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TOWN OF NORTON

FINANCE COMMITTEE

April 5, 2021

7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

I. Call to Order

The April 5, 2021 meeting of the Finance Committee was held via Remote Participation Meeting and was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Mr. Stephen Evans, Chairman of the Finance Committee.

Finance Committee Members Present: Ms. Aimee Sawyer, Ms. Paula Daniels, Mr. Richard Dorney, Mr. Michael Fiore, Mr. Aaron Smith, Mr. Kevin Snyder, Mr. Zachary Tsilis, Ms. Bonnie Yezukevich
Absent: Mr. Peter Carignan, Mr. William Rotondi.

Mr. Jack Conway, Select Board Chairperson, called to order the Special Meeting with the Select Board at 7:02 PM. Roll Call: Mr. John Conway, Mr. Michael Toole, Ms. Megan Artz.
Absent: Mr. Brad Bramwell, Ms. Rene Deley

II. New Business

Review, Discuss, and/or Vote Town Meeting and /or Operating Budget Requests, to include but not be limited to:

A. Special Town Meeting Tax Increment Financing Proposal – Project Northeast at Leonard Street.

During the week, Mr. Yunits sent the requested information regarding The Home Depot TIF to the Finance Committee and asked for a vote. He stated that the Select Board had already approved. This is Article 9 on the warrant and a yes vote gives permission to move forward on the agreement. There is no TIF on the Personal Property it is only on the Land. He also reviewed the agreement. Mr. Tsilis asked what the permit fees will be on this project. Mr. Yunits replied \$166,000. Mr. Evans requested a motion. Ms. Sawyer made a motion to recommend Article 9 on the Special Town Meeting. Mr. Smith seconded. Vote – Unanimous

B. Annual Town Meeting Article 2- to authorize the Select Board to accept and enter into contracts for construction, reconstructions and improvement of Town Roads.

Mr. Evans asked if all the Articles have been reviewed and approved by Town Council. Mr. Yunits replied in the affirmative. Since there was no discussion or questions Mr. Evans requested a motion to recommend this Article. Ms. Sawyer made a motion to approve Annual Town Article 2. Mr. Smith seconded. Vote – Unanimous. This Article was approved by the Select Board at their meeting.

Annual Town Meeting Article 3 – Highway Department requesting the usual \$25,000 for tree removal. Mr. Smith asked about a previous conversation to get ahead of the dangerous trees in town.

Mr. Yunits stated that this department uses this amount yearly for the larger trees that are near wires. The town employees are not wire certified and they wish to remain this way. This budget pays for wire approved contractors and the large cranes when needed. Mr. Yunits also stated that National Grid has been involved in trimming as well. Mr. Evans requested a motion to recommend this Article. Ms. Sawyer made a motion to approve Annual Town Article 3. Mr. Smith seconded. Vote – Unanimous. This Article was approved by the Select Board at their meeting.

- C. **Annual Town Meeting Article 4- To raise and appropriate funds for the Water Enterprise.** Mr. Evans and Ms. Sawyer asked if the follow up items from previous meetings are included in this information. Mr. Yunits replied in the affirmative and brought forward the Water Enterprise budget for review of these questions. Mr. Evans asked if the information could be shared with the committee so they can review in detail. He asked if the vote could be postponed to next meeting. Mr. Yunits agreed.
- D. **Annual Town Meeting Article 7 - Capital Appropriation** . Mr. Yunits stated that this article requests \$600,000 from Free Cash be appropriated to the Capital Fund. Mr. Evans asked if we could get the written article before we vote. Select Board approved this article at their meeting with the understanding that the total be added to the article. Mr. Evans requested a motion to recommend this Article. Ms. Sawyer made a motion to approve the transfer of Free Cash at the Annual Town Article 7 with the appropriate new wording. Mr. Smith seconded. Vote – Unanimous. This Article was approved by the Select Board at their meeting.
- E. **Budget Item – Fund Transfer lines , Expenditures, Fixed & Shared Budgets and General Services.** Mr. Yunits reviewed each line of the Fund Transfer, Expenditure Lines and Shared Budget. Mr. Evans asked for clarification on the Free Cash line and the Hicks Fund increase. Mr. Yunits replied that in order to keep a balanced budget it was necessary to transfer from Free Cash, even though he wished it was not. He would not transfer more until we know what the town's share from the state will be. He also stated that with the other Free Cash uses in this budget, there will still be over \$500,000 remaining. Mr. Toole spoke about the Hick's Fund stating that the portfolio performed very well this past year. The amount withdrawn from this fund is based on a percentage of the balance. \$200,000 is the top range of the allowed withdrawal and was approved by the Portfolio Manager. Mr. Toole will provide an average return of last years fund performance and will give a high level explanation of what the Hick's Fund is and what it does for the next meeting.
- Ms. Sawyer asked why the School Budget is showing approximately \$1 Million less than requested and how this will impact the school. Mr. Yunits stated that Dr. Baeta is looking into Federal Funds that will cover the shortage. Ms. Sawyer expressed her concern that not covering this shortage in our budget and using Federal funds will be a problem in the future. Mr. Yunits stated that the town is expecting \$1.9 Million and the School \$1.7 Million from the state. After hearing concern from the committee about possibly changing some of the line items in order to cover the school's budget shortage, Mr. Evan's took quick vote from the committee. It was unanimous to postpone approval on these items until Dr. Baeta returns with the outcome of his research.
- Mr. Toole requested that the Human Resource Consultant (\$40,000) money be shown on a separate line for clarity. Mr. Yunits will look into whether this could be shown as a separate department. He also said that this would cover approximately 800 hours.
- Mr. Evans asked when we could hear from Dr. Baeta. His concern is that we will run out of time to vote. Mr. Yunits will check and get back to the committee.
- Mr. Evans took a vote from the Committee to attend a meeting next Wednesday, April 14th. It was unanimous to add the meeting.

F. Budget Items for Snow Removal #423 and Communication Center #290

Mr. Evans asked for a motion to accept the Snow Removal #423 Budget. Ms. Sawyer made the motion to recommend the line items as shown below. Mr. Smith seconded the motion.

Charges and Expenditures	\$80,000.00	Vote - Unanimous
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Mr. Evans asked for a motion to accept the Communication Center #290. Ms. Sawyer made the motion to recommend the line items as shown below. Mr. Smith seconded the motion.

Communication Assessment	\$300,000.00	Vote - Unanimous
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III. Old Business

Follow up items from this meeting:

Follow up items from previous meetings answered at this meeting:

Follow up items from previous meetings unanswered:

1. Cost estimate if the Town Hall is condemned and the offices had to move into trailers.
2. The voting schedule for future budget meetings.
3. The financial numbers for all open TIFs.
4. Mr. Carignan asked if Mr. Yunits will provide a breakdown of the IP upgrade and the costs of the laptops.
5. Mr. Tsillis asked what the Total Debt of the town is. Ms. Van Dyne will send that out to the committee.
6. Mr. Tsillis asked for a breakdown of cell phone costs from each department.
7. Mr. Dorney asked if there is a breakdown showing the number of permits per electrical, plumbing, etc. And how much money the town receives through this process.
8. Ms. Sawyer asked if he has a number of houses on the Sewer system. He will get it to the Finance Committee next week.
9. Mr. Rotondi asked for a breakdown between the Town Salary and HR departments in the survey.
10. Mr. Tsillis asked if we can get a simple one page spreadsheet showing where the savings are for this year from last year in the different departments (lights, Insurance, SEMRECC, etc.).
11. Mr. Toole asked Mr. Morris from Southeastern Regional if he has a number of Norton applicants that applied but were not accepted. Mr. Morris will get that number for the committee and email to Mr. Yunits or Mr. Conway.
12. Mr. Yunits will ask if the Bristol Agricultural school will be getting any Federal Money that can be used toward the assessment.
13. Mr. Conway asked if the dispatchers been able to get their unemployment claims? Mr. Yunits said that all but two have gotten jobs and he will check on the others.
14. Mr. Evans asked what the status is regarding a reimbursement due to asbestos remediation and the window project at the Yelle School. Mr. Yunits will check and get back to the committee.
15. Before the Finance Committee votes Mr. Tsilis would like more information regarding the employment terms. Mr. Yunits will get this to us.
16. Mr. Evans asked if we could have the wording of article 2 regarding approval to use Chapter 90 funds before taking a vote. Mr. Yunits will get that for next week.
17. Mr. Yunits is Article 7 asking that \$600,000 from Free Cash be appropriated to the Capital Fund. Mr. Evans asked if we could get the written article before we vote. Select Board in agreement.

- IV. Open session for topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance
V. Minutes
VI. Adjournment

Mr. Conway entertained a motion to adjourn at 8:15 P.M. Mr. Toole made the motion. Ms. Artz
Seconded. Vote – Unanimous

Mr. Evans entertained a motion at 8:14 P.M. to adjourn this meeting. Ms. Sawyer moved to adjourn the
meeting. Mr. Smith seconded. Vote – Unanimous

Respectfully submitted by

Patricia Tarantino, Recording Secretary

Minutes approved by Committee on:





Signature:



Stephen Evans, Finance Committee Chair

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