been finalized – should be 2-5, but less than five. This is not a huge number as many areas were consolidated. Dr. Baeta stated that he's mostly concerned about FY22.

Mr. Rotondi asked how the negotiation with the teacher's union were going. Dr. Baeta stated that they began a joint effort to consolidate teachers and paraprofessionals into one group. The negotiations have been centered on salary. Mr. Rotondi asked if assuming there were funds available come Fall, which things would the school department bring back. Dr. Baeta stated that he would apply funds to anything that would minimize the transportation and the sports fees. Mr. Rotondi asked if remote delivery for special education has increased costs. Dr. Baeta stated that there is a potential for financial issues to arise in the future – this because we can't provide a specific service and parents will seek them somewhere else and also which services have to be provided for a specific type of student.

Ms. Sawyer asked if there was a possibility to pick up the kids in the same neighborhood and have them ride the bus together, to cut some costs. Dr. Baeta stated that this would be difficult, as many parents work (even if at home) and it would be complicated to pair students from different ranges of grades in the same bus; there is also the issue of staggered scheduling, which could complicate things.

Dr. Baeta mentioned the 1/12th budget and he stated that this is not the way to go, come July 1st. Maybe we could handle this in September/October, but not in the summer, as the final numbers from the Commonwealth come during at this time. Mr. Rotondi stated that we can all agree on a budget today, with the stipulation that the states comes back and doesn't fund some of the support mechanics. There are many unknowns.

Mr. Rotondi entertained a motion to approve the Norton Public Schools budget. Mr. DeLuca moved to approve \$33,706,589.00 for the school department budget. Ms. Sawyer second the motion. No further discussion. The vote was unanimous.

Norton Public Schools – Food Delivery Discussion

Mr. Wells stated that he was able to speak with MEMA and they will extend the program for an extra 30 days for the adult meals. Before starting the meal program Dr. Baeta stated that some of the issues we witnessed was concerning. He added that many people, especially seniors, would go out of town to seek food aid and there was an increase of food stamp applications, especially amongst the youngest families in town. The funding will be finalized by the federal government. Many businesses in town are helping with funding as well.



Mr. Dorney asked if Chartwells contract has to be extended, beyond June 15th. Mr. Wells stated that the contract doesn't expire until June 30, 2021 and that could include the summer, this because we are still in a federal state of emergency.

Mr. Eykel asked if the contract provides the personnel services, preparation and distribution, to which Mr. Wells agreed that it does. Mr. Eykel also asked if the high school was the only distribution facility, to which Dr. Baeta stated that it was, due to safety concerns and also it had a nice flow for pick-ups.

FY21 Budget Presentation, Discussion and/or Vote

Mr. Yunits moved to discuss the recommendation of Police budget (totaling \$3,804,970.00). Mr. Yunits stated that there are some concerning reductions, but they are hoping that these can be replenished in the fall. Mr. Rotondi asked if we go into a situation that no funds are available, what's the next step. Mr. Yunits stated that we have to wait until the fall and what is decided at town meeting, to make any further determinations.

Chief Clark stated that there were some expenses related to the pandemic, in-service training that is done online. Chief Clark doesn't believe that there will be a replenishment of funds in the fall, and they will most likely cut services to offset costs. They will perform a hiring freeze for the special police officers and shift/add on functions to some existing positions.

Mr. Rotondi asked if there were anyone in the police academy that will start soon. Chief Clark stated that there are two people there.

Mr. Smith asked if the new cadet that will start in July, is there a plan for the transition into the force. Chief Clark stated that even though the academy is closed, the new cadet has been part of the special police force and has had experience with Norton Police Department. Mr. Smith also asked about the court cases that are not happening right now, would this something that would require future excessive court time, once it's all caught up. Chief Clark stated that he is assuming that it will increase, but not excessive.

Mr. DeLuca made a motion to recommend the \$3,592,120.00 of police department personnel services. Ms. Sawyer second the motion. No further discussion. All were in favor and the vote was unanimous. Mr. DeLuca made a motion to recommend the \$212,850.00 of police department charges and expenses. Ms. Sawyer second the motion. No further discussion. All were in favor and the vote was unanimous.



Mr. Yunits moved to discuss the recommendation of Fire budget (totaling \$4,175,757.00). Mr. Yunits stated there were cuts in vehicle maintenance, over time, educational supplies, training, communications). Mr. Rotondi stated that these cuts could be replenished in the fall. Mr. Yunits stated that he hopes that the funds will come back, but we all have to be cautious, to make sure you can go through the whole year.

Chief Simmons concurred that nothing is guaranteed in the fall and now they are planning on these cuts, to make sure the budget can endure the whole year. Chief Simmons stated that the fire apparatus had a tough year, where many parts broke, and they are very costly.

Mr. DeLuca made a motion to recommend the \$4,175,757.99 of fire department personnel services (\$3,974,917.00) and of fire department charges and expenditures (\$200,840.00). Ms. Sawyer second the motion. No further discussion. All were in favor and the vote was unanimous.

Mr. Yunits moved to discuss the recommendation of Communications budget (totaling \$4,175,757.00). Mr. Yunits stated that by October, he hopes that the move to SEMRECC would save the town \$286,806.35 and this would be a great upgrade for the community that we could have never afforded otherwise.

Mr. DeLuca asked if the recommended budget disappeared. Mr. Yunits stated that it would be for 3 months and as a result it has disappeared. Mr. Carignan asked if some data stuff that was part of the budget will be included later. Mr. Yunits stated that what Mr. Carignan mentioned its part of the data processing budget.

Mr. DeLuca made a motion to recommend the budget of \$656,112.00 for Communications. Ms. Dorney second the motion. No further discussion. All were in favor and the vote was unanimous.

Mr. Yunits moved to discuss the recommendation of Emergency Medical budget (totaling \$143,900.00). Mr. DeLuca asked what makes up the big increase. Chief Simmons stated that its due to ambulance billing and the good news is that they are projecting to collect \$150,000.00 more than last year.

Mr. DeLuca made a motion to recommend the budget of \$143,900.00 for Emergency Medical. Mr. Dorney second the motion. No further discussion. All were in favor and the vote was unanimous.

Mr. Yunits moved to discuss the recommendation of Emergency Management budget (totaling \$7,400.00). Mr. Dorney stated that their website is very helpful, especially



when it comes to provide COVID19 and other issues

additional information in terms of that may affect town citizens. Mr.

DeLuca made a motion to recommend the budget of \$7,400.00 for Emergency Management. Ms. Sawyer second the motion. No further discussion. All were in favor and the vote was unanimous.

Mr. Rotondi asked if we really paid \$400,000.00 in emergency dispatch costs and if we broke even, when compared to this year. Mr. Yunits asked for clarification. Mr. Rotondi stated that other budgets were increased. Mr. Yunits stated that he only included in the budget, items that would be carried over, hence why we are seeing some savings.

Mr. Yunits moved to discuss the recommendation of Library budget (totaling \$501,781.00). Mr. Yunits stated that this is a 2.5% increase, even though it seems like a decrease. Mr. Rotondi asked if the difference would be detrimental to the library. Ms. Parker stated that it will not affect them, adding they are doing curbside, contact free services, many remote activities, and there is a good stock of eBooks. Mr. DeLuca made a motion to recommend the budget of \$501,781.00 for Library. Mr. Dorney second the motion. No further discussion. All were in favor and the vote was unanimous.

Mr. Yunits moved to discuss the recommendation of Data Processing budget (totaling \$422,784.00). Mr. Yunits broke down the budget, where \$25,000.00 would be radios/repair/maintenance for police, fire and Southeast Regional Police Radio, \$12,000.00 would be equipment repair and maintenance (RB Allen – Box Alarms for Fire Department and Metropolitan Telephone), \$32,000.00 would be for software licensing, \$267,209.00 would be for data processing professional services, \$50.00 would be for printing, \$35,775.00 for telephone communications, \$2,000.00 would be for office supplies, \$5,000.00 would be for seminars/conference expenses, \$1,500.00 would be for training (required state re-certifications) and \$42,250.00 would be for equipment (annual upkeep/replacement of town hardware).

DeLuca made a motion to recommend the budget of \$422,784.00 for Data Processing. Mr. Dorney second the motion. No further discussion. All were in favor and the vote was unanimous.

Mr. Yunits circled back to an inquiry placed last week on the salaries of Inspection department. He added that in the part time section, there was an inspector added, and this position was not there last year, which results in the budget increase for this year. Ms. Sawyer asked if it was a good idea, given the current economic situation, for building inspectors to receive a 11.4% increase this year. Mr. Yunits stated that if we don't have the staff they need, it won't affect the revenue in the long run. Ms. Sawyer



stated that this is not additional staff – the increase has to do with a specific salary. Mr. Yunits stated that the inspector's salary didn't increase that much. Ms. Sawyer stated that she doesn't see the name numbers as Mr. Yunits.

Mr. DeLuca made a motion to recommend the budget of \$221,961.00 (personnel services), \$21,350.00 (charges and expenditures) for a grand total of \$243,311.00. Mr. Dorney second the motion. No further discussion. All were in favor and the vote was unanimous.

III. Old Business

Mr. Eykel brought up where the town meetings will be held and right now there is some work from in the background to see if this can be resolved.

Mr. Rotondi asked Mr. Yunits why the assessments from Southeast Regional School went up. Mr. Yunits stated that 10 new students were added.

IV. Open session for topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance

V. Review and Approval of Minutes

VI. Executive Session

VII. Adjournment

Mr. DeLuca moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 P.M. Ms. Sawyer second. All were in favor, and the vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by

Sonia Tsilis, Recording Secretary

Minutes Approved by Committee on:

7/13/2020





Signature:

William Rotondi

William Rotondi, Finance Committee Chair

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