



TOWN OF NORTON
SELECT BOARD
MUNICIPAL CENTER
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NORTON, MA 02766

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Select Board
Meeting Minutes
November 9, 2022

I. **Call to Order by Chair**

The November 9, 2022 meeting of the Norton Select Board was held in the Community Room of the Norton Public Library as well as remotely (Web: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83225589285>; Phone: 646-558 8656; Webinar ID: 832 2558 9285), and was called to order at 7:01 P.M., by Ms. Megan Artz, Chair. Member(s) present: Ms. Christine Deveau, Mr. Kevin Snyder, Mr. Michael Toole and Mr. Steven Hornsby. Also present: Mr. Michael Yunits, Town Manager.

II. **Appointments/Resignations/Retirements**

1. Resignation of Dinah O'Brien from the Permanent Building Committee.

Ms. Artz announced that Ms. Dinah O'Brien resigned from the Permanent Building Committee (PBC). Mr. Yunits advised that she submitted her letter of resignation at the last PBC meeting and afterwards he had asked her if she wanted to rescind her letter, which she did not.

Mr. Hornsby questioned if she gave any reasoning as to why she chose to resign. Mr. Yunits answered that it was in result of discussions on how to use \$1,000,000 which the PBC ultimately voted in the opinion of Ms. O'Brien.

2. Appointment of Ellen McGrath to the Historic District Commission.

MOTION was made by Ms. Deveau to appoint Ellen McGrath to the Historic District Commission. Seconded by Mr. Toole. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

3. Appointment of Planning/Economic Development Director.

MOTION was made by Ms. Deveau to appoint Maria De La Fuente Martinez as the Planning/Economic Development Director. Seconded by Mr. Hornsby. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

III. **Minutes**

MOTION was made by Ms. Deveau to approve the minutes of April 27, 2022; October 18, 2022 (Executive Session); and October 26th. Seconded by Mr. Toole. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

IV. **Licenses and Permits**

There were no licenses or permits to approve at this time.

V. **Announcements**

1. Wreaths Across America Event on Monday, December 12th at 11:00 A.M. in the Massachusetts State House in the Great Hall, 24 Beacon Street, Boston, MA – Patricia Tarantino.

Ms. Patricia Tarantino advised that this would be their fourth year holding the Wreaths Across America and what is new this year is that for the first time, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is going to have a State Wreaths Across America ceremony. Ms. Tarantino informed the Board that there are about 30 locations in Massachusetts and they will all be there on Monday, December 12th and the ceremony begins at 11:00 A.M. She pointed out that there is a limit on the number of people that can attend, which is why invitations were sent out.

Ms. Tarantino also mentioned that the Wreaths Across America date, which was set by the Senate, is scheduled for Saturday, December 17th this year. She advised that it is also held at the Town Common Cemetery across from St. Mary's Church and it starts at 12:00 P.M. She pointed out that this is the same ceremony that is read throughout the country at the same time. She informed the Board that they are still taking donations up through November 20th.

She lastly mentioned that they will also be in the Veterans' Day Parade. As part of a fundraising event, they have been selling flags at Michelle's Corner Store as well as at Town Hall, so if people were interested in supporting veterans, they can purchase flags at either location.

Ms. Deveau asked if they wanted to donate how they would do so (drop off a check, mail a check, etc.). Ms. Tarantino said you could send a check to Ms. Estelle Flett, Veterans' Agent, or you could also go to the website (wreathsasscrossamerica.org/MA0108).

2. Veterans' Day Parade on Friday, November 11th at 10:00 A.M.

3. Veterans' Day - Town Hall Hours (Close at 4:30 P.M. Thursday/closed Friday).

4. Sports Complex Ribbon Cutting Thanksgiving Morning.

Mr. Toole reported that Dr. Baeta told him as of this past Friday that he would be sending invitations out to the Select Board for this, but he doesn't believe it has been done yet.

VI. **Business**

A. **New Business**

1. 7:15 P.M. – FY 2023 Tax Classification Hearing.

Ms. Denise Ellis, Director of Assessing, and Mr. Richard Dorney of the Board of Assessors were present. Ms. Ellis advised that there are 5 property classes: Residential, Open Space, Commercial, Industrial, and Personal Property. She stated that the purpose of the hearing this evening is for the Select Board to decide if they would like to stick with a single-tax rate or change to a split-tax rate. Ms. Ellis emphasized that if they were to shift to a split-tax rate that does not mean that it would bring more revenue to the Town, but would rather shift the burden to Commercial, Personal, and Industrial properties.

Ms. Ellis continued by explaining that the new growth for this year, which was certified and approved by the Department of Revenue, was \$832,494 and broken down as follows: Real Estate \$266,955; Commercial \$183,252; Industrial \$204,108; and Personal Property \$178,179.

Mr. Toole made a suggestion for one of the presentation slides (Historical New Growth) for next year by adding in the five-year average line because it is a great chart and you can see the New Growth is growing and by adding this data it will give them a better visual of the growth. Ms. Ellis stated that Residential came in at 81.06% and the Commercial came in around 18.9% (Open Space 0%, Commercial 7.77%, Industrial 8.46%, and Personal Property 2.71%). Ms. Ellis gave an overview of what the tax rates would be if they were to do a split-tax rate by using the example of shifting to 1.05 where the Residential tax per thousand would be \$12.99 and CIP would be \$13.81. Ms. Ellis further stated that the cost savings for the residential side (if they were to go with this option) would be about \$77 per year and would bring the Commercial up by over \$1,000 per year. Mr. Toole expressed an interest in splitting the tax rate. Ms. Ellis said she did some research this year and there are 351 cities/towns in Massachusetts and of the 351 cities/towns, approximately 200 of them have a split-tax rate. Ms. Ellis pointed out that when you look at the surrounding towns, the towns that have split-tax rates are places like North Attleboro (has the mall and Route 1), Raynham (has Route 44 and Route 138), Foxboro (has Gillette Stadium/Patriots Place), and Mansfield (has Mansfield Crossing), but Norton doesn't really have anything like that yet. Mr. Toole pointed out that Mansfield does something unique where they flip flop their split-tax rate where one year the burden is shifted to the Residential side and the next year it is shifted to the Commercial side. Ms. Ellis provided an overview of the top ten taxpayers in town.

Ms. Ellis continued her presentation by going over the types of exemptions (residential exemption and small commercial exemption). She advised the Board that the options being presented for consideration are the selection of a minimum residential factor and the granting of a residential and/or small commercial exemption.

MOTION was made by Mr. Toole to approve a residential exemption for Fiscal Year 2023/2024. Seconded by Mr. Hornsby. Vote: Yes – 0; No - 5. MOTION FAILS.

MOTION was made by Mr. Toole to approve a small business tax exemption for Fiscal Year 2023/2024. Seconded by Mr. Hornsby. Vote: Yes – 0; No - 5. MOTION FAILS.

Ms. Ellis explained that if they were to stick with a single-tax rate, the rate would be \$13.15. She further stated that if they went with the \$13.81 rate for the residential side, it would be a \$77/year tax savings for residents (increase of \$1,038/year for commercial), if they went with the 1.10 split, it would be a savings of \$149/year (increase of \$2,060/year for commercial), and if they went with 1.15 split, it would be a tax savings of \$221/year (increase of \$3,098/year for commercial).

Ms. Deveau recalled from last year's tax classification hearing being advised to wait to split the tax rate until they at least have 20% of commercial business in town because they don't want to deter businesses from coming into town or highly impact the smaller businesses. Mr. Dorney supported Ms. Deveau's statement by adding that this town is still in "recruiting mode" and while he knows they will make the best decision they think for the Town, but they need to also consider the small businesses and what their worth is in town. In contrast, Mr. Toole stated that the valuation of the residential increased by about 13% and with the commercial properties they know they aren't seeing that growth faster. With that being said, Mr. Toole explained that if the residential is growing faster than the commercial valuation and you have the same flat tax rate, you're essentially giving the commercial side a tax break. Mr. Toole expressed that he is in favor of a split-tax rate where the Town is at 18.9% commercial and emphasized that he has been following this for a really long time. He advised that he would like to see the tax rate split at either 1.05 or 1.10 and they will still be very competitive with the surrounding towns. Mr. Snyder agreed that Mr. Toole's argument was probably the strongest case yet and agreed that if the case is that the Town is still in growth mode and they want to attract commercial businesses, he doesn't see

how continuing to be the lowest commercial tax in the area doesn't continue to make Norton competitive. Mr. Hornsby stated that he has always been in favor of splitting the tax rate, but splitting it too much at this point would seem like they are almost shooting themselves in the foot and would recommend the lower the better at this point. Mr. Snyder agreed where the Town is "dipping its toe in the water" right now, he would also go low with the splitting of the tax rate.

MOTION was made by Mr. Toole to split the tax rate for the Town of Norton for Fiscal Year 2023/2024. Seconded by Mr. Hornsby. Vote: 4 – Yes; 1 – No. MOTION CARRIES.

MOTION was made by Mr. Toole to split the CIP shift to 1.05 for Fiscal Year 2023. Seconded by Mr. Hornsby. Vote: 4 – Yes; 1 – Abstention. MOTION CARRIES.

2. Discussion on the Finance Committee Appointment Process.

Mr. Snyder pointed out that during the process of the citizens' petition to change the process of the Finance Committee appointment process, he as well as others, were hearing a lot even from those opposed to the petition article that the process could use more transparency. He stated that while it is in the front of their minds from the recent town meeting, he posed the question of whether or not this something they as a board want to pursue further. Mr. Snyder proposed either a Charter change or an informal way with speaking with the Moderator. He expressed that his personal opinion is that shedding a little light on the process wouldn't be a bad thing, but he emphasized that he also didn't want to interfere or impose on the Moderator.

Mr. Toole thanked Mr. Snyder for asking for this topic to be put on the agenda. He stated that the reason he wanted the Finance Appointing Committee was for more transparency. Mr. Toole suggested rather than proposing a Charter change that the Select Board prepare a letter to the Moderator to suggest some ideas. Mr. Toole mentioned that he had spoken to a former Select Board member, Mr. Jack Conway, and asked him what he would suggest as changes and he suggested the following:

- When a position opens on the Finance Committee, the Moderator should post the vacancy and share the information online/town website;
- Request that vacancies be announced at the next one or two Select Board, School Committee, and Planning Board meetings (intent is to target the biggest audiences);
- Posting is open for a minimum of 30 days;
- Once the Moderator completes the interview selection, they come to the next scheduled Select Board meeting to inform the Board of the outcome and allows for any questions or so forth (this allows for the Moderator to keep his powers as the position was designed, but lets the Town know of the vacancy to possibly get more applicants).

Mr. Toole expressed that he believed Mr. Conway's suggestions were great and proposed possibly having the Moderator come in to have an open discussion and maybe also send a letter. Ms. Artz proposed having the Moderator come to a future meeting when they have a lighter agenda to speak to this more.

Mr. Hornsby stated that with the proposed suggestions, it still doesn't address the transparency issues. He pointed out that the selection process itself wasn't open and that is something he would like to discuss too. Mr. Hornsby thanked Mr. Snyder for putting this topic on the agenda for discussion.

4. Discussion and/or Vote to Accept Donation from Heather McKibben.

Ms. McKibben was not present at the meeting, so Ms. Artz stated that this would be put on a future agenda.

5. Updates on the Town Hall, Senior/Community Support Center, and Athletic Complex Projects.

Mr. Yunits advised that the Town is now registered in the Central Register and now are the bids for the Senior/Community Support Center. He advised that the sub bids are due on November 30th at 2:00 P.M. and the general bid deadline is December 14th and the Town Hall will be later in the winter.

Mr. Toole questioned why the bids for the individual projects were separated so much. Mr. Yunits responded that it was just due to the timeline on design.

6. Discussion and/or Vote on One-Day Liquor License Policy.

Ms. Artz explained that they are still having issues with applicants submitting one-day liquor license applications within 30 days of their event, so to mitigate the problem the Board will vote on creating a one-day liquor license policy.

Mr. Hornsby questioned if the list of exceptions were going to be included in the motion; for example, the individuals/establishments that would be categorized as an exception and Ms. Deveau agreed with the concern and stated that it should be 30 days and as simple as that because you know at least 30 days in advance that you are holding an event and if the application is filed within 30 days of the event, the applicant is automatically disqualified from getting a one-day liquor license [for that event]. Mr. Snyder emphasized that the point of trying to implement the policy is to ensure that Police and Fire have enough time to review the applications and put any protocols into place or if the Select Board isn't meeting within that time-frame, it eliminates the last-minute scrambling amongst those involved.

The Chair agreed to work together on something for a future meeting.

B. Old Business

1. Discussion and/or Vote on Town Report (Dedication, Photo, and Select Board Report).

Ms. Artz stated that her and the Town Manager will go over the Select Board report together and outside of the meeting submit ideas for the dedication and at their next meeting see who would like to volunteer doing what.

2. Discussion on High School Project Creating a Town Flag.

Ms. Artz explained that she was approached by a student who said as part of their senior project, they were working on creating a town flag, so Mr. Yunits did some digging and advised the Board that the Town already has a flag. Mr. Toole explained some of the history of the Town flag, which began with a competition in 1994 and two students won it. Ms. Artz advised that this student's thought was that flag is from a long time ago and proposed maybe providing an updated flag. Ms. Artz expressed that she was unsure if this was the right time to be doing this with the new Town Hall project and the Board agreed. The Board further expressed that if and when they do decide to make the change, that they let the public know for those who might be interested in submitting a design.

C. **Town Manager's Report**

1. SEMRECC November 15th Meeting – Attendance and/or Vote to Appointment Select Board Designee.

Mr. Yunits said it was entirely up to the Board, but he knows the Town of Easton appointed a designee so they didn't need to have a quorum there. He advised that this board could opt to do the same thing.

MOTION was made by Mr. Snyder to designate Ms. Deveau as their voting representative at the SEMRECC meeting on November 15th. Seconded by Mr. Hornsby. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

2. ARPA Funding Request Revision – COA Van.

Mr. Yunits advised that the other issue he has is that they did have a van (with a lift) they were looking at for \$95,000 but they have since sold it from under them. He explained that the Town belongs to a consortium where the Police Department and Highway Department buy from and there are some vans they can order from there. Mr. Yunits stated that in result, he will be looking for \$140,000 instead of \$95,000 in ARPA funds for the purchase of a van (with a lift) for the Council on Aging (COA).

MOTION was made by Mr. Toole to approve \$45,000 increase to be used for the COA van out of the Town ARPA funding request revision. Seconded by Mr. Hornsby. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

3. Update on Settlement Agreement with Carroll Advertising.

Mr. Yunits advised that the Chairs of the Select Board and Planning Board have signed the settlement agreement and they are actually going before the State Outdoor Sign Board tomorrow seeking approval to put up their signs.

Mr. Toole questioned if the Select Board could dictate where these settlement funds go. Mr. Yunits said he would check with the Town Accountant, but he believed they would go into the General Fund. Mr. Toole stated to Ms. Artz that he would really like to make this a priority because it could easily be \$1,000,000 they could put towards some programming within town.

4. Update on Second Floor Meeting Room Capabilities.

Mr. Yunits advised that the upstairs meeting room has been wired for live broadcasting capabilities. He wanted to let the Select Board and any other boards/committees/commissions know that it is available if they would like to use it.

VII. **Select Board's Report and Mail**

Mr. Snyder reported that the Norton Community Lions Club is doing their purchase a light annual memorial lights event. You can purchase a light in memory of the passing of a loved one for the cost of \$5 per name and then for each purchase, a light is lit on the memorial tree at the Norton Town Common. A reading of all of the names will be held during the Norton Festival of Lights. If you would like to submit a name, call or e-mail Tammy Morrissey at (508) 269-5927 or tsm758@aol.com or you can talk to any Community Lions member. Cash or a check for \$5 can be mailed to the Norton Community Lions, P.O. Box 2071, Norton, MA 02766. If you do this, please

make sure to include the name of the loved one you would like remembered. The deadline is Wednesday, November 16th.

Mr. Snyder advised that the Attleboro/Norton YMCA is having an open house on Tuesday, November 15th from 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. at the downtown branch in Attleboro located at 63 North Main Street. This event is for parents, teens, and community members to meet their amazing staff and learn about the new and exciting happenings at the teen center. There will be refreshments served as well. Any questions, you can contact James Bartelle at (508) 222-7422 or jbartelle@attleboroymca.org.

Ms. Artz brought to the Board's attention that at the Norton High School football game over the weekend, one of the officials had a heart attack. She expressed that she would like to do a proclamation for all of those who were involved as first responders for that incident. She said she would work on that and get it out to the Select Board.

Mr. Toole stated that this Friday at 10:00 A.M. will be the Veterans' Day Parade and there will be ceremonies held at the Pine Street Memorial/Common and the Trent Memorial as well. All are welcome to attend.

Mr. Toole advised that he would be participating in "No Shave November" for Men's Health Awareness. He stated that the Police Department is also participating. Mr. Toole informed everyone that there is a link to donate and he is just trying to raise funds for Men's Health Awareness. Mr. Snyder asked where they can donate and Mr. Toole answered that there is a link on his Facebook page.

Ms. Artz wanted to clarify the meeting dates for the remainder of the year. Ms. Deveau stated that the dates she has are November 16th, November 30th, December 14th, and December 28th. Mr. Yunits advised that they have a joint meeting with the Norton Housing Authority on November 16th to do a joint appointment to the Norton Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. He stated that they do have one individual who has submitted a letter of interest, but if anyone else would like to be appointed, they can submit a letter of interest.

IX. Warrants

Report of Chair, Megan Artz, on the following Payroll and Invoice Warrants:

- A. Payroll Warrant PR23-09 for the week ended October 29, 2022, Warrant dated November 3, 2022, in the amount of \$1,712,785.97.
- B. Invoice Warrant AP23-17A dated October 28, 2022, in the amount of \$135,100.00.
- C. Invoice Warrant AP23-18 dated November 3, 2022, in the amount of \$1,714,603.09.
- D. Invoice Warrant AP23-19 dated November 10, 2022, in the amount of \$1,952,070.52.

X. Other Business

Other Business: Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance.

XI. Next Meeting's Agenda – November 16, 2022 – Joint Meeting with the Norton Housing Authority; 2023 License Renewals.

XII. **Executive Session.**

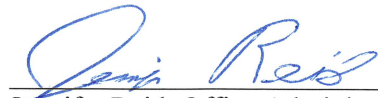
There was no executive session.

XIII. **Adjournment.**

**MOTION was made by Ms. Deveau to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:38 P.M.
Seconded by Mr. Snyder. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.**

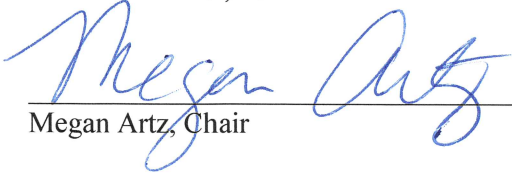
URL Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kblvdSBYYFo>

Respectfully Submitted by:



Jennifer Reid, Office Administrator

**SELECT BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
NOVEMBER 9, 2022**



Megan Artz, Chair

Kevin Snyder, Clerk



Michael Toole, Member



Steven Hornsby, Member

Minutes Approved by Board on: November 30, 2022