



RECEIVED  
NORTON TOWN CLERK  
2020 JUN 30 A 9:39

**TOWN OF NORTON  
FINANCE COMMITTEE  
and  
JOINT MEETING WITH BOARD OF SELECTMEN and SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Norton Middle School Library  
April 28, 2020  
5:00 P.M.**

**MINUTES**

**I. 7:00 P.M. Call to Order**

The April 28, 2020 meeting of the Finance Committee, along with Board of Selectmen and Norton School Committee was held virtually via Zoom meeting and was called to order at 5:00 P.M., by Mr. Bramwell, Chairman of Board of Selectmen.

Finance Committee Members Present: Mr. Peter Carignan, Mr. Richard Dorney, Mr. Walter Eykel, Mr. Michael Fiore, Ms. Aimee Sawyer, Mr. Aaron Smith, Ms. Bonnie Yezukevich, Mr. Thomas DeLuca, Ms. Paula Daniels, Mr. Stephen Evans.

Absent: None.

**II. New Business**

**A. Joint Meeting: 5:00 P.M. Call to Order**

- Bill Gouveia mentioned that the issue of having virtual town meetings, and he stated that under any circumstance, this is not a legal venue.
- He mentioned that we need to decide, when, where and how we will have a town meeting. This is a very complex event that needs to be organized with the many departments.
- Town meetings are not bound by the state of emergency orders and we need to wait until that is lifted.
- We need to decide if the town meeting will happen in June 8<sup>th</sup>, will it be outside, inside, how we will protect the health and welfare of people. Mr. Gouveia is open to hear all ideas. He mentioned that he doesn't want to risk their lives and wellbeing just to do their civic duty.

- Mr. Gouveia stated that even if we postpone the town meeting, he doesn't believe it's a good idea to have a large venue, with many people in a room. He stated that it would be better to have an outside meeting.
- Ms. Goldberg mentioned about the 1/12 budget – if a town is unable to hold a town meeting by the end of June, the town cannot go less than 1/12 budget. It would not involve the town meeting and the request would be sent to the department of revenue. If the Board Of Selectmen would decide it's not safe to hold a meeting, this would be an option. To hold a town meeting safely, there would be significant planning, where there would be many options. But there are concerns when it comes to holding a remote town meeting: to try to take a vote, would be hard to manage. Logistically speaking, this would be something that had to thought out. She agreed that some compromises would have to be made. She added that the town needs to be flexible, especially when it comes to dates and also there needs to be a platform in which everyone can hear it.
- Ms. Goldberg stated that the 1/12 budget is based on the FY20 budget. The department of revenue supports which way the towns move forward. She added that they're hoping that towns don't come to them with huge capital expense requests in July. She added that matters need to be limited on its significance. If there are items that can wait until the fall, then move them until then.
- Mr. Yunits asked if there was a timeline as to when we can declare a 1/12th budget. Ms. Goldberg stated that there is no timeline. If there was a state of emergency then, the moderator has to file a continuance of a meeting to another time. But this would require cooperation with other departments. A declaration would be done by the moderator that is valid for 30 days. Ms. Goldberg stated that she believes that we will have a state of emergency, but not a stay at home order. If the meeting gets pushed until July, then the town can file a 1/12th budget request to the Department of Revenue.
- Ms. Goldberg stated that current year budget could be adjusted by the BOS with the approval of the Finance Committee. You would ask a blanket approval to overspend on a few accounts.
- Mr. Gouveia asked if the declaration can be less or more than 30 days. Ms. Goldberg stated that it has to be up to 30 days for the continuance to be filed. She added that is meant to avoid putting people in peril. This can be done without opening the meeting.
- Dr. Baeta asked if we do a June 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, he would not know what the budget would be, because he has to send notifications to teachers. Ms. Goldberg stated that the school department needs to contact their state senators to ask for a break in deadlines.
- Ms. Deley stated that it would be easier to plan ahead of time to schedule a town meeting and then if something were to happen that we have to reschedule, then we would. She understands that it would be more difficult,

but this would be the best option. She added that the outdoor venue would be the best option and also to strengthen that people need to wear face masks.

- Ms. Goldberg stated that a remote online town meeting is not legal. You can use Zoom to talk about some issues ahead of time, but not to hold a town meeting.
- Mr. Gouveia stated that the town should maintain a fair amount of flexibility
- Ms. Deley inquired if we would have to hold a meeting in town, or could we hold it somewhere else. Ms. Goldberg stated that there is a legislative bill in the works that would allow this option to happen. Another option would be to get the courts to order the quorum to be lowered. Ms. Deley asked if there are any requirements for outdoor meeting. Ms. Goldberg stated that the one requirement is that everyone needs to be able to participate. She mentioned that Middleborough did it once. The only issue would be social distancing and how accessible it would be to people and of course, a rain date.
- Mr. Gouveia mentioned the question of accommodation and how we have to be able to make sure that a town meeting would be accessible. Ms. Goldberg added that if people had been excluded, the moderator has the authority to reschedule the meeting (with the permission from Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee).
- Mr. Gouveia stated that it's important to trim the warrant to what its absolutely necessary. Ms. Goldberg stated that if we take no action on a warrant item, we can refer it back to the committee.
- Ms. Goldberg stated that the schools would be subjected to a 1/12 budget, but if they have layoffs requirements, they have to have budgeted for that. The schools would have to incur unemployment claims.
- Mr. Gouveia stated that if we move to a ballot vote it will be tricky, but we need to plan for the physicality to have to check people in.
- Mr. Yunits stated that per Senator Feeney in 2-3 weeks they will have a local aid resolution.
- Ms. Longhurst stated that there is a problem of checking people in, especially if this would be an outdoor meeting. There is also a way to collect the votes, which would be problematic.
- Mr. Zahner stated that we could do a Town Meeting as long as we figure out the logistics of social distancing, face coverings, hand sanitizer, etc. It could be done, but the only issue is the space, especially if they are six feet apart. Mr. Zahner reinforced that trimming the warrant would possibly make less people come.
- Mr. Gouveia asked if the election has to be held by June 30 and Ms. Goldberg stated that yes, they have to be done by then. The Board Of Selectmen has to decide, within 20 days, to hold a different date for elections and request a

court order for this to happen. She emphasized that providing a notice to the voters is very important.

- Mr. Gouveia, Mr. Bramwell stated that we need to keep the June 8<sup>th</sup> date and then decide at a later date if it needs to be changed.

### III. **Adjournment**

Mr. Yunits moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:24 P.M. All were in favor. Vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by

**Sonia Tsilis, Recording Secretary**

Minutes Approved by Committee on:

6/10/2020

Signature:

William Rotondi

**William Rotondi, Finance Committee Chair**