



TOWN OF NORTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MUNICIPAL CENTER,
70 EAST MAIN STREET, NORTON, MA 02766

Telephone: (508) 285-0210 Fax: (508) 285-0297

Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
April 2, 2020

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I. Call to Order by Chairman

The April 2, 2020 meeting of the Norton Board of Selectmen was held remotely (dial in via 425-436-6387, participant access code 386881) and was called to order at 6:30 P.M., by Mr. Bradford K. Bramwell, Chairman. Member(s) present: Mr. Michael Flaherty, Mr. John Conway, Ms. Mary Steele, and Ms. Renee Deley. Also in attendance: Michael D. Yunits, Town Manager.

II. Appointments/Resignations/Retirements

There were no appointments, resignations, or retirements to vote on/discuss.

III. Licenses and Permits

There were no licenses or permits to approve or discuss.

IV. Announcements

There were no announcements to discuss.

V. Business

A. New Business

1. Update on COVID-19.

The Board of Health Agent, Christian Zahner stated that there was a total of 2,400 cases in MA around last week and now there are 8,900 cases. He added that there are 424 cases in Bristol County and there have been a total of 154 deaths in MA. Mr. Zahner advised that to date, there are 17 cases in Norton, many of which have either fully recovered or are on their way to recovery.

Mr. Yunits informed the Board that Ms. Beth Rossi, the Director at the Council on Aging, has a lot going on. The Town Manager stated that New England Ice Cream delivered two cases of milk and Lake Pearl also donated and delivered food to seniors and veterans in need. The Town Manager listed several other businesses that have made donations, such as Roche Bros. that were delivered by Norton Emergency Management. Ms. Rossi stated that she is at the Senior Center working and if residents needed her help with food stamps and/or fuel assistance to please contact her.

Ms. Estelle Flett, Veterans' Agent, stated she is helping Norton veterans who need assistance and she informed everyone that her office is open via phone as well. She mentioned that she has been getting a lot of direction from the Department of Veterans Services. Ms. Flett pointed out that the big thing is unemployment, and she said that she is available to help people with things such as applying for unemployment online. The Veterans' Agent informed the Board that a lot of the guidelines for Chapter 115 have been loosened due to the effects of COVID-

19. For example, they are not counting stimulus money as part of income to help with things such as veterans' benefits. Ms. Flett encouraged [veterans] to inquire about this at this time.

Ms. Deley asked Ms. Flett to supply her contact information. Ms. Flett stated that she can be reached at her office line at 508-285-0274 or her work cell phone at 774-265-7462. Mr. Yunits stated that Ms. Flett has a gift account if people would like to make donations (checks should be made payable to Veterans Office Town of Norton). Ms. Deley added that you can also donate gift cards for food stores too, which Ms. Flett confirmed and added that this is always welcome, crisis or not. The Veterans' Agent mentioned that she usually suggests Stop & Shop because people can also get gas. Ms. Deley said that she heard CVS cards were also good too, which Ms. Flett confirmed. Ms. Deley asked what the best way is to get donations to her. Ms. Flett replied that they can be put in the drop box at the front of Town Hall and address them to the Veterans' Office or Estelle Flett.

Mr. Yunits informed the Selectmen that the Cupboard of Kindness is also receiving donations. He stated that people can donate by going to their website, cupboardofkindness.org, using their app, or by mail as follows: Cupboard of Kindness, P.O. Box 874, Norton, MA 02766. The Town Manager lastly stated that the Cupboard of Kindness is open the first and third Mondays of the month and that cash contributions would be very helpful.

Mr. Zahner wanted to talk about the fact that they are at the beginning stages of the toughest period of this virus. He said that the best thing they can do is to get people to stay home "before the big storm."

Ms. Deley asked Mr. Yunits if he could have all of the addresses and contact information on one list for the public service announcements her and Mr. Conway are going to do on behalf of the Board, which Mr. Yunits agreed to.

Chief Brian Clark gave updates on changes made for the Police Department. He stated that the station is closed to non-emergencies and everything else is being done by mail. They have also stopped civilian fingerprinting and roll calls have been suspended due to size of the room they are done in. Chief Clark added that officers are staggering when they are coming and going to minimize contact and call responses have the minimum number of officers needed, and they are instructed to stay a safe distance away. The Chief advised that the same goes for the medical calls where they are only answering for life-threatening illnesses or injuries. He added that administrative staff have been working from home and that training has been cancelled for the foreseeable future. Chief Clark informed the Board that the courts are closed, so none of the officers are reporting there. They are also doing web conferences for arraignments. The Chief advised that the call volume has decreased since many people are staying home, but the number of disturbances and domestic violence calls have almost doubled in the last two weeks (went from five domestic violence calls the previous week to nine this week). He added that the medical/mental health, alcohol, and drug calls have remained around the same.

Ms. Deley asked in regards to domestic violence calls if the Police Department is providing a phone number to contact. Chief Clark stated that he did not have the number in front of him at this time, but mentioned that there is a Civilian Police Advocate from New Hope that they are forwarding reports to and working with remotely at this time. He said he could get her that information to the Selectmen for the informational sessions the

Selectmen are doing. Chief Clark informed the Board that the Police Department does it also, but with New Hope there is more confidentiality.

Mr. Conway asked how the Police Department is doing on supplies. Chief Clark responded that CVS gave them supplies and they have some backordered supplies that are hopefully arriving within the next week or so. Chief Clark mentioned that a company in Middleboro also donated about 200 masks.

Chief Shawn Simmons of the Fire Department informed the Board that currently all of their people are healthy and that they started putting in new policies in February. Chief Simmons stated that they have a good supply of PPE equipment and that they are picking up a good-sized order tomorrow as well. The Fire Chief advised that he is working with other town departments to give and ask for information. He added that they are also working with Council on Aging, the School Department, and the Veterans' Agent to help people.

Mr. Conway said in Attleboro the Police Department and Fire Department are having issues getting tested at Sturdy Hospital and asked if they are having similar problems. Chief Simmons replied that they haven't had a need to have anyone tested because they are using their PPE correctly, but there are three other locations for first responders to go to get tested besides Sturdy Hospital.

2. Update on COVID-19 Budget Impacts.

Mr. Yunits advised that on March 23, 2020 he instituted a spending freeze on all discretionary expenditures. The Town Manager said that they will be using every penny of free cash for next year's budget. He gave the Board an update on the economic status of the State advising that there will be a \$1.8 – \$3 billion decline in State revenue in the next 16 months, which will result in a drop in State aid. Mr. Yunits told the Selectmen to plan on no increase in State aid next year or 5% cut.

Mr. Yunits then moved on to give updates on the local government side. He advised that the meals tax is also going to decrease. He told the Board that they would have to wait and see on the building permits because there could also be a drop there. Mr. Yunits informed the Selectmen that some towns are expecting a 25% drop in permit fees for next year. The Town Manager stated that they will have to look at new growth and commented that everything depends on timing. Mr. Yunits stated that they are lucky the Blue Star project is still moving forward. He expressed that if things go back to normal by mid-May, they could bounce back quickly. Mr. Yunits stated that Capital was looking at recommendations, but now they may have to pull back on capital items to ensure that they have the necessary payments in capital for next year. The Town Manager advised that he will be working on all of this next week and that he is pulling figures from 2008 and 2009 to compare.

Mr. Conway, in reference to Mr. Yunits comments about the Blue Star Business Park, stated that the Governor issued clarification for those who fall under "essential work" as far as construction and that a lot of construction projects that were exempt no longer are. Mr. Conway asked Mr. Yunits to check with them to make sure they aren't violating anything.

Ms. Deley asked if they had thought of potential new expenses in response to the pandemic, such as supplies and overtime. Mr. Yunits said that every department has been keeping track of that in hopes of reimbursements for costs related to this. The Town Manager stated that budgets are fine for this year, but it will be next year when they feel the big impact. Mr. Bramwell commented that when a State of Emergency is declared, the State government will come up with a percentage for municipal expenses and whatever they can push towards the Town will help alleviate potential new expenses.

Mr. Conway referred to Mr. Yunits reaching out to the State Representatives about emergency expenses. Mr. Yunits clarified that Mr. Conway was referring to one of the bad years of snow where the State allowed the snow deficit to carry over and be paid back over three years. The Town Manager informed the Board that he asked the State Representatives if expenses related to COVID-19 could be carried over three years. The Town Manager said it was put into legislation, but that he doesn't know the status of it.

3. Discussion on Marijuana Licenses.

The Town Manager asked if the Board wanted to move forward meeting with people who are interested in obtaining a license and put a Host Community Agreement together, or do they want to wait until the zoning change is voted on at town meeting.

Ms. Deley stated that the Industrial Development Commission (IDC) is forming an application process and they have a good draft put together. She stated that if it is good the way it is, they will then present it to the Selectmen for their review. Ms. Deley advised that they also need the Host Community Agreement back with answers to the questions they had asked from town counsel. She said they will also need the application process to go to town counsel before the Board opines on it to make sure it is legally compliant. Ms. Deley explained that an outstanding question they have is if they can start the application process and have Host Community Agreement negotiations once applicants are selected before the bylaw is put into place. She clarified that the question has been posed to town counsel, but they have not received an answer back yet. Ms. Deley lastly advised that there would be a couple of changes to the bylaw resulting from their recent meeting with the Planning Board.

Mr. Bramwell emphasized that since the Board of Selectmen have never dealt with this before that he would like the IDC and the Planning Board to provide insight on this. He then asked Ms. Deley if the Board would be getting feedback from people that have been dealing with this. Ms. Deley responded that this is part of the application process. She added that the IDC and a subcommittee would be working together on applications for retail dispensaries. Then, the subcommittee would review those applications and after that, others could be reached out to, such as the Police Chief and the Fire Chief.

4. Discussion on Warrant Articles.

Mr. Yunits stated that he is going to look into this more at the next meeting after further discussion with the Finance Committee.

B. Old Business

1. Discussion on Release of Information Provided on School Buildings.

Mr. Yunits asked if the Board wanted him to make copies of the information provided by the School Department and supply it to the petitioner. Mr. Bramwell replied that from a legal standpoint, he thinks they should do so and Ms. Steele and Ms. Deley agreed and further stated this was discussed and requested to be completed at a previous meeting.

C. Town Manager's Report

Mr. Yunits emphasized that the next week or two, they should really start "holding down the hatches." He informed the Board that he has been telling town employees to only come into the building if they really need to grab something. Mr. Yunits stated that he really wants to see people working from home and limiting the amount of time they are in the building. The Town Manager wanted to point out that if people don't see anyone at the Town Hall that this is why. Ms. Deley asked if signs were posted at the Town Hall, which Mr. Yunits confirmed.

Mr. Bramwell stated that he had a brother and sister-in-law that just tested positive for COVID-19 and that they had also gone and hung out with their extended family. Mr. Bramwell emphasized that for everyone's best interest, now is not the time to be visiting family members if they are not living in the same household as you.

V. Selectmen's Report and Mail

Mr. Conway asked Mr. Yunits to get information on the new town hall and community center projects posted on the Town website. He stated that they are drawing attention to the project and he would like people to be able to get the information. Mr. Yunits agreed to get the presentation on the buildings from the previous meeting posted to the Town website. Mr. Conway asked to have the confidential sales prices that were listed in the presentation provided.

Mr. Conway mentioned that the Permanent Building Committee was supposed to meet with the Board of Selectmen a couple of weeks ago, but that meeting was cancelled. Mr. Yunits asked if the Board would like the Permanent Building Committee on the agenda for their next meeting. Mr. Bramwell said he would rather hold off until they could be in person and Mr. Conway and Ms. Steele agreed.

Ms. Deley said that one of the things they had talked about at previous meetings was the costs for the [current] Town Hall repairs and upkeep in lieu of a new building. She asked if Mr. Yunits could start thinking about this and suggested having the PBC assist with this because she would like to know what those numbers look like especially when they are heading in the direction of a recession. Ms. Deley expressed her opinion that she doesn't see this passing in this type of environment and would like a plan "B". Ms. Steele agreed and added that this virus is going to have an effect on these people's health and livelihood, so at this time it doesn't seem like people are going to be appreciative of the Town putting this project out there.

Ms. Deley said that [the Board] had received an e-mail and asked if the Permanent Building Committee has been involved in discussions with the renovations as a result of the report they received because the PBC is responsible for overseeing any sort of maintenance and any larger-scale projects for the buildings. Mr. Yunits replied that

they have not be engaged in this yet because they haven't proposed anything. Ms. Deley clarified that the Town Manager has plans to do so, which he confirmed. Ms. Deley stated that she didn't know if anyone had responded to this e-mail yet, but she did not see one to date.

Ms. Deley pointed out that Mr. David Cohen had sent an e-mail to Mr. Yunits and copied the Selectmen on it and asked Mr. Yunits if Mr. Cohen had received a response yet. Mr. Yunits advised that he had not responded to Mr. Cohen's e-mail yet. Ms. Steele mentioned that she had not received the e-mail from Mr. Cohen and Mr. Yunits said he would forward it to her.

Ms. Deley then asked for an update and information be sent to the Board regarding the proposed Chapter 40B down by Xfinity Center. She mentioned that Mr. Yunits had given an update about a site-tour that had recently occurred and that as part of that letter, she noticed that comments were due back from the Town [to the State] by mid-March. Ms. Deley asked if this was already submitted, which Mr. Yunits answered it was. She then referred to a letter that was sent out on February 14th regarding the Chapter 40B they agreed to support; she stated that in the letter the address listed was "95 Mansfield Avenue," but the paperwork provided at the meeting stated it was "195 Mansfield Avenue." Mr. Yunits agreed to look into this and get back to them.

Ms. Deley asked if the Public Meeting Notice went out to the committees/boards as agreed upon at the last meeting. Mr. Yunits said he will check if it went to all of the committees, but advised that it is on the Town website.

Ms. Deley said the IDC had their first meeting on Zoom and it went really well. She said people were able to see the documents that were posted online. Mr. Yunits informed the Board that Ms. Charlene Fisk setup a Zoom Pro account. Ms. Deley asked if one was enough for all of the committees. Mr. Yunits replied that it seemed like everything was working fine with the demand.

VI. Meeting Minutes

The Board agreed to hold off approving Minutes until their next meeting.

VIII. Warrants

Report of Chairman, Bradford K. Bramwell, that he approved the following Payroll and Invoice Warrants:

A. Payroll Warrant PR20-20 for the week ended March 21, 2020, Warrant dated March 26, 2020, in the amount of \$1,418,205.08.

B. Invoice Warrant AP 20-39 dated March 26, 2020, in the amount of \$1,538,062.11.

C. Invoice Warrant AP20-40 dated April 2, 2020, in the amount of \$258,685.03.

IX. **Other Business**

There was no other business to discuss.

X. **Next Meeting's Agenda** – April 16, 2020

XI. **Executive Session**

There was no need for an executive session.

XII. **Adjournment**

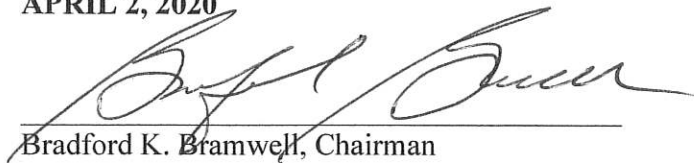
MOTION was made by Mr. Conway to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting at 7:40 P.M. Seconded by Ms. Deley. Vote: Ms. Deley – Yes; Ms. Steele – Yes; Mr. Conway – Yes; Mr. Flaherty – Yes; and Mr. Bramwell – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

URL Link: <https://fccdl.in/fn8qbh8jiA>


Respectfully Submitted by:


Jennifer Reid, Office Administrator

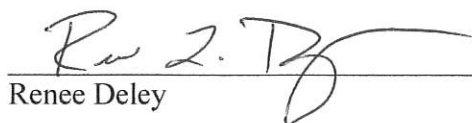
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 2, 2020**


Bradford K. Bramwell, Chairman

Michael Flaherty, Vice-Chairman


John Conway, Clerk

Mary T. Steele


Renee Deley

Minutes Approved by Board on: May 14, 2020