



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

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**Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
May 9, 2019**

1. Call to Order by Chairman

The May 9, 2019 meeting of the Norton Board of Selectmen was held at the Henri A. Yelle Elementary School Cafeteria and was called to order at 5:32 P.M., by Mr. Bradford K. Bramwell, Vice-Chairman. Member(s) present: Ms. Mary T. Steele, Mr. John Conway, and Ms. Renee Deley. Also in attendance: Michael D. Yunits, Town Manager.

Permanent Building Committee Members Present: Mark Gershman, Kevin O'Neil, Robert Medeiros, and James Slattery.

2. Business

A. New Business

Mr. Bramwell explained that the Board of Selectmen's purpose of attending this meeting is to discuss with the Building Committee the Town Hall/Community Center. He explained that some members in Town may be concerned about the sticker shock regarding the price of the project. He stated that some member of the Board may have questions about the cost and further clarified that the Selectmen thought that the Building Committee might be able to explain how the price was determined.

Mr. James Slattery introduced all members and explained the process to date. He stated that \$1.5 million is set aside and that they have put out a request for an RFQ where they went through 12 architects for Town Hall and about 14 architects for the Senior/Community Center none of which were the same. Mr. Slattery informed the audience that DBVW Architects was chosen for the Town Hall and BHA for the Community Center and they were informed at the time that the Permanent Building Committee would need a feasibility study from each of them. DBVW interviewed employees at the Town Hall and BHA did a survey for the Community Center. Mr. Slattery mentioned that they heard concerns regarding park, activities, and space. He pointed out that at the current Town Hall the disturbances that occur when meetings are going on simultaneously in the first floor and second floor meeting rooms and the continuous interruptions. Mr. Slattery pointed out the several proposed uses of the Community Center outside of activities just for seniors, such as a place to hold elections, a heating/cooling center, and a space for Parks and Recreation to hold their events. He mentioned that the food pantry will also be moved to the Community Center. For the Community Center, the results from the feasibility study proposed a 10,000; 15,000; and 20,000 square foot building and the Building Committee chose the 10,000 square foot building. Mr. Slattery added that this building will be a single-story building for easier accessibility and ADA compliance.

Mr. Slattery moved on to discussing the several site locations that were contemplated for the Town Hall and Community Center and ultimately the Reed & Barton location on Elm Street was

the best choice. He went on to explain that built into the cost of the projects is an escalation cost due to the fact that this project isn't going to begin for another two years. Ms. Beth Rossi, the Council on Aging Director, clarified that the cost includes the soft costs as well as the construction and escalation costs, which Mr. Slattery confirmed.

Mr. Kevin O'Neil of the Building Committee then opened the discussion to hear from the Selectmen as to beyond the cost of the project why they might like to delay going forward with the project. Mr. Bramwell stated that they are concerned with the lack of support the project is getting from the community. He added that they are also concerned with not only the town meeting costs, but the cost of the election itself, which costs just under \$10,000. Mr. Bramwell added that from the feedback he has heard that the concern is spending money on something that residents are not confident will pass. Mr. Bramwell emphasized that personally he believes they should go to the vote because at these town meetings the votes showed that the community wanted the information from these studies and the community should make the decision.

Mr. O'Neil responded stating that Mr. Bramwell's idea a few years ago was very prudent whereas he suggested getting the permitting fees from ALNYLUM and recommended taking that \$1.5 million and putting it in a separate account for this purpose. Mr. O'Neil further stated that at town meeting, it was then voted to allocate \$200,000 for the feasibility study and questioned why the \$10,000 for the election can't come out of that same account. He mentioned that the Board of Selectmen also unanimously approved the June Special Town Meeting and June Special Election for this exact purpose. Mr. O'Neil concluded stating that nothing from the Permanent Building Committee's side of things has changed.

Ms. Deley responded that they want this to pass, but right now they do not think it will due to cost concerns. She added that she would like to know exactly what the discussions were that were had when negotiating costs because Foxboro built their new town hall for just under \$8 million. Mr. Medeiros added that the new town hall in Foxboro was built on town property, all of the utilities were already there, and they also do not have conference rooms nor the space they want. Ms. Deley responded that because the Building Committee has only heard concerns about the costs, they should go back and analyze where they can minimize those costs. Mr. Medeiros responded that the only way to do that is with a set of plans in front of them, which they don't have. He added with the support of Mr. Slattery that everything that is described in these studies is needed and there isn't anything to eliminate because it is deemed unnecessary.

Mr. Yunits expressed that the Permanent Building Committee understands that people are looking for where cost-cutting can be made, but at this phase the studies are simply showing the maximum cost of the project and in the next phase is where the cost-cutting will happen. Mr. Christopher Carmichael, the Building Commissioner, informed the audience that these buildings need to be constructed to a level 1 standard, so if a hurricane or flood comes through the buildings will be able to withstand the storm. The Building Commissioner added that the escalation costs are included in this figure and that the conference rooms are necessary in order to bring business into the Town. Mr. Medeiros added that the Town is growing rapidly and then there is the tiny "dump" of a Town Hall. He further stated that the current Senior Center he is ashamed to go over to because there isn't even room for him to go if he wanted to.

Mr. Bob Briscoe spoke stating that Mr. Yunits had mentioned previously that there might be some money available or money that will not be used that is in the bid, which would lower the figure of \$25 million. He further supported the Town Manager stating that they will not know this information though until they move to the next phase of the project. Mr. Yunits added that they also have a donation of \$1.6 million and \$1.3 million left in the funds to be put towards these projects, so that is \$2.9 million right there.

Ms. Mary Ann Dempsey asked the audience who had been in the Senior Center by a raise of hands and then told the people that have not been there to go visit. She addressed that safety is a big concern there and that the project just needs to be done because the longer they wait the more expensive it will be.

Mr. Bob Briscoe then addressed the issue of the current Town Hall. He mentioned that the Town needs to get more business coming through and posed the question of how contractors are going to react coming into the current building where there isn't even a room to have the conversation in. Mr. Briscoe described it as an embarrassment to this town and is unsafe.

Ms. Deley asked what the Permanent Building Committee members' reactions were when the bid came back at \$25 million. Mr. Medeiros responded that he wasn't surprised at all. Ms. Dempsey stated that as a homeowner and a taxpayer she should have the right to decide by voting and that everyone should have that right; if it is not favorable, then they will know what people want and what they don't want.

Mr. Conway stated that they aren't trying to turn down the project in its entirety, but to allow for a few more months to conduct due diligence and bring in a third-party estimator to validate the \$25 million cost. Mr. Briscoe refuted Mr. Conway's comments stating that the Permanent Building Committee already had several estimates come in and Ms. Rossi added that two architects gave estimates and their square foot cost came in very close to one another.

Chief Schleicher took the time to address the Community Center serving as a shelter versus not a shelter issue. He stated that when the High School was being renovated, there was a six-figure adjustment if they wanted to try to make the renovated High School into a shelter, but they ultimately walked away from the idea because the Middle School was the main shelter if they did have a localized disaster. Chief Schleicher stated that regardless of if the Community Center were to be used as a shelter, it is going to be designed with a generator.

Mr. Yunits directed his question to Mr. O'Neil asking what the price per square foot was on the estimators the Building Committee received. Mr. O'Neil explained that they chose the architects they did because they specialize in these feasibility studies and they have their own estimators in house, but they also reach out to a fourth and fifth party independent estimator. Mr. O'Neil then addressed the reference to Foxboro Town Hall and stated that there is a big difference when it comes to escalation because there is a five-year difference; their project started three years ago and Norton's would not be starting for another two years. He further pointed out that this is about a 20% difference just in escalation costs alone. Mr. O'Neil stated that there is \$3.6 million in demo work, site-work retaining walls, and on-site septic system, which shows up under the town

hall costs. He explained that of the \$16 million that it will cost for town hall about \$4 million of that is for site work.

Ms. Deley asked if there is a reason why the project isn't starting for two years and if there is a way to bump the deadline up. Mr. Slattery explained the process of projects such as these. Mr. O'Neil stated that in the two and a half years it will take to cleanup the site, they will be working on the design work, the preparation, engineering, and architectural work. Mr. Mark Gershman stated that when looking at the total cost of the project, the building itself and the escalation cost over the years, it will be \$598 per square foot for the town hall and \$530 per square foot for the community center (that is just for the construction and escalation costs).

Mr. O'Neil then stated that he believes even if the cost of the projects came in 20% less it would not make a difference and that they should put this to a vote now to see where this project stands. He expressed a concern that they don't want this to get pushed out six months and ultimately get turned down. He then compared the project to the overrides that have been tried in the past stating that when the Town comes back for a second try at an override it loses by an even bigger margin. Mr. Conway emphasized that this is why they are trying to delay the vote because they don't want people to turn the project down due to a lack of information and then lose by an even bigger margin the second time. He added that he would like to get everyone behind this project. Mr. O'Neil stated that even if it does fail in June there are other options; for example, they could split the two projects up into two articles and have them voted on independently. Mr. O'Neil stated that ultimately the political decision is up to the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Gershman asked Mr. Conway what he suggests they do to get the word out. Ms. Deley recommended sending out mailings to inform residents of the project. Mr. Slattery refuted that the informational meetings started years ago at the town meeting that voted on the \$1.5 million for the feasibility study and added that there have also been seven informational meetings about the project. A member of the audience stated that the current Senior Center is holding two open houses for informational meetings on May 21st and May 30th at 6:00 P.M. regarding these projects to get the word out.

A gentleman in the audience expressed his opinion that this is a strategic time to take on this project because it is not going to get any cheaper and emphasized the need for industry in the Town. He further stated that the Town is significantly below the average for industry and explained that the Town cannot simply run on residential revenue. He further emphasized that students would benefit from visiting the new Community Center and having the opportunity to sit down with the senior citizens to ask them questions regarding subjects such as future career aspirations and advice. He also made a point that a certain population is worried that if this money is spent on the new Town Hall and Community Center that it won't be available for the schools, but the Town always makes sure that the School Department gets their money. For example, the School Department is about 55% of the budget.

The Board of Health Agent, Chris Zahner, stated that often times they are dealing with enforcement situations that will upset somebody. He exemplified this with a woman who came to Town Hall in tears and he had no place to sit down with her and talk with her private. Mr. Zahner stated the other issue he has is when the Public Health Nurse is administering flu shots

and he steps out of his office and someone is getting their flu shot; there is no privacy. Mr. Zahner asked if they knew what these projects would cost residents in taxes, which Mr. Yunits answered that on a \$300,000 house it would cost \$280.59 in the first year and then decreases (in the tenth year it would cost \$213.60 and in year 20 \$154 and change). Mr. Zahner stated that for only \$25 per month the Town and residents would get these new buildings. Mr. Carmichael stated that as far as energy efficiency in the current Town Hall the Town is throwing money out the window.

Mr. Yunits answered a resident's question regarding if the cost ended up being lower than \$25 million how that would affect the tax payment. He explained that the project would be funded with temporary borrowing during construction and then when the project is all done [and the exact cost of the project is known] the Town will then permanently borrow. Thus, the authorization to exceed is no more than \$25 million.

Mr. Gershman stated that whatever the Board would like them to do to get the word out he is in full support of that. He stated he liked the mailing idea. Ms. Deley suggested social media platforms because while some people do not use it, herself and Mr. Conway ran a social media campaign and won for the Selectmen election. Ultimately, Mr. Slattery on behalf of the Building Committee stated that the ball is in the Selectmen's court and it is their decision. Mr. Yunits stated that the Town can post information, such as the cost of the project, they just can't promote it.

Ms. Steele stated that she understands the Building Committee's frustration whereas they had unanimous support from the Board of Selectmen, but pointed out that in fairness to the two new Selectmen, they are just coming into this project so of course they have a lot of questions. She thanked the Building Committee for having them at their meeting to collect more information and she expressed her opinion that they should move forward with the timeline they currently have [as far as the June Special Town Meeting and June Special Election].

MOTION was made by Ms. Steele to support moving forward with this project. Seconded by Ms. Deley. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

Adjournment

MOTION was made by Ms. Steele to adjourn at 7:08 P.M. Seconded by Ms. Deley. Vote: Unanimous. MOTION CARRIES.

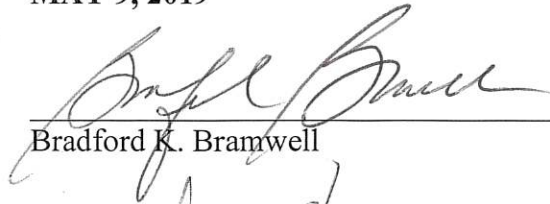
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Respectfully Submitted by:



Jennifer Reid, Office Administrator

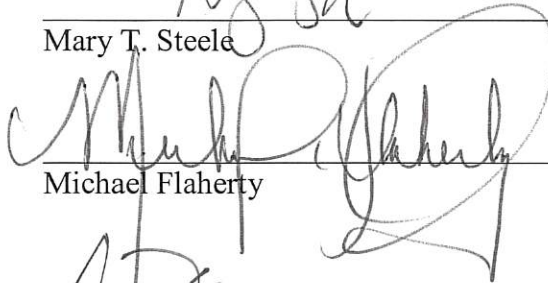
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES OF MEETING
MAY 9, 2019**




Bradford K. Bramwell




Mary T. Steele



Michael Flaherty



John Conway



Renee Deley

Minutes Approved by Board on: 6/13/19