



TOWN OF NORTON
SELECT BOARD
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Select Board
Meeting Minutes
April 5, 2021

I. Call to Order by Chair

The April 5, 2021 joint meeting of the Norton Select Board and Finance Committee was held remotely (Web: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6391519600>; Phone: 646-558-8656; Meeting ID: 639 151 9600, and the Finance Committee meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M., by Mr. Stephen Evans, Chair of the Finance Committee. Finance Committee member(s) present: Ms. Paula Daniels, Mr. Richard Dorney, Mr. Michael Fiore, Mr. Aaron Smith, Mr. Kevin Snyder, Mr. Zack Tsilis, and Ms. Bonnie Yezukevich. Ms. Aimee Sawyer joined the meeting at 7:03 P.M. The Select Board meeting was called to order by Mr. John Conway, Chair of the Select Board, at 7:01 P.M. Members Present: Mr. Michael Toole and Ms. Megan Artz. Also in attendance: Mr. Michael D. Yunits, Town Manager.

2. New Business

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

Mr. Yunits began by informing Mr. Evans that the Planning Board will be at the meeting to go over the zoning articles. He mentioned to the Chair that next Monday, April 19th is a holiday and asked if they would like to meet Monday and Wednesday of next week, which Mr. Evans said they would take into consideration.

a.) TIF

Mr. Yunits stated that this is Article 9 on the Special Town Meeting Warrant and was presented to the Finance Committee last week. Mr. Evans commented that this was presented last week and put on hold so the Finance Committee could see the actual wording of the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Agreement itself. Mr. Yunits advised that the Select Board did vote to support the TIF and that it would be between the Town of Norton and Home Depot USA. Mr. Yunits provided highlights of the TIF as follows:

- The creation of 25 new permanent jobs for the project;
- Anticipate development to begin is on July 1, 2021 and continue through to opening on May 31, 2022;
- The investment will be \$10,400,000 in site improvements and \$1,000,000 in personal property and equipment;

- Property is currently assessed at \$1,168,300;
- Duration of the TIF is 10 years (the tax exemption percentage beginning at year 1 at 80% and year 10 at 25%);
- Will hire qualified local contractors, vendors, and suppliers in connection with the operation;
- To the best of their ability, require that 3rd party delivery vehicles to register in the Town of Norton;
- Tenant agrees that during the exemption period will not seek or accept from the Economic Advisory Coordinating Council (EACC) any material changes to its certified project, application, or this agreement without approval of the Select Board, which approval will not be unreasonably delayed or denied;
- Tenant will have to provide annual reports to the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) on any job creation so the State can see that they are meeting their job requirements of hiring 25 full-time employees;
- Any failure to comply with the terms of the agreement shall be deemed an event of default and the TIF will be decertified.

Mr. Evans asked if legal counsel reviewed the wording, which Mr. Yunits confirmed they had and added that the Massachusetts Office of Business Development did as well. Mr. Tsilis asked what the permit fee will be for this project and Mr. Yunits advised \$166,000.

MOTION was made by Ms. Sawyer to recommend Article 9 on the Special Town Meeting Warrant. Seconded by Mr. Smith. Vote: Ms. Sawyer – Yes; Ms. Daniels – Yes; Mr. Dorney – Yes; Mr. Fiore – Yes; Mr. Smith – Yes; Mr. Snyder – Yes; Mr. Tsilis – Yes; Ms. Yezukevich – Yes; and Mr. Evans – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

b.) Chapter 90

MOTION was made by Ms. Sawyer to recommend Article 2 of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Seconded by Mr. Smith. Vote: Ms. Sawyer – Yes; Ms. Daniels – Yes; Mr. Dorney – Yes; Mr. Fiore – Yes; Mr. Smith – Yes; Mr. Snyder – Yes; Mr. Tsilis – Yes; Ms. Yezukevich – Yes; and Mr. Evans – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

c.) Tree Services

MOTION was made by Ms. Sawyer to recommend Article 3 on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Seconded by Mr. Smith. Vote: Ms. Sawyer – Yes; Ms. Daniels – Yes; Mr. Dorney – Yes; Mr. Fiore – Yes; Mr. Smith – Yes; Mr. Snyder – Yes; Mr. Tsilis – Yes; Ms. Yezukevich – Yes; and Mr. Evans – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

d.) FY22 Water Enterprise Budget and FY22 Sewer Enterprise Budget

Mr. Evans asked that the Finance Committee have more time to review this and the Sewer budget more closely before voting on it potentially next week.

e.) FY22 Capital Appropriation

Mr. Yunits explained that both the Finance Committee and Select Board voted to support the FY22 Capital Plan (Article 8 of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant) and this is Article 7 of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. He advised that this will be to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$600,000 to be added to the Capital Improvements Fund from Free Cash. Mr. Toole clarified that the Select Board did vote to recommend this article, but wanted the amount written in.

MOTION was made by Ms. Sawyer to recommend Article 7 on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant pending an update to the language that they will be transferring \$600,000 from Free Cash. Seconded by Mr. Smith. Vote: Ms. Sawyer – Yes; Ms. Daniels – Yes; Mr. Dorney – Yes; Mr. Fiore – Yes; Mr. Smith – Yes; Mr. Snyder – Yes; Mr. Tsilis – Yes; Ms. Yezukevich – Yes; and Mr. Evans – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

f.) Balance of General Government (Part I)

Mr. Yunits moved on to discuss the FY22 budget. He advised the Finance Committee and Select Board that he is proposing \$700,000 be used from Free Cash; \$73,199 from Stabilization; and the Hicks Fund the Committee voted to go from \$100,000 to \$200,000 this year; Ambulance Receipts \$700,000; the Dog Fund \$10,000; Septic Betterments \$35,000; Wetlands Protection \$3,000; Debt-Exclusion \$13,646; Sewer Reimbursement \$112,325; and Water Reimbursement \$533,254.

Mr. Evans asked for two points of clarification: 1) why there was an increase in the amount of Free Cash being used for this year (usually \$600,000 and this year proposing \$700,000) and; 2) why the Hicks Fund agreed to go from \$100,000 to \$200,000. Mr. Yunits responded that he would let the Select Board speak to item 2 and explained that in regard to item 1, last year the Town used a total of \$1,551,185; so, rather than wait until the Fall, this allows the Town to balance its budget if they go to \$700,000. He emphasized that he wanted to make sure they had a balanced budget since they still aren't entirely sure of what the federal funds can be used for.

Mr. Toole explained that the Hicks Board met and advised that the portfolio is doing extremely well. He stated that with advice from the Portfolio Manager and the cash level being where it was that it could tolerate a withdrawal of \$200,000 for this year. He pointed out that the portfolio has well over \$10,000,000 and that it has been heavy in equities for the past few years and has grown by leaps and bounds. Mr. Evans asked what the projected return was and what the actual return ended up being. Mr. Toole responded that they are limited to the amount they can withdraw from this fund, but the expected return "they crushed it." Mr. Evans asked what the amount is that they could withdraw. Mr. Toole stated that the \$200,000 is pretty much the limit because the withdrawal limit is based off of the percentage of what the portfolio's earnings are. Ms. Artz added that the largest amount withdrawn from this account in the past was in the amount of \$150,000 and that was during the recession in 2009 and it

wasn't even performing as well then as it is now, so the decision seemed prudent in terms of where the Town is at right now. Mr. Toole asked Mr. Evans if the Finance Committee would like a report prepared showing the average return and Mr. Evans said that would be great.

Mr. Yunits advised that the balance for Free Cash as of now is \$1,926,000; so, if the \$700,000 is used for the FY22 budget, \$600,000 for Capital, \$82,000 for Snow and Ice, there will still be a balance of \$544,248 in Free Cash.

The Town Manager continued his presentation and Mr. Evans asked when the Town will know what the actual government numbers are. Mr. Yunits said he would look into it because he hasn't heard anything yet. The Town Manager informed the Finance Committee that the Select Board did vote the other night to use the ESSER II funds that Southeastern Regional made available to lower the Town's assessment. Mr. Yunits mentioned during the overview of the budget that the General Government budget is \$13,767,362 and the School Department is \$31,717,944 and what he was presenting would be a balanced budget. Ms. Daniels asked in regard to the number showing for the School Department (noting that it looked like it was about \$1,000,000 less than what the department was asking for. Ms. Daniels added that the School Department stated that they needed a 2.5% increase just for the mandated expenses for Special Education. She asked the Town Manager why the proposed budget for the School Department is \$1,000,000 less here. Mr. Yunits responded that they are getting \$1,000,000 less because the Town simply doesn't have it. He mentioned that the School Superintendent, Dr. Joseph Baeta, was looking at the federal funds to see what they can use to supplement the lost revenue to the budget. Ms. Sawyer asked if these federal funds have a deadline and Mr. Yunits answered that they have until 2024 to spend these funds. Ms. Sawyer expressed a concern with the limitations the federal funds may have where they only covered COVID-19 related expenses. Mr. Yunits advised that they are still waiting to hear more on that and mentioned they have been looking more into this especially with the funds the Schools have been getting. Mr. Toole advised that he received an update from a congressman and he expressed that the rules for these funds will not be as strict as they were for the CARES Act funds. Mr. Yunits confirmed this was correct and clarified that the CARES Act funds were not that strict, but the FEMA funds were. Mr. Snyder asked if they knew what those funds were estimated to be and Mr. Yunits answered around \$1.9 million for the Town and the Schools are getting \$1.7 million. Ms. Sawyer expressed a concern with being able to fund future budgets because the Town was using federal funds and when those run out and the School Department asks for a 12% increase it is because their budget wasn't increased as requested. Mr. Yunits advised that he has been speaking with Dr. Baeta about these concerns and moving forward into 2023.

Mr. Tsilis pointed out that in the School Department's budget there were 9 new positions and noted that a lot of them were mental health professionals (psychologists/psychiatrists) to deal with the pandemic. He suggested that in 2 or 3 years from now when things go back to some sort of normalcy that these positions wouldn't be needed anymore. Mr. Conway asked Mr. Yunits if when speaking to Dr. Baeta if he asked how this would impact the School Department as far as how they will operate. The Town Manager stated that Dr. Baeta hasn't gotten back to him on that yet because he is still looking into the federal funds as previously mentioned. Mr. Yunits noted that the bill that was passed says that the funds will be available 60 days from the date it was passed and commented that he would expect the guidelines to be out soon too.

Mr. Yunits gave a summary of the General Government accounts. Mr. Evans questioned the amount budgeted for Human Resources that was original \$40,000 and now it is \$40,000 for the Human Resources' services and \$10,000 for grant writing services at the request of the Select Board. Mr. Evans clarified that the \$40,000 was supposed to be for a salary survey and asked if that was still the case, which Mr. Yunits confirmed it would be part of it and the remainder would be to work on an HR policy manual for the Town.

Ms. Sawyer asked why the Finance Committee was voting on these numbers this evening without first hearing from Dr. Baeta to see if he is comfortable because if he is not, then this may all be changed. Mr. Evans advised that they can do that, but he pointed out that these are the budgets where there isn't much flexibility to have funds that they can shift around in any significant fashion. Mr. Evans expressed that he did agree with Ms. Sawyer's conversation and comments. He further stated that he had no problem putting these on hold for now, but if the Committee felt strongly on voting on these budgets tonight, he reassured the Committee that at the end he would definitely entertain a motion to discuss the budgets and his response would not be that they have already voted on these. Mr. Snyder agreed with Ms. Sawyer that it would make things more difficult if they voted tonight and it would be more prudent to speak with Dr. Baeta first.

Mr. Evans asked each Committee member if they would be comfortable voting this evening and he received the following responses: Ms. Sawyer – No; Ms. Daniels – No; Mr. Dorney – No; Mr. Fiore – No; Mr. Smith – No; Mr. Snyder – No; Mr. Tsilis – No; Ms. Yezukevich – Yes; and Mr. Evans – No.

Mr. Yunits noted that while the Finance Committee is saying they are going to hold off voting on these budgets until they hear back from Dr. Baeta he wanted to remind them that these are 1 to 2 people departments they are talking about. He questioned what their solution would be because they aren't going to wipe out departments and come up with \$1,000,000. Mr. Yunits said they might some pennies here and there and commented that Dr. Baeta would probably say the same thing, but emphasized that this was just his opinion. Mr. Evans agreed with Mr. Yunits and stated that he doesn't want this to turn into taking out dollars and cents from these smaller budgets that could have a greater impact in services, but the Finance Committee has spoken and are going to wait until they hear from Dr. Baeta. Mr. Fiore agreed with Mr. Evans and further stated that if they are going to have to cut any budgets it isn't going to be these.

Mr. Toole on a separate note emphasized that he wanted to see the Human Resources position as a separate line item and a commitment to adding this position. Mr. Evans clarified that the Select Board wants to create a department and account number for Human Resources. Mr. Dorney asked if this would include the School Department and have everything under this one position. Mr. Conway expressed that he believes it is too early to make that determination, but pointed out that this could be a cost-sharing opportunity. Mr. Dorney said that they could find out that it may not be a good fit, but it was something worth digging into and looking at. Mr. Conway said that a lot of towns are doing something similar and some are actually looking into a multi-town collaborative for this position where they split the cost of a full-time HR position. Mr. Tsilis wanted clarification as to what type of Human Resources position (consultant or manager). Mr. Toole said his understanding was they are looking for a full-time HR consultant who is on call for the Town for the next fiscal year and Mr. Conway agreed. Mr. Evans asked with the estimate of \$40,000 for the HR consultant roll how much that will get the Town. Mr. Yunits answered that the Town would probably get close to 800 hours. Mr.

Evans asked if this would be used for some of the ongoing negotiations. Mr. Yunits said it would be in preparation for negotiations like starting their salary surveys, but there will not be any negotiations next year. Mr. Toole asked if this would be its own department and Mr. Yunits replied that he would have to look into this to see if it is possible.

Mr. Evans asked when they can have Dr. Baeta at their meeting because he knew the Finance Committee had asked for some information that he said he would have by Friday (April 9th), but he didn't know if that would be enough time to have any definitive items for that Monday (April 12th). Mr. Yunits said he would check with Dr. Baeta and get back to them. The Finance Committee agreed to meet on Wednesday, April 14th in addition to their meeting on Monday, April 12th.

The Finance Committee and Select Board agreed to hold off on voting on all other budgets with the exception of Snow Removal and Communications.

MOTION was made by Ms. Sawyer to recommend the budget for Department 423 (Snow Removal) in the amount of \$80,000. Seconded by Mr. Smith. Vote: Ms. Sawyer – Yes; Ms. Daniels – Yes; Mr. Dorney – Yes; Mr. Fiore – Yes; Mr. Smith – Yes; Mr. Snyder – Yes; Mr. Tsilis – Yes; Ms. Yezukevich – Yes; and Mr. Evans – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

MOTION was made by Ms. Sawyer to recommend the budget for Department 290 (Communications Center) in the amount of \$300,000. Seconded by Mr. Smith. Vote: Ms. Sawyer – Yes; Ms. Daniels – Yes; Mr. Dorney – Yes; Mr. Fiore – Yes; Mr. Smith – Yes; Mr. Snyder – Yes; Mr. Tsilis – Yes; Ms. Yezukevich – Yes; and Mr. Evans – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

Ms. Sawyer said she would double-check their follow-up items in preparation for their next meeting. Mr. Evans asked Mr. Yunits to confirm that the Water and Sewer Departments' budgets have been updated before Monday, April 12th, which he confirmed he would do.

3. Adjournment.

MOTION was made by Ms. Sawyer to adjourn at 8:14 P.M. Seconded by Mr. Smith. Vote: Ms. Sawyer – Yes; Ms. Daniels – Yes; Mr. Dorney – Yes; Mr. Fiore – Yes; Mr. Smith – Yes; Mr. Snyder – Yes; Mr. Tsilis – Yes; Ms. Yezukevich – Yes; and Mr. Evans – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

MOTION was made by Mr. Toole to adjourn at 8:15 P.M. Seconded by Ms. Artz. Vote: Ms. Artz – Yes; Mr. Toole – Yes; and Mr. Conway - Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

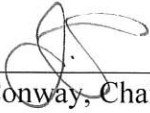
URL Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxoVlf26heo>

Respectfully Submitted by:



Jennifer Reid, Office Administrator

**SELECT BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 5, 2021**



John Conway, Chair

Michael Toole, Vice-Chair

Christine Deveau, Clerk

Renee Deley, Member

Megan Artz, Member

Minutes Approved by Board on: May 27, 2021

**SELECT BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 5, 2021**

John Conway, Chair

Michael Toole, Vice-Chair



Christine Deveau, Clerk

Renee Deley, Member



Megan Artz, Member

Minutes Approved by Board on: May 27, 2021

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