



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

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

NORTON TOWN CLERK

FEB 22 2021
3:43 AM
RECEIVED

Select Board
Minutes of Joint Meeting
January 14, 2021

I. Call to Order by Chairman

The January 14, 2021 joint meeting of the Norton Select Board, Finance Committee, and School Committee was held remotely (Web: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6391519600>; Phone: 646-558 8656; Meeting ID: 639 151 9600, and was called to order at 6:03 P.M., by Mr. John Conway, Chair.

Member(s) present:

Select Board: Mr. John Conway, Ms. Renee Deley, Mr. Michael Toole, and Ms. Megan Artz.
Also in attendance: Mr. Michael D. Yunits, Town Manager.

School Committee: Mrs. Carolyn Gallagher, Mr. Deniz Savas, Ms. Sheri Cohen, and Ms. Kathleen Stern. Also in attendance: Dr. Joseph Baeta, Superintendent of Schools, and Mr. Matthew Wells, the School Business Manager.

Finance Committee: Mr. Stephen Evans, Ms. Bonnie Yezukevich, Ms. Paula Daniels, Mr. Aaron Smith, Ms. Aimee Sawyer, Mr. Richard Dorney, Mr. Zack Tsilis, Mr. William Rotondi, and Mr. Kevin Snyder.

Mr. Yunits recognized the great loss of Detective Sergeant Stephen Desfosses and advised that the Police Department was able to bring him home to Norton from the city. The Town Manager acknowledged Detective Sergeant Desfosses' contribution to Norton explaining that he not only grew up in this town, but also served on the Norton Police Department for more than 30 years. Mr. Yunits expressed his condolences to his family and to Detective Sergeant Desfosses himself for what he went through trying to fight COVID-19. The Town Manager wished his family the best.

Mr. Conway called for a moment of silence at 6:06 P.M.

1. Joint Meeting with the Finance Committee and School Committee:

a.) Discussion on Form of Warrant Article and Ballot Question for Council on Aging/Community Center, Town Hall and School Sports Complex Projects.

Mr. Yunits advised that they need to decide on how the Town would like to present the article (i.e. whether it be all three projects together on one article, do them all as separate articles, or some other variation of grouping).

Dr. Baeta informed everyone that the athletic complex was now part of the School Department's capital plan. He explained that they scaled back the plan and the cost of the project, which was originally \$8.7 million to somewhere in the \$6 million range. Dr. Baeta said they also have as part of the capital plan tying the schools fully into sewer. He stated that the project started at \$10.4 million and has since been reduced by 46% (\$6.3 million). Dr. Baeta said he would rather see the projects grouped together on one article, but deferred that decision to the School Committee and/or the Select Board.

Ms. Gallagher stated for the record that this has been a "labor of love" where there have been many discussions and meetings about this. She mentioned that this wasn't their first choice option, but they are understanding of what is going on currently in the world and chose a less expensive option.

Ms. Cohen expressed her opinion that the three projects should be one vote. She further commented that these are three projects that have needed to be done that kept being put off. Ms. Cohen emphasized that these should be one vote to show a united front and present all three projects together.

Mr. Evans asked what has changed from the original athletic complex plans with the option the School Committee chose. Dr. Baeta gave an overview of the changes as follows:

- The mainstays are the total renovation and new football field, track, and lights (seating is not included with this and would be staying as-is);
- The "pit" field is no longer being done as turf;
- The tennis courts will be coming towards the high school from the Yelle School;
- The JV baseball field is not being done (was part of the original projects; turf is behind where the softball field is and building all the way back becomes a multi-purpose field for practices and games.
- Baseball field and varsity softball field aren't being touched
- Project does include lighting everywhere in the new turf area, but not at the tennis courts.

Dr. Baeta advised that there were many discussions about the tennis courts at the Middle School because they are at a point of serious concern, which are on top of a leeching field. Dr. Baeta expressed his opinion that the Town should not be investing a lot of money into improving those considering that the weather completely utilizes the wetness in that area and is how the tennis courts have cracks throughout them that are pretty significant. He explained that the cost to put the new tennis courts at the high school would be \$350,000 and the cost to repair/improve the existing tennis courts at the middle school is estimated around \$260,000 with a leeching field continuing to be underneath it. Dr. Baeta offered to send over all the plans and the two options, with sewer and without sewer.

Ms. Deley asked if they had an updated visual of what the updated plan looked like, which Dr. Baeta answered they do and he would send that over as well. Ms. Deley clarified that there would be no lights at the baseball field or the varsity softball field, which Dr. Baeta confirmed.

Mr. Evans asked for the cost-benefit analysis with the information Dr. Baeta said he would send over, which Dr. Baeta confirmed he had a one-pager on this as far as utilization and potential cost. Dr. Baeta pointed out that they do have a cost-savings when it comes to labor.

Mr. Toole asked Dr. Baeta if they have any current contracts for field-usage that they are already entered into, such as for cricket, and how this would affect that (are they going to be using that new field). Dr. Baeta said that cricket is a yearly contract and is written in a way where it is up to the School Committee because they recognize that this field could be gone at any moment. Dr. Baeta advised that the only contract that they are entered into that they really do not want to touch is the Norton Middle School with Norton Youth Soccer.

Ms. Cohen stated that she hopes they can rent out the fields to generate revenue and hopefully either lower or eliminate the athletic fees in the future. She pointed out that Norton has some of the highest athletic fees in the area.

Mr. Tsilis asked if they could use water/sewer funds to fund some of these projects. Mr. Yunits said no because these funds are only to be used for work being done in the street. Mr. Toole asked if this could be changed by a vote at town meeting and Mr. Yunits said possibly, but expressed that this wouldn't exactly be a fair way to go about it because they would only be getting payment from those who have sewer when it would really be the community that would benefit from it and really should come out of residents' taxes.

Ms. Deley asked if the track was still part of the plan and Dr. Baeta said it was, which will transform the current track from a six-lane track to an eight-lane track. Mr. Toole expressed his support for the school project, but at the same time after talking to the community about wants versus needs, a lot of the responses he has heard from residents is that this isn't really a need and expressed that he agreed that it is not exactly something he feels is a necessity.

Ms. Gallagher said this is a need because they can't use their fields for certain times of the year or rent space, the football field is totally inadequate, the track is inadequate, etc. She further stated that the Athletic Director has put in countless hours of work to find space to practice and play games because of the inadequate fields/track. Dr. Baeta and Ms. Stern both expressed similar sentiments with the extra expenses the schools are incurring in result of inadequate fields, such as field fees and busing fees. Dr. Baeta also pointed out that from the high school project and from those meetings/discussions at that time, they spoke endlessly about doing the football field over and putting in a turf field and they chose the cheaper way out with not doing it and now the Town is paying for it.

Mr. Wade Lizotte, Director of Facilities, thanked Mr. Toole for asking the question to the community. He pointed out that the fields were essentially built on wetlands and on top of that they are being used during the fall and not having an opportunity to regenerate.

Mr. Savas said that while Mr. Toole has heard people say that they don't need the athletic fields, he has also heard people say the Town doesn't need a new Town Hall or Senior Center, but those are people who either haven't been in the Town Hall or are 28 year-olds who have not been in the Senior Center.

Mr. Dorney said that for all three projects they should have the predictive maintenance costs and take that information and compare them with the present-day costs with preventative/emergency maintenance in order to paint a picture of what the cost benefit is and put a pin on a map for residents.

Ms. O'Brien emphasized that the Town has a municipal infrastructure that is in dire need and explained that they need to address the needs versus the wants. Ms. O'Brien pointed out that the Town is currently spending a significant amount of money trying to maintain the buildings and fields where they could save these [repair/maintenance] costs on the failing structures/fields and put the money towards these projects. Ms. O'Brien lastly stated that the Town is at a point where it needs to spend money to save money.

Mr. Tsilis explained that he too supports all three projects, but to Mr. Toole's point with talking to people on the street the response he gets is "they think we are on drugs" because it started with putting up a small senior center, then a new town hall, and now the athletic complex on top of it. Mr. Evans emphasized that they really need to come up with a communication plan for the whole town on all these projects to be able to distribute the message to the whole town.

Ms. Stern, Ms. Gallagher, and Mr. Savas voiced unanimous opinions that they should have all three projects as one article and one vote.

The boards/committees moved on to discuss the Town Hall and Senior Center projects. Ms. O'Brien started off the discussion by stating that the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) has been meeting every other week working on these projects. Ms. O'Brien advised that the PBC is currently at the stage where they will be receiving two independent cost estimators that are due to the PBC by February 8th. She said the plan is to go to the Select Board meeting on or around February 11th to present the Town Hall/Municipal Center and Community/Senior Center projects. Ms. O'Brien further stated that the PBC has been working closely with the architect to come up with the conceptual designs of the buildings, which are just about in their final stages, and have received feedback from the Council on Aging Board as well as the employees at Town Hall, the Police Chief, and the Fire Chief. She added that they have also been working to obtain a Purchase and Sales Agreement for the two properties.

Mr. Conway pointed out that the Veterans' Agent and Recreation Director need space to hold their events. Ms. Deley asked why the Park and Recreation Director and the Veterans' Agent aren't in the Community Center plan/layout rather than the Town Hall. Mr. Yunits answered that a lot of veterans are a younger population and they don't want there to be a misconception or shun younger veterans away. The Veterans' Agent, Ms. Estelle Flett, pointed out that she assists veterans and a lot of it comes from foot traffic through the Town Hall and that to assist veterans, she works with several other departments to do so, such as the Town Clerk Office, the Treasurer/Collector's Office, and the Assessing Office.

Mr. Slattery suggested having full veterans' services in the proposed community center once a week or some other routine schedule. Mr. Toole emphasized the need to stick to one name when discussing the Senior Center/Community Center project, preferably "community center" rather than "senior center."

Mr. Evans clarified that the PBC will have the cost estimators by February 11th, which Ms. O'Brien confirmed. Mr. Evans asked that after the PBC presents to the Select Board that they also have these figures sent to the Finance Committee, which Ms. O'Brien agreed to.

Mr. Conway posed the question to the Finance Committee about how they believe these projects should be presented to the Town on the warrant (one article with all three projects,

separately, etc.). Mr. Evans said they need to come to a consensus and in his opinion, they should be kept together and Ms. Sawyer agreed. Mr. Tsilis agreed with both Mr. Evans and Ms. Sawyer and added that they should also have it on the same ballot as the Charter Commission question to get the best turnout. Mr. Smith agreed to having all projects together on the warrant, but expressed that he didn't necessarily agree about having it on with the Charter Commission question. Mr. Dorney agreed to have them all together and show unity (three projects, one presentation/article). Ms. Yezukevich agreed with the other Finance Committee members stating that it is one town, three projects, and should be one vote. Ms. Daniels said without a doubt it should be one question. Mr. Snyder said he agreed with everyone else on the Finance Committee and that the best chance of success is to have one vote for all three projects; however, he disagreed with Mr. Tsilis about having the Charter Commission question rolled into this vote on the same ballot. Mr. Rotondi agreed to have only one vote.

Mr. Conway asked the Select Board the same question. Ms. Deley stated that this is a long-term strategic look that the Town is formulating and agrees it should be three projects on one article. Ms. Artz agreed with Ms. Deley. Mr. Toole acknowledged the great discussions and supports the idea of three projects and one article. Mr. Conway also agreed to have the three projects on one article.

b.) FY21 Budget Discussion on Any Issues or Concerns.

Mr. Yunits showed where the Town was on local receipts through November. He advised that they should be at 41%, which they are for the most part with the exception of motor vehicle excise taxes, which is because this usually comes in February, and with that being said he expressed that he wasn't concerned. The Town Manager commented that the only issue is if the Town doesn't receive a substantial amount of revenue above their estimates, the only thing the Town will be relying on for free cash is turn backs from departments; so, this could potentially impact free cash if revenues don't pick-up. Mr. Yunits advised that they originally estimated \$16,172,811 in local aid and the Town received a slightly higher amount of \$16,381,485. He pointed out there was an increase in School Choice Receiving Tuition, so that wipes out any increase the Town had from local aid funds that could have been available to spend anywhere other than the schools.

Dr. Baeta responded to the increase in School Choice Tuition explaining that the difference in the amount is because the State decided to come back to its original support of students of School Choice who have any type of special education services. Dr. Baeta said this was taken away from the School Department in March and they actually lost \$34,000 in School Choice money because they would not accept the delivery of services for special education, such as OTPT from March until June. He emphasized that this is not a makeup, but rather utilizing the actual number of students and those who get those services.

Mr. Yunits continued summarizing the final numbers from the State and concluded that the numbers overall stayed the same more or less. Dr. Baeta pointed out that they lost \$72,000 in Chapter 70 money, but the rumor is that they may see it before the end of the year.

Mr. Yunits summarized that as far as the budget for this [fiscal] year on the Town side it is holding fine, but expressed a concern with anymore outbreaks of COVID-19 and especially if

they don't have the Cares Acts funds down the road there is the potential that they could be running into issues.

Dr. Baeta gave a summary of FY21 changes and the maneuvering the School Department had to do including hiring 19 teachers for e-learning, people out on family leave, maternity leaves, 3 staff members dealing with significant health issues, etc.).

Mr. Tsilis asked in regard to the Cares Act funds if there was any funding for municipal governments or if the Town received any additional funding for the schools under the package that was just passed. Mr. Yunits answered that under the package that was just passed, all the Town has received is that they have been allowed to carry the balance of Cares Act funds to December 31, 2021.

c.) Update on FEMA and Cares Act Funding.

Mr. Yunits explained that previously the Cares Act funds were set to expire on December 31, 2020 and now municipalities are allowed to carry over their balances to December 31, 2021. He informed the Board/Committees that initially FEMA said they would reimburse for meals, then they said they weren't, and now they said they might be again. Mr. Yunits reported that Ms. Rebecca Mowry of the Fire Department who is handling the FEMA reimbursements said she should know in two weeks if meals will be reimbursable. Mr. Yunits pointed out to the Select Board, Finance Committee, and School Committee that as of now the Town hasn't received a penny from FEMA. Mr. Evans asked if there was going to be an audit for the federal funds received and used. Mr. Yunits answered that yes there would be and the Town Accountant, Mr. James Puello, and Mr. Wells handle these audits. The Town Manager clarified that they have received every penny for Cares Act funds.

d.) FY22 Budget Preparation Discussion.

Mr. Yunits said he heard that the State estimated meals tax revenue increasing by 5.5% next year. He added that the last report in November, the unemployment rate was down to 5.9% rather than 10.4% reported at this time last year. Mr. Yunits advised that he has been directing department heads to not even ask for anything for next year and that they are just trying to do level-services. The Town Manager said that there is no way they are going to cut Chapter 70 money and expressed that there will be an unbelievable need next year so hopefully it goes up. He further stated that for local aid planning they are planning on 10% reduction. Mr. Yunits concluded that he is waiting to hear on how vaccinations are working out and State revenue to have a better idea of the FY22 budget.

e.) Discussion on TRANE Project Timeline.

Dr. Baeta advised that the TRANE performance contracting has 36 municipal buildings on it (5 school and 31 town side). Mr. Evans asked for the cost-benefit summary that was put together for this contract after he asked if it was already signed, which Dr. Baeta answered that he believed it was signed already and that he would provide this information.

Mr. Dorney asked if the listing for the equipment has already been done as part of the audit. Mr. Wells said they will put together a list of projects in priority of which will have the biggest savings. Mr. Dorney asked if they provided a facility listing as part of the bids, which

Mr. Wells said they did. Mr. Dorney asked if it had an equipment listing included as part of that bid and Mr. Wells said it did not. Mr. Dorney asked if TRANE sub-contracted some of the work out. Mr. Wells answered that they have people within their company that do most of the work, but believed that they do have other firms that they work with as well (when doing the energy audits and some of the work). Dr. Baeta said that the biggest issue is the formula that becomes the contract for actual savings that is guaranteed. He commented that the other part of it is when you get through the audit and you go through that process, you do not have to necessarily accept the recommendations; you can make your own recommendations based of your priorities.

f.) Update on Plain Street Solar Project.

Dr. Baeta said that every item on that timeline provided by the company for this project has not been met. He added that they have not received any communication from them since the end of June. Dr. Baeta further stated that there has been lots of noise disturbances throughout the work. Dr. Baeta expressed that he hoped for future projects the company is more communicative.

Ms. Deley provided an update that the Select Board got from one of their meetings saying that the company did not know that the windows were open while in session due to COVID-19 in reference to the noise complaint.

Dr. Baeta asked for a timeline of the work left to be done be sent to him. Mr. Conway relayed a message that the update the Board received was at their December 10th meeting and the last day they should be working there is on February 11, 2021.

On a separate note, the Town Manager advised that Dr. Baeta and himself, working with SRPEDD, filed the Town's energy reduction plan recently, which was the last step the Town needed. So, once this is approved by the State, Norton will become a Green Community.

g.) Update on Marijuana Establishments.

Mr. Evans said he was just looking for a general update since at town meeting, they were told they were going to get periodic updates and they haven't yet. Mr. Evans mentioned that he saw in the newspaper an article about a couple of establishments coming into town and was wondering if they had the potential revenue projections yet.

Ms. Deley said she would have to look into the revenue projections, but that there are multiple streams of revenue and/or benefits to the Town from this including the community impact fee, the 3% excise tax on the sales, and the charitable donations, which is part of the Host Community Agreements (HCAs). She informed the Finance Committee and School Committee that the Select Board did enter into two HCAs, one of which being Solar Retail Norton that will be on Mansfield Avenue near the Xfinity Center, Alberto's and TPC. She stated that they submitted their paperwork to the State, so now it is just up to the Town to respond to the State so they can receive their provisional license. Ms. Deley advised that the second establishment coming into Norton is Exit 10 LLC, which will be in the Blue Star Business Park. She emphasized that her and Mr. Yunits have had follow-up conversations with Solar Retail Norton and commented that they are fully committed and they are working towards going before the Planning Board to obtain their special permit and site plan approval.

Ms. Deley explained that Exit 10 LLC is going through some ownership changes, so that will have to be presented to the Board again for an amendment to the HCA. She said they are actually doing this to reposition their organization to be considered as a social-equity applicant, which will allow for them to do delivery from their location as well, which will be an additional revenue stream and additional HCA they would enter into. Ms. Deley mentioned that they did receive a third application for a delivery service, who is a social-equity designation, and as of November 30th the Cannabis Control Commission (CCC) approved regulation for delivery operators. She said the applicant has since submitted a proposal for an HCA with the Town as a delivery operator. Ms. Deley advised that this is something that will go before the Economic Development Commission (EDC) for more questions as well as a general understanding of it and then be presented to the Select Board.

Mr. Evans asked if there have been public meetings on this. Ms. Deley advised that either the special permit or site plan approval process require that a public hearing be held before the Planning Board. Ms. Deley advised that Solar Retail Norton has already held their required informational session (on or around December 14, 2020), which is a requirement before they file an application with the State. She added that Exit 10 LLC has not done their first presentation yet, but they are fully committed to moving forward in the process. Mr. Evans posed the question of how they get this information out to residents since this is all happening very quickly. Ms. Deley informed Mr. Evans that as part of Solar Retail Norton's informational session they had to post it in multiple newspapers, it was posted locally by the Town Clerk, and they have to do the same thing when they go before the Planning Board.

II. Adjournment

MOTION was made by Ms. Deley to adjourn at 9:00 P.M. Seconded by Mr. Toole. Vote: Ms. Artz – Yes; Mr. Toole – Yes; Ms. Deley – Yes; and Mr. Conway – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

URL Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nwojziw0gDg>

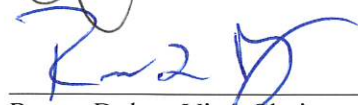
Respectfully Submitted by:



Jennifer Reid, Office Administrator

**SELECT BOARD
MINUTES OF JOINT MEETING
JANUARY 14, 2021**



John Conway, Chair

Renee Deley, Vice-Chair

Michael Toole, Clerk

Bradford K. Bramwell

Megan Artz

Minutes Approved by Board on: February 18, 2021