



TOWN OF NORTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MUNICIPAL CENTER,
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**Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
June 4, 2020**

I. Call to Order by Chairman

The June 4, 2020 meeting of the Norton Board of Selectmen was held remotely (web: <https://zoom.us/j/6391519600>; dial in via +1 (646) 558-8656, Meeting ID 639-151-9600) 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: Mr. Michael D. Yunits, Town Manager.

II. Business

I. Discussion and/or Vote on Town Meeting Location Options and Logistics.

The Board of Health Agent, Mr. Christian Zahner, gave an overview of the "Town Meeting Health and Safety Plan for Outdoor Option: High School Football Field." He pointed out that volunteers will be wearing reflective vests or official uniform and that all volunteers will be screened by nurses upon arrival.

Mr. Zahner informed the Board that he did a webinar with Kopelman & Paige, which resulted in revisions from the original plans. For example, Mr. Zahner advised that they cannot turn someone away if they show up without a face mask because it would be unconstitutional. However, they can ask those who aren't wearing a mask to be placed socially distanced away from others so they aren't potentially infecting anyone. He stated that they are encouraging citizens to wear masks and that there will be a police presence in case there are any problems. The Board of Health Agent stated that town counsel, Attorney Lauren Goldberg, advised that they should not be screening people's temperatures prior to entering because it would be a violation of privacy, so they are going to setup a sanitizing station.

Mr. Zahner proceeded to explain the layout for town meeting. He stated that there would be a tent setup for only the Town Moderator and Town Clerk because in order to setup for the Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen, etc. the stage would have to be enormous and would therefore be too expensive. He informed the Selectmen that there will be seating for 108-320 people available. Mr. Flaherty asked what the expense associated with this would be. Mr. Zahner replied that this would be explained in the next part of the presentation. Mr. Zahner clarified that the tent coverage is for 108 people and the remaining people would be uncovered, which is why the seating availability varied from 108-320 people. He advised that a second tent would be an additional \$4,000 to cover the second section on the diagram provided. Mr. Zahner told the Board that he was leaving it up to them to decide on whether or not they should have a second tent. Ms. Deley asked about having the area where people can stop and talk to nurses about concerns about symptoms and if there would be signage, which Mr. Zahner confirmed there would be.

Mr. Ray Cord, Deputy Director of Norton Emergency Management Agency, explained that the closest lot is "Lot 1" which is where the bus turnaround is. He stated that when this lot is filled up, the next area for parking will be the first part of the main lot and then go to the left from there. Mr. Cord pointed out that a rescue vehicle will be parked near the bleachers at the back of the High School.

Ms. Deley asked if they were just going to have greeters or signage too to direct residents on where to go and the flow of traffic. Mr. Zahner answered that they are relying on the greeters for this. Mr. Cord commented that there would be some signage. Ms. Deley asked if there would be handouts of maps and information being given by greeters. Mr. Cord clarified that there will be handouts of the procedures put into place.

Ms. Deley asked where they are going to put the non-masked participants. Mr. Zahner brought up the discussion with town counsel about town elections and having them off to the side sectioned off. Mr. Flaherty said they would probably have to do that, but to check with town counsel.

Mr. Cord advised that one town is having a town meeting outdoors with no tents with a rain date. Mr. Conway asked if someone showed up with no mask on and when at the pre-screening process, they discover that they are exhibiting symptoms if they can turn them away. Mr. Zahner said he believes they cannot because it is deemed unconstitutional, but they would separate them from the rest of the participants.

Mr. Bramwell proposed expanding the size of the stage to fit the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Finance Committee because they also facilitate running the meeting and should be sitting with the Town Moderator and Town Clerk. Mr. Zahner said they would be able to accommodate adding these committee members. Ms. Deley asked Mr. Zahner if they have asked other towns about sharing resources, such as asking towns that have tents if they can borrow them. Mr. Zahner advised that this is something he is going to look into, but he just hasn't had a chance yet.

Mr. Zahner moved on to go over the indoor option, which was procedurally very similar to the outdoor option. Mr. Conway explained that by using his company's software, they were able to calculate the capacity of the gym with social distancing figured in. He stated that given the volume of the space, the results determined a reasonable risk range. Mr. Bramwell asked what the gym capacity would be and Mr. Zahner and Mr. Cord said it would hold no more than 300 people. Mr. Cord provided a list of pros and cons for both inside and outside, which Mr. Zahner gave an overview of.

Mr. Cord brought up the issue discussed earlier in the day as far as having no WI-FI available. Mr. Yunits advised that Fire Chief, Shawn Simmons, said they might be able to use an ambulance for that and that using a hot spot was another option discussed. Mr. Cord pointed out that the tents they may potentially use cannot be spiked down and must be counterweighted because of the sprinkler system on the field.

Ms. Lucia Longhurst, Town Clerk, said that they could use a printed out list versus using the tablets if they can't get WI-FI or a hot spot. Mr. Cord asked if it would take longer and Ms. Longhurst said it would but it is doable.

Mr. Conway asked if they heard more about legislation allowing the use of other towns' venues. Mr. Yunits responded that he reached out to the Xfinity Center, but they are not opening their venue at all and that the Town of Mansfield is using solely the parking lot for their town meeting. Mr. Conway suggested possibly piggy-backing their venue and sharing costs. Mr. Bramwell pointed out that they still need to know if they can go out of town for town meeting before exploring that option.

Mr. Flaherty expressed a concern from a previous meeting about using school properties for town meetings and elections. Mr. Yunits said that most of the towns he spoke with are using school properties. Mr. Conway expressed that he would prefer town meeting be held outdoors and Ms. Steele, Mr. Flaherty, and Ms. Deley agreed. Ms. Deley suggested discussing a time and posed the idea of 9:00 A.M. or 10:00 A.M. Ms. Steele and Mr. Flaherty agreed that both times seemed ideal. Mr. Conway said he liked 10:00 A.M. Mr. Bramwell expressed that he liked the idea of starting at either 9:00 A.M. or 9:30 A.M. because the meeting probably won't start until 10:00 A.M. Mr. Gouveia expressed his opinion that there is no need to air the meeting live because if the meeting is taped, people can still watch what happened. He added that in his opinion, having the meeting live gives no advantages and only discourages attendance.

Ms. Deley suggested having Ms. Longhurst comment since she would need time to setup and check people in. Ms. Longhurst said that neither option posed a problem. Mr. Bramwell commented that they should start at 9:00 A.M. and Ms. Deley agreed.

MOTION was made by Mr. Flaherty to hold the Spring Town Meeting on June 27th at 9:00 A.M. at the Norton High School football field/track. Seconded by Ms. Steele. Vote: Ms. Deley – Yes; Ms. Steele – Yes; Mr. Conway – Yes; Mr. Flaherty – Yes; and Mr. Bramwell – Yes. MOTION CARRIES

Mr. Yunits suggested a rain date of Monday, June 29th at 6:00 P.M. Mr. Flaherty stated that he thought it would be prudent to do so.

MOTION was made by Mr. Flaherty to have a rain date of Monday, June 29th at 6:00 P.M. at the High School track and football field. Seconded by Ms. Deley. Vote: Ms. Deley – Yes; Ms. Steele – Yes; Mr. Conway – Yes; Mr. Flaherty – Yes; and Mr. Bramwell – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

2. Review and/or Vote on Town Meeting Articles and FY2021 Budget.

Mr. Yunits explained that at this time they don't know if they are going to need anything under retirement expenses, but he could know by Thursday. He informed the Board that the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) would be meeting on Tuesday night, so Articles 10 to 14 were dependent on the PBC and the School Committee agreeing to remove those articles from the warrant for now. Mr. Yunits continued to give a summary of the articles as follows:

Article 15: Water/Sewer Article for the West Main Street sewer project.

Article 16: The Selectmen previously voted to entertain an agreement for a twenty-year lease for antenna space on the water towers. So, because this lease would be for twenty years, it has to be approved at town meeting.

Article 17 (Water Bodies Management Costs): Going to be in discussions with the Water Bodies, but may need to wait until October [for this article] because of funding.

Article 18: The Town Manager stated that he needs to check with Town Accountant to see if there are any prior year bills.

Articles 19-23: Zoning articles.

Mr. Yunits explained that he was looking for thoughts on delaying Articles 10-14 and then he will approach the PBC, School Committee, and the School Superintendent on those. In response, Ms. Deley said the Board had talked about this and the budget deficit at prior meetings and expressed that she thought this was a controversial item. She explained that if their focus was on reducing the number of attendees that she would be in favor of delaying these articles. Mr. Bramwell said that if these articles were not necessary that he would delay taking care of them and delay action to a later meeting to give people the opportunity to feel comfortable voicing their opinion.

Mr. Flaherty brought to the Board's attention that holding this town meeting is a considerable expense and the primary driver of having the meeting is to get what is absolutely necessary done. He emphasized that they are carrying a big expense for what could be a 15 minute meeting. Mr. Yunits said if they did the zoning articles that could take a considerable amount of time. Mr. Flaherty said he understood and clarified that he just didn't understand the costs to get this done. Ms. Deley pointed out that if Mr. Flaherty recalled, the most attended meeting was the June 3, 2019 town meeting and it was on the same topics. Mr. Flaherty stated that he agreed and that it was more of a comment than anything else.

Ms. Deley asked what articles were put on by a public body. Mr. Yunits advised that Article 10 was from the PBC, Article 11 the School Committee, Article 12 the Board of Selectmen and the PBC as well as Article 14, and Article 13 by the PBC.

Mr. Bramwell suggested voting to revoke their endorsement of any land acquisition articles. Ms. Dinah O'Brien of the PBC stated that their articles are on the warrant in conjunction with the Board of Selectmen. She further stated that her understanding of the PBC is that the article falls under the Board of Selectmen and it is their say as far as pulling the articles off of the warrant. Ms. O'Brien suggested postponing their inclination of presenting it at this time, which Mr. Bramwell agreed and clarified that he misspoke.

MOTION was made by Mr. Flaherty to propose that Articles 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 be postponed until a later town meeting. Seconded by Ms. Deley. Vote: Ms. Deley – Yes; Ms. Steele – Yes; Mr. Conway – Yes; Mr. Flaherty – Yes; and Mr. Bramwell – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

Mr. Zack Tsilis expressed his opinion that if the articles on the warrant were stripped down to a few articles pertaining to the budget that they shouldn't spend the money on the tents, but still hold the meeting outside.

Mr. William Gouveia, Town Moderator, stated that if the zoning articles stayed on the warrant it would increase the attendants, triple the chaos, and create more work for the Town Clerk's

workers. He urged the Board to not let the zoning articles stay on the warrant because it will be an entirely different meeting. Mr. Bramwell and Mr. Flaherty agreed.

Mr. Yunits informed the Selectmen that the Planning Director was on vacation this week and asked to leave this until next week. The Town Manager suggested that in the meantime they get a written opinion of the process to make sure everything is done correctly if the Board does decide to not move forward with the articles.

- Mr. Bramwell advised that the Board of Selectmen needs to appoint a new member to the GATRA Advisory Board. He stated that he could attend those meetings, but that he would like to open this to someone in the community and asked people to send letter of interest. The Chairman lastly mentioned that the next GATRA Advisory Board meeting is June 22nd.

MOTION was made by Mr. Conway. to appoint Mr. Bradford K. Bramwell as the Representative to the GATRA Advisory Board. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: Ms. Deley – Yes; Ms. Steele – Yes; Mr. Conway – Yes; Mr. Flaherty – Yes; and Mr. Bramwell – Abstained. MOTION CARRIES.

- Mr. Conway announced that the High School is holding a graduation parade Saturday (June 6th) at 10:00 A.M. He stated that graduates will be in vehicles from the L.G. Nourse Elementary School to the J.C. Solmonese and that participants could register online.

The Board moved on to discuss the budget with the Town Manager. Mr. Yunits began with the Fixed and Shared Expenses and advised that the sheet presented to the Board did not have the Finance Committee's recommendations on there yet. He informed the Selectmen that Southeastern Regional, the Regional Agricultural School, and Water/Sewer Department would be presenting to the Finance Committee the following week. The Town Manager continued by explaining that under this category is also the maturing debt, which totaled \$1,890,636.00. He went on to explain that employee benefits have three sections: Personnel Services (Bristol County Retirement expense), Other Personnel Services (health insurance), and Charges & Expenditures (retiree health insurance). Mr. Yunits advised that under Unemployment they were budgeting \$80,000.00. He explained that the Miscellaneous category included fuel for the town vehicles and Charges & Expenditures is for all other insurances that the town has. Ms. Deley asked if \$80,000.00 would be enough for unemployment. Mr. Yunits responded that they don't know at this time how much they will actually need, but advised that there is a possibility this amount could increase. He pointed out that through December, the Town had only spent \$16,000 for unemployment.

Mr. Yunits continued his presentation of the budgets. Regarding the "Balance of General Government Accounts", Ms. Deley questioned why the Town Clerk's budget decreased. The Town Manager advised that there was a position in that office that was unfilled. Ms. Deley then asked why all the other budgets increased when the country was likely going into a recession. Mr. Yunits advised that the increases were contractual and the Town could afford these increases this year, but that there will probably be no increases next year. Mr. Yunits explained that he didn't feel they should be talking about salaries in open session. Ms. Deley and Mr. Conway asked to have an executive session the following week to go over increases and contracts. Ms. Deley then asked about the Police Department and Fire Department

budgets and why there were so high. Mr. Yunits answered that this was again because of contractual increases (2%) and whatever stipend increases these employees are entitled to. Mr. Conway pointed out that the Inspection Department's budget showed an increase of just under 13%. Mr. Yunits explained that this was an estimate and is based off of the number of inspections, so right now they budgeted for \$17,000.00; however, if the economy goes down and there are less inspections, it is likely that this figure will decrease.

Ms. Deley asked in regard to the Communications line item what savings they will have joining SEMRECC. Mr. Yunits gave an overview of the cost comparisons between a Norton Dispatch and joining SEMRECC and it came to a total cost savings of \$286,806.35. Mr. Bramwell pointed out that all the technology will also be new. Mr. Yunits agreed and said that it is a huge upgrade to what they currently have. Chief Clark pointed out that they are outgrowing their twenty-year-old station and they don't have the sustainability to keep up. The Police Chief stated that this center will be able to grow for the future and emphasized that this is a state-of-the-art facility. He pointed out that other [police] departments are going to want to join SEMRECC, which will reduce the cost to the Town. Ms. Deley asked how many towns are already in SEMRECC. Chief Clark said Mansfield and Foxboro already combined and Norton and Easton are joining soon.

Ms. Deley asked Mr. Yunits why the number for Veterans' Services decreased and Mr. Yunits explained that a new person would be filling that position at a lower rate. Mr. Conway then asked why the Council on Aging increased and Mr. Yunits stated that this was in result of the clerical position that was filled last October. Ms. Deley asked why the School's numbers reduced so much from what they requested (\$32,352,868.00) and what the Town Manager recommended (\$30,706,589.00). Mr. Yunits advised that the School Department came in with an 8% increase in their proposed budget. Mr. Yunits pointed out that the Finance Committee also recommended \$30,706,589.00. He further stated that they were hoping by March to have the Town and Schools at 3%, but the Town [governance side] is a 2.22% increase and the Schools a 2.5% increase.

Mr. Yunits pointed out that the Streetlights budget decreased by \$40,000.00 because of the LED project before moving on to discuss the Capital Improvements budget. He advised that the Capital Committee met again earlier that week and they scaled back quite a bit because they were not confident they would be able to add money back to the budget in the fall. The Town Manager informed the Board that the beginning balance for Capital is \$719,242.00. He advised that there are payments that the Town is required to pay, which he went into further detail explaining, and after those payments the ending balance would be \$303,092.00. Mr. Yunits pointed out that they know next year they are going to have \$284,650.00 payments again because none of the expenses itemized under "Required Payments" on the FY20201 Capital sheet would be coming off and they would be adding another \$22,000.00 for the minibus. With that being said, Mr. Yunits advised that they wanted to leave the remaining balance of \$303,092.00 in Capital to cover these payments in case they are not able to add money in the fall. The Town Manager further mentioned that the Water Department would be purchasing a new Dodge Ram in the amount of \$34,015.00 out of Water Surplus Retained Earnings. Mr. Yunits stated that the Water Department will be replacing wells 5 and 6, which they will be borrowing money to do so, and the Capital Committee approved the borrowing in the amount of \$850,000.00. The Town Manager did an overview of the Five-Year Capital Improvement Program.

Ms. Deley asked if they could further review the Water Department's budget the following week at their next meeting. Mr. Yunits said they could do so and advised that the Water and Sewer Department would be at that meeting to go over their budget.

III. Adjournment

MOTION was made by Mr. Flaherty to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting at 9:25 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.

Next meeting: June 11, 2020 at 6:30 P.M.

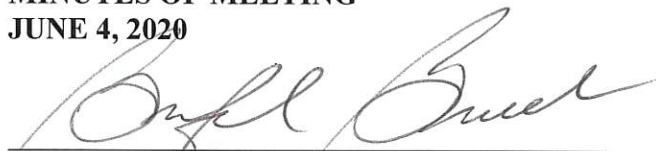
URL Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xub7ahRMIfE>

Respectfully Submitted by:



Jennifer Reid, Office Administrator

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES OF MEETING JUNE 4, 2020




Bradford K. Bramwell

Michael Flaherty



John Conway



Renee Deley



Michael Toole

Minutes Approved by Board on: July 9, 2020