

TOWN OF NORTON FINANCE COMMITTEE

RECEIVED

JUN 05 1996

NORTON TOWN CLERK

Minutes of the Meeting
May 15, 1996

CALL TO ORDER: 7:34 p.m. by Chair, Michael Fiore.

Roll Call: Michael Fiore, Chair; Michael Thomas, Vice-Chair; James Barrett, Thomas DeLuca, Jackie Desrochers (7:50 p.m.), Paul Helmreich, Christine Meyer, Jack Nicolas, and Jonathan Rowe. **Absent:** Cornelius Linehan and Donna Summerfield.

NEW BUSINESS

Emergency Medical (230): Ambulance Billing Memo - Helmreich moved to reconsider budget 230-570 Other Charges & Expenses; seconded by DeLuca. Vote: 6 in favor and 1 abstention (Barrett). Helmreich moved to increase 230-570 from \$34,700 to \$54,740. The committee discussed whether or not the town is saving any money by using the billing agency. Are we getting back more than the 10% we pay to them? The memo did not have complete information about the billing, therefore, Helmreich moved to table this budget until later this evening when the town manager is available. Seconded by Nicolas. Vote: unanimous.

Public Hearing: Called to order at 7:45 p.m.

Fiore explained that the total budget for the town side is \$21,288,097 which is a 7.3% increase over the previous year including the school budget. The majority of the town side increase is due to the contract negotiations (4.2%). The biggest requests come from the police and fire departments. The police department would like one new policeman, one annualized, and a patrolman to move from a rank of patrolman to sergeant. The fire department is requesting 4 new firefighters to start in January 1997 (half-year positions).

The total budget is under the tax levy limit by \$891,357. The budget as submitted is well under the tax levy limit. The capital improvements fund has \$594,000 and the Stabilization Fund has \$404,000 for a total of \$998,000. Certified Free Cash is at \$1,766,000.

We will have future debt coming due for the Jackson property and the Middle School project that we will need money to fund. The committee must keep in mind the future financial commitments

of the town. Selectman Kimball feels that we need to put as much money as possible aside for a rainy day account and for unexpected capital improvements.

A South Washington Street resident asked about the finance committee's position on the re-opening of the Chartley Fire Station. The finance committee has recommended the funding of the 4 new firefighters but their primary concern is the safety of the town. Next year the fire chief will request to annualize these four and then hire 4 more half-year positions. There are other considerations for vacation coverage and the finance committee questions whether 8 firefighters would be enough to keep Chartley open 24 hours a day. The resident stated that she felt with the development of the Jackson property and middle school the committee is putting soccer before public safety. The FinCom defended their position on fiscal responsibility and public safety.

The public hearing adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Helmreich moved to take Emergency Medical off the table; seconded by Thomas. Vote: unanimous. The original motion to increase the budget from \$34,700 to \$54,740, is still open. Lindberg stated that the number of runs and types of things we did have not changed in the 6 month period that we have been using Comstar. Therefore, the total billing will be very comparable. The committee wanted numbers in order to make an educated judgment but figures were not available because the program is so new. The did not feel there was enough information to make a good decision. Helmreich moved to table this until Monday, 5/20/96; seconded by Thomas. Vote: unanimous.

Town Meeting Warrant

Helmreich moved to recommend Article 4 - Road Contracts; seconded by Thomas. Vote: unanimous.

Article 5 - Chapter 90 Roadwork will not have a sum of money attached to it so the town manager recommended taking "No Action". Helmreich moved to take "No Action" on Article 5 due to lack of information; seconded by DeLuca. Vote: unanimous.

Article 6 - Stabilization Fund: DeLuca moved \$1 Million into the Stabilization Fund; seconded by Nicolas. DeLuca feels that we can draw for short term debt from that account. This can be done to normalize a rise in taxes in the future. Vote: unanimous.

Article 7 - Capital Improvements Fund: DeLuca moved \$776,000 to the Capital Improvements Fund from Free Cash; seconded by Nicolas. Vote: unanimous.

Articles 9-11: The capital improvements committee has made its recommendations for capital purchases in Articles 9, 10 & 11.

Article 12 - FY 1997 Water Department Budget: Helmreich moved to recommend \$813,925 for the Water Department budget. This is not from the tax rate but raised from water department fees. Seconded by DeLuca. Vote: unanimous.

Article 13 - Property Transfer: Helmreich moved to recommend Article 13; seconded by Nicolas. Vote: unanimously opposed.

Article 14 - Budget Transfer: Helmreich moved to recommend Article 14 for \$350,000; seconded by Barrett. They want to build a new prefabricated building for \$225,000. The finance committee asked for further information and a perk test to be done. They would also like an architects rendering. Fiore recommended that the committee not make a recommendation tonight. Helmreich withdrew his motion; Nicolas withdrew his second.

Article 15 - Hazardous Materials Revolving Account: Helmreich moved to recommend Article 15; seconded by DeLuca. Vote: unanimous.

Article 16 - Recycling Revolving Account: Helmreich moved to recommend Article 16; seconded by Thomas. Vote: unanimous.

Article 17 - Job Titles: Helmreich moved to recommend Article 17 with the addition of Assistant Town Accountant; seconded by Thomas. This is to eliminate personal computer specialist and 2 others from the list. Assistant Town Accountant should be on the list. Vote: unanimous.

Article 18 - Salary Plan: Thomas made a motion, seconded by Helmreich, to recommend Article 18. Vote: unanimous.

Article 19 - Household Hazardous Waste Day: DeLuca moved to raise and appropriate \$5,000 to help fund (there is \$8,000 in the account at this time) one Hazardous Waste Day. Seconded by Nicolas. Vote: unanimous.

Article 20 - Zoning By-law Amendment: Flood Plain District: Helmreich moved to recommend Article 20; seconded by Thomas. Nicolas would like to do some research on this before they take a vote. It was decided to take the vote and reconsider the article if necessary later. Vote: 4 in favor, 3 opposed (Fiore, Nicolas, Barrett) and 2 abstentions (DeLuca and Rowe).

Article 21 - Zoning By-law Amendment: Water Resource Protection District: The planning board has not had their public hearing yet. Nicolas made a motion to take "No Action" for lack of information; seconded by DeLuca. Vote: unanimous.

Article 22 - Zoning By-law Amendment: Definition of Way or Street: Helmreich would like to hear from the planning board on this article. Nicolas made a motion to take "No Action"; seconded by Thomas. Vote: unanimous.

Article 23 - Street Acceptance - Crowe Farm Lane: Helmreich moved to recommend Article 23; seconded by DeLuca. Vote: 8 in favor and 1 abstention (Meyer).

Article 24 - Inter-Municipal Agreement: This article is to formalize SERSG. Catherine Salisbury drew up the article to formalize what has been done for years. It is a straight forward agreement. It costs the town \$3,100 to have them do procurements for the communities that it serves. Nicolas made a motion to recommend Article 24; seconded by DeLuca. Vote: unanimous.

ADJOURNMENT

Nicolas made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Deluca. Vote: unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Patricia C. Mello

Patricia C. Mello
Recording Secretary