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TOWN OF NORTON
FINANCE COMMITTEE

April 12, 2021
7:00 P.M.
MINUTES

I. Call to Order

The April 12, 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, Mr. Peter Carignan, Ms. Paula Daniels, Mr. William Rotondi, Mr. Aaron Smith, Mr. Kevin Snyder, Mr. Zachary Tsilis, Ms. Bonnie Yezukevich.
Absent: Mr. Michael Fiore,
Mr. Richard Dorney sent a letter of resignation read by Mr. Evans

Mr. Jack Conway, Select Board Chairperson, called to order the Special Meeting with the Select Board at 7:00 PM. Roll Call: Mr. John Conway, Ms. Rene Deley, Ms. Christine Deveau, Mr. Michael Toole, Ms. Megan Artz.
Absent: None

II. New Business

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

A. School Budget

Dr. Baeta was introduced and allowed to give his presentation. He sent a document earlier this week that he hoped answered the committee's questions. He also gave an estimate of the funds coming from the State (approx. \$1.6) and stated that these are earmarked for specific services and there will also be what is being called the Biden Supplement. He stated that the budget is approaching \$2.2 million and the current budget is short and they are searching for ways to supplement this shortage.

The state is pushing for a full all-in attendance, but they also believe some students with medical issues may need to stay home. He also spoke about a Virtual School Approach and what it will cost the town in lost school choice money if this happens.

Mr. Evans asked what the enrollment differential is from last year to this year. Dr. Baeta stated we are down 40 students. He also explained how the staff is moved around to accommodate student needs.

Mr. Evans asked if there will be any give back to the budget due to COVID restrictions regarding travel. Dr. Baeta stated an example that although there were less students traveling on the bus, the new COVID regulations for bus spacing changed any amount we might have saved.

Ms. Sawyer asked how we can make up the deficit in the budget. Mr. Yunits stated that we expect the House to come out with their budget soon and he hopes it will help. They are also looking at Federal

Guidelines to see what will be coming due to COVID losses. Then we will have to look at again in September. He expects that we can close the gap. Dr. Baeta is concerned that the gap will continue and we will see larger holes in the budget. There was a lengthy discussion about things that Dr. Baeta can and cannot control, for example, Mental Health Support has spiked during this past year and is a reality. Because of this more counselors are needed.

Mr. Conway asked if we go forward with the \$2.19 Million smaller budget, does it mean there would be cuts before Town Meeting and would the difference come forward to the September Meeting. Dr. Baeta stated in the negative. He may have to look at other areas such as dropping the cost of a posted position. The difference will come back in September. Ms. Deley stated that we should be pursuing this now and not send it to September and perhaps looking at the salary increases. It was agreed that posing one department against another is not acceptable; it is a town budget problem not just the school budget problem.

Ms. Deley asked if the original transportation cost was cut due to COVID and could the CARES act be used. Mr. Wells stated that the CARES Act was very specific where the funds could be used and transportation was not one of the areas.

Mr. Evans asked about the Article on the Sewer complex for the school tie and whether there is a hold on borrowing \$570,000. Dr. Baeta stated that it is embedded in the actual town complex cost.

Dr. Baeta stated that when the town complex passes the Renewable Energy Project Phase 1 is complete. This project points out where savings could be made. It shows a savings of \$12M can be made over the next few years and will be completely funded by the energy savings itself. There will be an Article to move these changes forward without additional funds from the town by using the energy savings to pay the borrowed money. No questions from the Select Board.

B. Annual Town Meeting Article 12- To expand the Purpose of Article 13 of the October 2019 Town Meeting to Also include the so-called Reed & Barton Lots on Elm Street (Map 17, Lot 32-01, and Map 17, Lot 360.

Mr. Evans asked for a High Level Status on this project. Mr. Yunits stated that the EPA has finished cleaning the oil and they tore down the North Side of the building while Norton tore down the South Side due to imminent danger to the public. Mr. DiGiuseppe stated that we are now looking for funds/grants to finish the demolition. Mr. Durkin from Talbot Drive stated his concern about prolonged environmental effects until the building is completely demolished and evaluation of what is below. Mr. Yunits explained that expanding the purpose of the \$63,000 remaining from the earlier article will allow the use of these funds for fencing, etc. for the south side. Mr. Conway asked if there has been new well testing lately. Mr. Barron of 3 Mill Lane stated that his well test showed 1.452 Dioxane (the safe limit is .3) which is high and is linked to cancers. He asked how long this will be an issue and asked if he has to pay for his own water. Mr. Rotondi asked how many wells maybe impacted. Mr. Yunits said that the DEP tested about 10 wells. Mr. Dorney stated that number of homes in the area on wells as 10.

Mr. Tsilis asked if there is town water on these streets and if we could connect them to it. Mr. Yunits stated that there is not town water on Mill Lane.

Ms. Deley also asked for an exact amount to securing the site and if any money can be moved to help residents impacted. Mr. Yunits stated that this Article will allow us to spend the money on the site once things are found. Ms. Deley would like to see more specific wordage in this Article. She also asked if Mr. DiGiuseppe knows how much money would be available in the two grants. Mr. DiGiuseppe stated that the demolition grant would be up to \$800,000. He needs to speak to others later.

Mr. Yunits restated the wording of Article 12 as written includes Elm Street which expands the site area. Mr. Evans is asking for a change in the wording and will revisit this Article.

C. **Annual Town Meeting Article 17 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment to allow an applicant for a marijuana facility to apply for building permits after approval of a special permit and site plan.** Mr. DiGuiseppe asked if Ms. Deley would speak to this Article. She reviewed the three changes in the By-law and that these changes are due to new legislation from the State Cannabis Commission. These are replacements to the Cannabis regulations because the state made changes after our by-laws were finalized at our last town meeting. Basically these are housekeeping items not changing the intent of the original Zoning Bylaws. The Select Board has already approved at their previous meeting. The Finance Committee will review these changes and vote on it Wednesday.

D. **Annual Town Meeting Article 18- Amend Norton Zoning By-Law, Article III-Zoning Map and Districts and the Zoning Map: Rezoning of Parcels 11_16, 11_14-01, 11_15 and 11_17) from Residential to Industrial.** Mr. DiGiuseppe introduced Craig McKeown, DOT Development Committee and Mr. Tom Cox, Greystone Real Estate Services. Mr. Cox gave a presentation showing the above areas. Mass DOT owns 3.7 acres that are currently used for salt and various materials used in the area. His presentation explained the reasoning behind changing to Industrial rather than commercial. The change to Industrial Zone allows for Life Science and the tax opportunity would be greater for this area.

Mr. Tsilis asked if this was one of the sites considered for the new Town Complex. Mr. Yunits stated that it was reviewed and the cost to get into the area was too prohibitive as a prospective site. The road coming into this property and would be directly across from Leonard Street and the new street light will allow a safe left turn into this property.

Ms. Yezukevich asked if the salt shed will be moved. Mr. Cox stated that the salt shed will most likely stay on site at this time.

Ms. Deveau asked for someone to further explain the Article. Mr. Yunits explained the Article and the map parcels involved. Mr. Conway entertained a motion. Ms. Deley motioned to approve this Article as written. Ms. Artz seconded. Vote – Unanimous.

Mr. Evans asked for a motion. Ms. Sawyer motioned to approve Article 18 as written. Mr. Tsilis seconded. Vote – Unanimous.

E. **Annual Town Meeting Article 19 – Petition of Lucille Drane to Amend Norton Zoning By-law, Article III- Zoning Map and Districts and the Zoning Map: Rezoning of Parcels 11_16, 11_14-01, 11_15 and 11_17.** Mr. Souza, Attorney for Lucille Drane, spoke to support what they believe is a zoning error. They want to change this back to its original status of Commercial. Mr. Toole stated for the record that there was a petition from the residents of Red Mill Village against this change. Mr. Sigal spoke about a town wide zoning master plan and questioned if this would be considered “spot” zoning. It was determined not to be “spot” zoning.

Mr. Conway entertained a motion to recommend this Article. Ms. Deley motioned to accept the Article as written. Meg Artz Seconded. Vote – 4 Yes, 1 No. Motion carries.

Mr. Evans entertained a motion for this Article. Ms. Sawyer motioned to recommend the article as written. Mr. Tsilis seconded. Vote - Unanimous

F. **Annual Town Meeting Article 4 – F22 Water Enterprise Budget.** Mr. Yunits thanked and introduced Mr. Fournier, Department Head. Mr. Evans asked if the placeholder numbers previously submitted been replaced with the actual numbers for these articles. Mr. Yunits affirmed that these are correct. There were no questions from the Select Board or Finance Committee. Mr. Conway entertained a motion to approve the Water Enterprise Budget. Mr. Toole made the motion to approve. Ms. Deley seconded. Vote – Unanimous.

Mr. Evans entertained a motion to approve the Article. Ms. Sawyer motioned to approve Article 4 for the Water Enterprise as presented. Mr. Smith seconded. Vote - Unanimous

- G. Annual Town Meeting Article 5 – F22 Sewer Enterprise Budget.** Mr. Toole asked about the Debt Service line. Mr. Yunits stated that this would show an increase because of the W. Main Street Sewer Project. Mr. Fournier confirmed. Ms. Deveau asked if this number will remain the same. Mr. Yunits stated that it will remain approximately the same until the debt is paid off.
- Mr. Conway entertained a motion to approve. Ms. Deley motioned to approve Article 5. Ms. Deveau seconded. Vote – Unanimous.
- Mr. Evans entertained a motion to approve. Ms. Sawyer motioned to approve Article 5 for the Sewer Enterprise as presented. Mr. Smith Seconded. Vote – Unanimous.

III. Old Business

Follow up items from this meeting:

1. 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. This article has been approved on 4/5/21. Follow up complete.

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. 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


Before asking for a motion to adjourn, Mr. Conway wanted to make note that for the first time in Norton's History we have a female majority on the Select Board. He then entertained a motion to adjourn at 9:59 P.M. Ms. Deley made the motion. Ms. Artz Seconded. Vote – Unanimous
Mr. Evans entertained a motion at 9:59 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

TITLE	Finance Committee Minutes
FILE NAME	FC Minutes 3.22.21.pdf and 4 others
DOCUMENT ID	6e3aa5ed4c92f396ed558362b64f928f7ac39b20
AUDIT TRAIL DATE FORMAT	MM / DD / YYYY
STATUS	● Completed

Document History



SENT

05 / 03 / 2021

16:44:52 UTC

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05 / 04 / 2021

14:27:19 UTC

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