



TOWN OF NORTON
SELECT BOARD
MUNICIPAL CENTER
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NORTON, MA 02766

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Select Board
Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2021

Call to Order by Chair

The April 8, 2021 meeting of the Norton Select Board was held remotely (Web: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86169529511>; One tap mobile : US: +1 (312) 626-6799, or Telephone: US: +1 (312) 626-6799; Webinar ID: 861 6952 9511, and was called to order at 7:06 P.M., by Mr. John Conway, Chair. Member(s) present: Ms. Renee Deley, Mr. Michael Toole, Mr. Bradford K. Bramwell, and Ms. Megan Artz. Also in attendance: Mr. Michael D. Yunits, Town Manager.

1. Town Manager's Performance Review.

Ms. Deley explained that the Select Board got information from town counsel and from attending a Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) meeting. She advised that performance reviews need to be done in open meeting in accordance with Open Meeting Law (OML). She stated that each member of the Select Board did a performance review on the Town Manager, which was then sent to the Chair, and emphasized that there were no discussions amongst the Board about the reviews at any time. She continued explaining that the review can be distributed amongst the Board and posted to the Town website and available as public record if the Chair so chooses. Ms. Deley further stated that the aggregated report is part of public records and you are encouraged to provide your input to the Town Manager, but if a Select Board member makes a direct reference to their evaluation, it will then become public record as part of the meeting minutes. Ms. Deley explained further that as part of the process, the Chair will provide an aggregated evaluation and can make revisions as they so choose and at the end of the meeting, the Board can vote to approve the evaluation. Ms. Deley stated that town counsel informed the Board that in 2018 the process changed. Ms. Deley stated that in accordance with OML, this is something they are required to do.

Mr. Toole asked if there is any other enterprise or board/committee that should be doing this as well. Ms. Deley answered that the School Committee is also in a similar situation. Mr. Toole asked if this message has been passed along to the School Committee and Dr. Joseph Baeta, Superintendent of Schools. Ms. Deley and Mr. Conway both said they had not. Mr. Toole emphasized the importance of doing so to be fair and consistent and suggested maybe doing it through town counsel. Mr. Conway clarified that this evaluation can be sent to the Town Manager as well, which Ms. Deley confirmed.

At 7:15 P.M. the Board agreed to review the evaluation individually and to return at 7:30 P.M. The Board extended the time and resumed at 7:35 P.M.

Mr. Conway gave an overview of how the evaluation was calculated. The Board awarded 222.57 points, with an average score of 2.78, which is just below the "meets expectations"

scoring. Mr. Conway said that overall the majority of these categories were right around the “meet expectations” scoring and there were a few that exceeded including the overall rating, the intangibles were very high, the Personal/Professional Growth was very high as well as Relations with Federal, State, & Other Governmental Units and Public Relations. The Chair stated that one outlier that was substantially lower than others was the General Management category at 38.6% of the total possible points.

Mr. Conway stated that Mr. Yunits has a great knowledge of the job and that the two big things that needed improvement was Communication and General Management. Mr. Toole said that one of the things he would love to see is how the Select Board would be able to help him (such as a course they should take). Mr. Conway responded that the Board could have done better with setting objectives and goals to assist the Town Manager. He said he would like to double their efforts this year and work collaboratively to make sure they have more formal items to review against.

Mr. Bramwell pointed out that Mr. Yunits would typically go to continuing education type of things that weren’t available this past year due to COVID. Mr. Bramwell expressed that considering how hectic and confusing COVID was for everyone, he thought Mr. Yunits and the other town employees fortunately did an amazing job reacting and kept the Town in good condition considering what it went through and Ms. Deley agreed.

Ms. Deley recognized the amount of information that Mr. Yunits had to learn with the CARES Act, how much he worked with KP-Law, and the great job he did navigating this environment and seeing what benefits they could get for the Town. Ms. Deley said they could attribute part of that too from the department heads. Ms. Deley emphasized the importance of trying to set aside time. Ms. Deley stated that she knows that when the Board has asked for things, Mr. Yunits had gone and contacted other Town Managers to get the information that they needed.

Mr. Yunits mentioned that earlier in the day they were talking about pivoting and one of the benefits with COVID is the Southshore Town Manager conferences, and now with not being able to meet there are more opportunities to work together and communicate.

Ms. Artz said it would be helpful to get guidance on where public officials roles end and where volunteers begin. Mr. Conway agreed and mentioned an article about the new town council form in North Attleboro where the new President said his mission was to create an onboarding package and he said it was a great idea.

1. Board Relations

Mr. Toole pointed out that the average score was 2.65 and 3.00 is “meets expectations” and wanted to point out that 53% doesn’t accurately capture this. Mr. Conway clarified that 60% is equivalent to meeting expectations. Ms. Deley stated that the only thing she wanted to emphasize the importance of was communication where there were issues of asking for certain things and not having them immediately available.

2. Personnel

Mr. Toole recognized how great Mr. Yunits is at negotiating contracts and recognized that this is one of his absolute strengths (job well done). Ms. Deley said that she has been fortunate to

represent the Board for marijuana establishments and has sat with Mr. Yunits to go over Host Community Agreements (HCAs) and share expertise on how to proceed with the negotiations and stated that he does a great job with that and added that she has learned a lot in the process. Ms. Deley said when answering the evaluation questions, it doesn't fully depict what Mr. Yunits does and recognized that he handles this in a great way.

Mr. Toole pointed out that there is an inconsistent review process for all employees. He said he asked several departments about this and if there is one thing he advised that he wants to see is a review process. Mr. Toole stated that the Town not having a Human Resources person could hurt this process. He also pointed out that there could be feedback from employees that could help and make his job easier.

Mr. Bramwell stated that on a personal note, when his brother was on the police force, at first, he was not a fan of the Town Manager because he was hard to deal with, but over the years it turned around and he began to respect him more and more and, in the end, stated that he might be tough, but he is fair.

Ms. Deley said the way some actions were received, there may have been better ways to work with employees and resolve morale issues so employees don't seek employment elsewhere. Ms. Deley posed the question of how they could do this mentioning that the HR Director would help. She commented on communications amongst various levels of employees and recognized similarities and differences, but stated that there needs to be a way to create an environment where people want to come to work.

3. Financial Management.

Mr. Conway stated that the overall score for this category was 2.96 or 59.2%. Mr. Conway pointed out how difficult this aspect is and recognized Mr. Yunits for his work on this category.

Ms. Deley said one of the things that could use improvement is having the information available at town meeting. Ms. Deley found it interesting that the Town Manager presents a budget with a deficit at first and then later with his recommendations shows a balanced budget. Ms. Deley pointed out complications/confusion with Proposition 2½ and stated that she doesn't understand fully how it is resolved. Mr. Bramwell responded that is just how it is and always has been, but the Town Manager and School Superintendent work to figure out what the Town can afford and what needs to be cut. Mr. Bramwell used the analogy of the initial budget presented as the Christmas list and what ends up under the tree is what Santa could afford, which is the balanced budget that the Town Manager and Superintendent of Schools work to put together.

4. General Management.

Mr. Conway said this is the lowest of the nine categories and showed an average score of 1.93. In response, Mr. Toole expressed that he believes it was pointing out that there seems to be a bit of confusion from staff with the general management as far as an inconsistent review process. Mr. Toole said General Management and Personnel overlapped a lot.

Ms. Deley stated that the perception, discussions, and comments whether it is based on real or perceived observations, show that there are issues here. Ms. Deley said a struggle for the Board is making sure that their goals are met. Ms. Artz added again that with the pandemic, sometimes she feels like there is a lot of confusion.

5. Community and Interdepartmental Relations.

Mr. Conway reported that this category Mr. Yunits scored 3.00 (60% = meeting expectations). Mr. Conway said that when there is a problem, the Town Manager is extremely attentive and involved; however, there are circumstances when people reach out and get no response.

Ms. Deley mentioned that there have been a lot of situations where folks have reached out to them from other boards and committees asking for a response from the Town Manager. Ms. Deley emphasized that Mr. Yunits has always shown professionalism, especially where there are circumstances where he may be getting attacked and he keeps his composure and presents the facts and stated that he does a great job with that.

Mr. Conway noted a big improvement where the Board and/or Town Manager may not know an answer they are honest with saying they don't know and work on getting the answer.

6. Public Relations/Communications.

Mr. Conway noted that Mr. Yunits does a great job with this and mentioned that he received a very high rating in this category. He noted that he sees what Mr. Yunits does as far as communicating with the Sun Chronicle to report on things involving the Town, such as the recent story of the Norton Police Department and the mental health program they have joined forces with. Mr. Conway commented that this is great publicity for the Town and other departments.

7. Relations with Federal, State, and Other Governmental Units.

Mr. Yunits received a score of 3.5 (70%) for this category.

Mr. Conway stated that Mr. Yunits has cultivated a great relationship with local representatives, his counterparts in town/municipal government, and creating a great network from which to draw information, expertise, and ideas. Mr. Conway stated that the Town Manager has developed such a great way to build relations.

Mr. Bramwell stated that he noticed that Mr. Yunits always received respect from counterparts of other municipalities and usually take his leadership in this. He added that Mr. Yunits' knowledge is quite well suited for his position and the Town is fortunate to have someone in that way to know how this is supposed to work and the laws, etc.

8. Personal and Professional Growth of Town Manager.

Mr. Yunits received a score of 3.28 (65.5%). Mr. Conway stated that he did very well in this category, but pointed out that there is some room for improvement. Ms. Deley said if there is something that he can seek for professional and personal growth where he could rearrange his

schedule to please do so, because this has not been an easy year to try and do things such as this.

Mr. Conway emphasized that the premise of good government, and mentioned that they touched on this a few weeks ago, is that the Town employees are here to help people. Mr. Conway used the example of the Board of Health Agent not being there to issue citations, but rather to provide helpful information to people. Mr. Conway further stated that Mr. Yunits' direct reports have had a lot of that in there.

9. Other Ratings.

Mr. Yunits received a score of 3.84 (76.7%). Mr. Conway stated that the Town Manager has a great familiarity of the Town, its people, and the landmarks. The Chair emphasized that Mr. Yunits is incredibly well versed and knowledgeable in government. Mr. Conway stated that for someone who came in relatively blind to all of that it has been really nice to learn from him. Ms. Deley commented that Mr. Yunits drove her around town one time and took a lot of notes and commented that it was extremely beneficial for her. She commented that she became more educated on the Town and was better positioned to make decisions as a Select Board member and also as an Economic Development Commission (EDC) member. She stated that they were up able to come up with strategies and improve some of these opportunities in result of meetings like this and emphasized that this is a huge benefit that the Town has.

10. Suggestions.

Mr. Conway summarized a list of suggestions as follows:

Communications, relationships, prioritizing operational goals, onboarding, information flow (internally and externally), new home-buyers welcome packet, Town HR representation and financial forecasts, state of the Town presentation before the Annual Town Meeting to give more insight before going out there.

Mr. Yunits added that they should have a business welcoming packet as well. Ms. Artz suggested also having a business recruitment packet.

Ms. Deley commented that she wished the Board had the self-evaluation because it is important from their perspective when considering their evaluations (even if just bullet-points) because he is his own best advocate. She asked that this be done for next year.

Mr. Yunits thanked the Board for preparing this and stated that he would be sending the board his list of goals to see what the Board thinks of them.

Mr. Conway recognized that this would be the last meeting Mr. Bramwell will be on the Board, who has served on the Board of Selectmen/Select Board for 24 years. Mr. Bramwell clarified that this didn't mean he wouldn't be back. Mr. Bramwell pointed out that he has been part of the process of selecting the Town Managers (the past 5) and Mr. Yunits has proven to be a great selection.

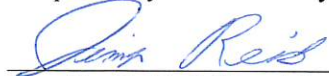
Ms. Deley recognized that Mr. Bramwell has been a pleasure to serve with on the Board and that he has been a great mentor and expressed that he will be greatly missed. Mr. Toole thanked Mr. Bramwell for everything he has done for the Town and also stated that he will be missed. Mr. Conway agreed and stated that he has been a great mentor and has shown how town governance should be done.

Ms. Deley advised that in accordance with part of this procedure, the Board has to meet in executive session (less the Town Manager) to discuss the evaluation and asked to do it before the open meeting. Mr. Conway brought to Ms. Deley's attention that the Board has another executive session for union negotiations already planned. The Select Board agreed to do the executive session with Mr. Yunits at 6:00 P.M., followed by the second executive session at 6:30 P.M., and to push the open meeting for April 15th to begin at 7:30 P.M.

2. **Adjournment**

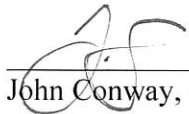
MOTION was made by Mr. Bramwell to adjourn at 8:37 P.M. Seconded by Ms. Deley. Vote: Ms. Artz – Yes; Mr. Toole – Yes; Ms. Deley – Yes; Mr. Conway – Yes; and Mr. Bramwell – Yes. MOTION CARRIES.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Jennifer Reid, Office Administrator

**SELECT BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 8, 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

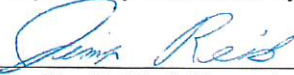
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Jennifer Reid, Office Administrator

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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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06 / 03 / 2021
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06 / 03 / 2021
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