



TOWN OF NORTON  
SELECT BOARD  
MUNICIPAL CENTER  
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Select Board  
Meeting Minutes  
April 28, 2022

**1. Call to Order by Chair**

The April 28, 2022 meeting of the Norton Select Board was held remotely (Web: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89351900531>; One tap mobile: +1 (646) 558-8656, 89351900531#, or Telephone: US: +1 (646) 558-8656; Webinar ID: 893 5190 0531, and was called to order at 7:11 P.M., by Mr. John Conway, Chair. Member(s) present: Ms. Renee Deley, Ms. Megan Artz, and Ms. Christine Deveau. Also in attendance: Mr. Michael D. Yunits, Town Manager.

**2. Town Manager's Performance Review.**

Mr. Conway acknowledged how really deeply uncomfortable these kinds of topics can be and emphasized that he would much rather this be a private conversation, but this can't be the case due to Open Meeting Law. Mr. Conway advised that over the past week or so, they have put together the Town Manager's review and color-coded everyone's comments and advised that there is also a summary sheet in the back. Mr. Conway passed out the review for the Board members and Mr. Yunits to read through.

Mr. Conway listed off the categories and noted that each carries its own weight as follows:

- Leadership and Management (30%)
- Operational and Process Improvements (30%)
- Financial Management (30%)
- Professional Development (10%); and
- Overall Performance Review

Each item will be rated according to the following scale:

- 5 - Outstanding
- 4 - Exceeds Expectations
- 3 - Meets Expectations
- 2 - Needs Improvement
- 1 - Unacceptable

**1. Leadership & Management**

Ms. Artz commented that with the multiple personalities and work styles, it is going to continue to be a work in progress. She expressed that she knows Mr. Yunits is trying, but the frustration comes from the fact that they aren't setup with the resources and structure that could set him up for success, like adding a Human Resources (HR) consultant.

Ms. Deley stated that she appreciates that he did provide his comments and his self-evaluation before the review and wished that these efforts were communicated before this review (like the creation of the Onboarding Manual). She also referred to the grievance process that was put into place, but the fact that the Board yet again wasn't informed or communicated this they were unaware. Ms. Deley suggested putting in the Town Manager's Report on the agenda the items that he is working on day-to-day. She lastly commented that being able to communicate more effectively would be beneficial.

Mr. Conway stated that Mr. Yunits is extremely knowledgeable and recognized that the Town Manager speaks well to the topics, but having a more open communication would be beneficial.

Mr. Yunits suggested on their end to facilitate having a more open line of communication to send an e-mail once a week with questions or ideas to go over.

### **Average Score: 2.6**

#### **Operational and Process Improvements (30%):**

Ms. Artz said that communicating to residents at events such as town meeting is hard, partially because there is still a lot she doesn't know, and it is hard when residents come up to you at meetings asking questions.

Ms. Deley mentioned last year trying to make changes like working from home for employees and boards/committees and spoke to delegating tasks to be more efficient.

Mr. Conway stated that he focused on accessibility and found reading through these things he found that he wished he had more of an active role. He expressed that he hopes that they can keep a level of engagement going, specifically in reference to Zoom meetings. Mr. Conway explained that while Zoom can have its challenges, having the accessibility is really great, especially with the flexibility it offers. He emphasized that he hopes Zoom continues as an option. Mr. Conway pointed out that one of the items that keeps coming up is the pretentious relationship between the Select Board/Town Manager and the School Committee/Superintendent of Schools. He mentioned that times can get a bit snippy and it is a two-way street, but encouraged everyone involved to try and take a deep breath and take a step back and not engage at this level. Mr. Conway stated that this is coming across harsher than he intends it to. He lastly stated that it is natural to be defensive and some comments do come from a truly aggressive manner.

Ms. Deley expressed that they all know that tone gets lost in e-mails. She advised the Town Manager to not feel like he always has to respond in an e-mail and to feel free to call to have a more fruitful discussion. She mentioned some sections of the Charter that were "odd" and referring to use of town facilities. Ms. Deley stated that she knows Mr. Yunits has helped from an Economic Development Commission (EDC) perspective and worked with the prior Treasurer about providing a list of town properties and referred to finding ways to off-load some of that work load/delegating to other departments to facilitate fulfilling requests.

### **Average Score: 2.4**

### Financial Management (30%):

Ms. Artz expressed that she thinks he does a great job with this category (especially with contract negotiations). She emphasized that the first and foremost important thing is keeping the Town fiscally sound.

Ms. Deley stated that she would like to add too that she thinks some changes that were implemented, such as the Fire Department hiring additional people to get more grants and the Planning Director applying for grants has been great. She expressed that the staff do a great job with continuing to search for grants and applauded Mr. Yunits for supporting that. Ms. Deley said that they have certainly been given more information and participated in more robust discussions on the tax rate. She pointed out that there is still difficulty on understanding the timeline of the budget and suggested prioritizing this for the future. Ms. Deley further stated that she is just looking at priorities, limitations, what they can expect for revenue, how to get additional funding sources, and being creative. Ms. Deley questioned if they have seen a five-year forecast yet and Mr. Yunits replied not yet. She pointed out that the LED project was definitely a benefit to the Town and was a good initiative.

Ms. Deveau stated that when there were comments about town meetings and that the Select Board members should be well versed in some of the articles on the town meeting warrant and that this responsibility shouldn't just fall on the Town Manager. She continued that even just having the availability to have the discussion to designate each member to be responsible for certain articles and sit down with the Town Manager prior to town meeting to be able to answer or educate residents/voters would be beneficial to themselves and residents.

Mr. Conway expressed that what he likes hearing from this is almost an entire Board and Town Manager agreeing collectively on ideas moving forward where they can approve. He stated that he agreed with fellow members that Mr. Yunits does a great job managing a difficult task such as the budget as far as keeping services, personnel, and programs in-tact. He added that Mr. Yunits does a great job with contract negotiations and he did a great job striking fair deals and he has enjoyed working with him (as much as they can) and commented on how fair he is. Mr. Conway noted that what he would like to see is an improved communication about the budget where people can ask questions so they aren't having people at town meeting spending so much time on something such as a \$22,000 budget that was talked about for almost an hour. He added that it would be really eye opening for the Town to see how much grant money the Town Manager and staff bring in to keep the gears going and emphasized that the Town Manager should really start "tooting his own horn."

Ms. Deley added that the other thing she thinks could be beneficial is a discussion showing the grants they receive and where they plan to be absorbed into the budget and allocations. She expressed that another point of discussion should be in regard to the grants and when the funding stops and when the Town needs to start supporting it.

**Average Score: 3.4**

#### Professional Development (10%):

Mr. Conway referred to their last Town Manager review and expressed that this one is more of a peer review. He stated that he believes the Select Board needs to take a more active role in the performance review. Mr. Conway mentioned that it is challenging because they can't do this collectively with a quorum without it being a public meeting. Mr. Conway added that they should start checking in more with how things are evolving on their end. He emphasized that the Town Manager's networking skills are excellent and referred to his collaboration with Congressman Auchincloss and acknowledged how great it was. Mr. Conway expressed that Mr. Yunits utilizing his personal skills to benefit the Town is awesome.

Ms. Deveau agreed with the comments made requesting the Town Manager to start tooting his own horn (such as the courses he is taking) because otherwise they won't know. She stated that then he can say he is developing in order to better develop the Town.

Ms. Deley stated that everyone has to be their own advocate and it goes both ways (i.e., if he doesn't think the Board is doing what they need to do, then he needs to tell them). She pointed out that sometimes they lose sight because they are so focused on getting items done on the agenda. She continued that the Town Manager does a great job internally and externally networking. Ms. Deley mentioned that she understands that courses and conferences have been limited because of COVID, but hopefully this changes soon. She emphasized the importance of Mr. Yunits being his own advocate and added that it might not always come out the right way, but it is about opening that communication up. Ms. Deley recognized that there is a lot of work going on.

Ms. Artz expressed that she is behind on a lot of things that she wants to talk about. She informed the Board and Town Manager that she spoke to the Select Board members she knows in Foxboro and advised of how they work with their Town Manager. Ms. Artz stated that they have all the good stuff she wants to talk about, such as strategic planning, that is organized by the Town Manager that is done in late summer, it is an open meeting, and it becomes more of an opportunity where they outline what the priorities for the year are. She continued explaining that all dates are put into their calendars and this is one of their longer meetings so that they understand what they are doing, such as the budget process. Ms. Artz advised that she would be happy to facilitate, but expressed that she doesn't know how to drive it.

Ms. Deley wanted to make mention too that not one task is listed in the Charter about professional development.

#### **Average Score: 2.8**

#### Overall Performance:

Mr. Conway emphasized that it was a solid year of performance. He stated that with the past 2 years, he can only imagine the challenges he has had to face with staff, hybrid meetings, restaurants being closed, excise taxes, ARPA money, etc. Mr. Conway advised that he had the Town Manager rated at a 3. He reiterated that everything leveled out to a good solid year and appreciated all of the hard work of the Town Manager.

Ms. Artz agreed with Mr. Conway's comments and advised that she gave the Town Manager a solid 3 as well. She expressed that she feels like she is still behind the 8 ball as far as how things are done during the transition period and in response, Mr. Yunits said they can work on that together. She pointed out some missed opportunities and expressed that she hopes things get slower paced where they can all meet. Ms. Artz lastly stated that she appreciates Mr. Yunits doing the best with what he has.

Ms. Deley expressed that for her it is a matter of getting him from the day-to-day operations to the strategic thinking of leadership where he can take the time to do the things he wants in order to improve the Town. She stated that it is his power and his schedule, so he should set aside time to meet with all department heads to see what they are thinking, whether it is together or separate. Ms. Deley emphasized that having that time would help him figure out how to communicate these things and build a better operation (builds partnership, support, and inspires people to do better).

Ms. Artz mentioned there still being a massive communication issue as far as how information is disseminated to residents and business owners. She emphasized the importance of figuring this out and advised that this might be where the strategic planning could come into play. She used the example of the Town Cleanup Day by informing the Board she was at Outlooks Hair Salon and she mentioned the event to the owner, who expressed that she wished she knew because she would have put it on her website. Ms. Deley agreed about communication and taking advantage of some of these opportunities they are missing out on. The Board discussed ways to get the communications out there and how each different age group/population have their preferences as to how that information is disseminated. Mr. Yunits suggested having the Director of Human Services/Council on Aging put these communications in her monthly news flyer as a way to reach the older population, which the Board agreed was a good idea.

**Overall Score: 2.8 unweighted; weighted 2.8**

**MOTION was made by Ms. Deley to accept the Town Manager's review as presented. Seconded by Ms. Deveau. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.**

**3. Discuss and/or vote on annual compensation and possible salary increase of the Town Manager following performance review.**

Mr. Conway explained that as part of the contract extension that was issued last June, they put performance targets that were connected to step raises. Mr. Conway gave an overview of what the step increases would be based on these ratings as follows (referenced as Section 3, Part B of the Town Manager's contract):

- Outstanding (5): 2.75% - 3.75%
- Exceeds Expectations (4): 1.75% - 2.75%
- Meets Expectations (3): 1.00 – 1.75%

Mr. Conway explained that the rating came in at 2.8, so personally he would round that up to a rating of 3, which would hit the "Meets Expectations" rate. Mr. Conway expressed that this is the more awkward part and advised that with the rating of 3, that is the "Meets Expectations" range of a 1.00% to 1.75% increase. Ms. Deley pointed out for the Board's recollection that his new salary was already negotiated under this agreement is effective July 1, 2022 and this is

the additional merit-based increase, which would also be effective July 1, 2022. Mr. Conway threw out the number of 1.5% increase, which Ms. Artz, Ms. Deley, and Ms. Deveau agreed was the increase they were all going to suggest as well.

**MOTION was made by Ms. Deley to issue a 1.5% raise in accordance with contractual obligations. Seconded by Ms. Deveau. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.**

**4. Vote to enter Executive Session to act under authority of the Open Meeting Law, General Laws Chapter 30A, §22(f), and review and approve the executive session minutes of April 15, 2021; April 13, 2022; and April 27, 2022 pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, Section 21(a)(7).**

**DECLARATION BY THE CHAIR:**

I declare, under General Laws Chapter 30A, §22(f), that the purpose of the executive session will be to act under authority of the Open Meeting Law, General Laws Chapter 30A, §22(f), and review and approve the executive session minutes of April 15, 2021; April 13, 2022; and April 27, 2022 pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, Section 21(a)(7), because a discussion of the strategy in open session could compromise the purpose of the executive session and with the Board to not return to open session at the conclusion of the executive session.

**MOTION was made by Ms. Deley at 8:30 P.M. for the Board to go into executive session under G.L. c.30A, §22(f) for the purposes and reasons declared by the Chair and with the Board to not return to open session thereafter. Seconded by Ms. Deveau. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.**

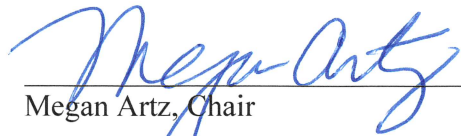
**5. Adjournment.**

*The Select Board adjourned their meeting directly from executive session.*

Respectfully Submitted by:


  
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Jennifer Reid, Office Administrator

**SELECT BOARD  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
APRIL 28, 2022**



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Megan Artz, Chair



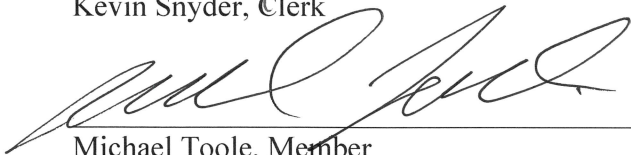
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Christine Deveau, Vice-Chair



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Kevin Snyder, Clerk



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Michael Toole, Member



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Steven Hornsby, Member

Minutes Approved by Board on: August 24, 2022