



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

Telephone (508) 285-0210; Facsimile (508) 285-0297

Board of Selectmen  
Meeting Minutes  
EXECUTIVE SESSION  
June 16, 2020

NORTON TOWN CLEI  
FEB 17 2021  
2:50 AM  
RECEIVED PM

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The June 16, 2020 Executive Session of the Board of Selectmen was called to order by Mr. Michael Flaherty, Vice-Chairman, at 9:24 P.M., held remotely (web: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/6389291060>; dial in via +1 (646) 558-8656, Meeting ID: 638 929 1060).

- a. **ROLL CALL:** Mr. Bradford K. Bramwell, Mr. John Conway, Ms. Mary Steele, and Ms. Renee Deley were present. Also in attendance: Michael D. Yunits, Town Manager.

Mr. Conway stated that as far as personnel increases, he wanted to determine where the increases would be coming from. Mr. Yunits explained that department heads get a 2% increase with the possibility of an additional 3% based on merit. Mr. Yunits advised that for unions, it also depends on steps. Mr. Conway asked who the department heads are. Mr. Yunits informed Mr. Conway that department heads fall under SENA-A and provided examples of positions including the Board of Health Agent, Building Commissioner, Planning Director, Conservation Agent, Veterans' Agent, Assistant Treasurer/Collector, Council on Aging Director, and Water/Sewer Administrator. Ms. Deley asked about the Town Clerk and the Town Manager answered that she is a wage/salary employee.

Ms. Deley said that the country is going into recession and expressed that they should really look at raises because they will be more difficult to fund later, which could result in layoffs. She explained that she would rather try and keep [the budget] level funded and keep people hired and Mr. Conway agreed.

Mr. Conway asked how the merit raises allocated this year. Mr. Yunits answered that for the fiscal year coming up, he didn't know off the top of his head, but everyone would have gotten either 4% or 5% increases. Mr. Conway asked if these increases were similar to what has been done in the past. Mr. Yunits answered that it was and further explained that this was added into their contracts. Mr. Yunits emphasized that the department heads are also very far behind other towns [in regard to salaries]. Mr. Conway stated that he understood the frustration of the Town being used as a stepping-stone and people leaving for a higher paying town.

Mr. Bramwell stated that when they are referring to the [Town Hall] department heads, there are so few of them compared to the schools. He further pointed out that a lot of the teachers/employees of the schools get 5%-7% raises built into their contracts and it isn't even merit based, but for longevity. He added that while the department heads are paid slightly higher than the others, it doesn't make a big impact.

Mr. Conway argued that the school people also have continuing education degrees and other things they have to pay for. Mr. Bramwell responded that most of those expenses are reimbursed. Mr. Conway argued that it was in the past, but now they only get a few hundred dollars a year towards this. Mr. Conway said that the School Department is already doing administrative consolidation at the schools and have \$1.6 million shortfall. Mr. Bramwell pointed out that 10 years ago, half of the administrative positions at the schools didn't exist. Mr. Yunits supported Mr. Bramwell's statement by pointing out that the School Department now has a Business Manager, Assistant Superintendent, Facilities Director, IT person, and more. The Town Manager informed the Board that the previous School Business Manager salary was closer to the Town Accountant's and now it is way above the Town Accountant's. Mr. Yunits further stated that the administrators on [the Town governance] side are seeing what they are getting paid and what they are getting paid at the schools and also know that the schools don't have to go back to town meeting for increases.

Ms. Deley looked for clarification of what the overall increase was in the budgets. Mr. Yunits said that the Town governance side was 2.2% and the Schools 2.5%. Ms. Deley asked if they knew what the schools were looking at. Mr. Conway replied that the personnel increases the School Department was asking for was 6.82% (or \$1.62 million). Mr. Yunits clarified that the School Department just votes a total line item for the budget not where it goes. Mr. Flaherty asked if the Finance Committee voted on this already and if so, how they voted. Mr. Yunits advised that the Finance Committee did and they voted to recommend the budget.

Ms. Deley asked if the Finance Committee was able to have these kind of detailed discussions. About the budget process, which Mr. Flaherty replied that they absolutely do. Mr. Yunits pointed out that the Finance Committee does see every single employee's start date, their salary for the previous year, and their salary for the current year, with the exception of the School Department, who they have been trying to get this information from for a number of years, but the School Department never gets this information to them.

Ms. Deley asked what the potential was to drop this [amount] down. Mr. Yunits advised that it was up to the Board because contracts end at the end of June. Ms. Deley clarified that the budget is funded by not allocated yet and pointed out that if they go lower to be more frugal, it could also back them into a corner.

Mr. Bramwell said that if the money isn't used, it goes to free cash. He further stated that if the Town Manager doesn't have money to negotiate with, they could be setting him up to negotiate in bad faith. Mr. Bramwell said if things don't seem as dire as they thought, they can try and give them the funds. Ms. Deley asked who the highest paid department head is and what their salary is. Mr. Conway brought to the Board's attention that in the proposed budget, there are \$360,000.00 in salary increases excluding the School Department and if they include the School Department increases, it is a lot more. Mr. Yunits responded to Ms. Deley's question that the highest paid department head was in SENA-A and makes \$83,000.00. Mr. Conway asked how many employees fall under the Town excluding the School Department and Mr. Yunits replied about 110-120 people.

Mr. Conway asked what positions have been added [at Town Hall] and referred to the IT/Director of Communications position. Mr. Yunits clarified to answer Mr. Conway's question that the Director of Communications was merged with IT and that the Council on Aging added part-time clerical person. Mr. Conway concluded that the Board ultimately needs to trust the Town Manager and let him do his job.

Mr. Yunits referenced the AFSCME Clerical Agreement and informed the Board that they are looking for longevity and a \$50 increase on each step on each year of the contract. Ms. Deley asked how many people fall under this agreement and Mr. Yunits answered 11 and out of the 11, 4 were hired in 2019, 2 in 2017, 1 in 2016, 2 in 2014, 1 in 2000, and 1 in 1999. Mr. Yunits stated that one proposal is to get rid of the two lowest steps, which he stated would be more in line with other towns. Mr. Conway asked if all 11 individuals participate in this union, which Mr. Yunits answered they do.

Ms. Deley asked about the paragraphs referencing getting paid time and a half. Mr. Yunits explained that because there was nothing in the contract for the person to get compensation time versus getting time and a half that this would be added. Ms. Deley asked about changes to the Town Hall hours. Mr. Yunits advised that this was for part-time employees. He stated that the argument there was if someone was part-time and works 6 hours on Mondays, they should get 6 hours for the Monday holiday rather than dividing it over the course of their hours for the week. Mr. Yunits said that they are also looking for a full day before and after Christmas, but they settled on a half day on the day before Christmas. Mr. Yunits moved on to the next item negotiated, which would allow employees to carry over 5 vacation days from one year to the next. The Town Manager said that after 2009, carrying over 6 weeks of vacation wasn't allowed. Ms. Deley asked if they carried over vacation time if they would be allowed to get paid for them. Mr. Yunits answered no and that there is no pay out for unused vacation time.

Mr. Yunits informed the Board that they were able to meet the Fire Department half way by giving them the \$100 stipend (for the bulletproof vest) and on the EMT stipends. He expressed that if they were to go to arbitration, he didn't see it going well.

Mr. Conway referenced a letter about adding new positions to the Fire Department. Ms. Deley and Mr. Conway pointed out that in the vote taken, these new positions were to expire at the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2020) and Mr. Yunits confirmed that this was correct and that they will have to come back to the Board of Selectmen for those positions.

### **Adjournment**

**MOTION was made by Mr. Bramwell to adjourn at 10:11 P.M. Seconded by Ms. Deley. Vote: Ms. Deley – Yes; Ms. Steele – Yes; Mr. Conway – Yes; Mr. Bramwell – Yes; and Mr. Flaherty - Yes. MOTION CARRIES.**


Respectfully Submitted by:

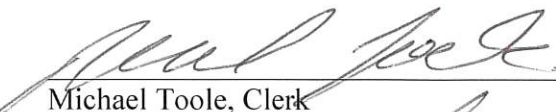



Jennifer Reid, Office Administrator

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
EXECUTIVE MINUTES OF MEETING  
JUNE 16, 2020**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John Conway, Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Renee Deley, Vice-Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Toole, Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bradford K. Bramwell

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Megan Artz

Minutes Approved by Board on: September 17, 2020