

Finance Committee Joint Meeting with Select Board

October 4, 2021

7:00PM

Meeting held via Remote Participation

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NORTON TOWN CLERK  
2022 JUN 14 AM 8:55

**Meeting called to order at 7:01pm**

**Attendance:** Aimee Sawyer, Bonnie Yezukevich, Paula Daniels, Kevin Snyder, Michael Fiore, Joe Parker, Stephen Evans, Yelena Gordon, Zach Tsilis, William Rotondi

**Absent:** None

**Updates:**

**Article 9**

- Disposition article on 0 King Phillip Road
- 10,000 square feet of property
- Back in 1970 there was a tax delinquency and there was a tax taking and the owner then paid what was owed
- The redemption document was never recorded so its still listed on the books as being owned by the town of Norton
- Owner passed away in 1974 his family still continues to pay the taxes
- Recommend that the town deed this property back over to the current owner
- Selectman have already approved this article, they recommend it
- If we do not deed this house back to the owner, they will want all the tax money they have been paying on it back with interest

Aimee Sawyer – I would entertain a motion to recommend article 9

William Rotondi – I move we recommend article 9 as presented

Seconded

No further discussion

Call for Vote: Yes – 10, No – 0, Unanimously passes

**Jack Conway:**

**Let the record show that we'll open the selectboard meeting at 7:06pm**

**3 members of the board are present, Jack Conway, Renee, Michael**

**Article 17**

- Two parts to the article, this would amend the personnel by laws
- First part would change the list of holidays as well as any other day defined as a legal holiday
- Would bring personnel by laws into conformity with the union contracts
- Second part would change the longevity schedule, which hasn't been changed since 2013
- Estimate of what the increase is going to cost is around \$2400
- Selectmen at last meeting (9/30/21) did vote to recommend this article
- Discussion on the years of service and longevity pay it equates to
- Worth looking at this contract every three years
- Discussion on the 9-11 employees that fall under wage/salary
- Discussion on how the union contracts differ for longevity pay for certain years of service
- Got our numbers by comparing to other towns with similar positions
- Discussion on the breakdown of where the \$2400 increase is coming from
- Discussion on why yearly reviews were not chosen over putting this longevity article in place, and if there is an easier way to implement this
- Recommended the article as a whole, not split up into the two sections that make up the article

Aimee Sawyer- I would entertain a motion to recommend article 17

William Rotondi- I move we recommend article 17, both sections, as written in the Warrant

Seconded

No further discussion

Call for Vote: Yes – 10, No – 0, Unanimously passes

#### **Article 15 & Article 16 (Michael Toole)**

- If this change stays on the warrant, and is adopted, it would require change in the bylaws and the charter
- Disclosure statement from Town Council read by Aimee Sawyer
- Everyone on the Finance Committee agrees to do their job objectively and fairly
- Mr. Toole is proposing two articles at town meeting.
- One article will be about the creation of the finance appointing committee, Mr. Toole thought it would be beneficial if several people that had been elected by the town came together to appoint
- Mr. Toole believes this is a safeguard to add more people to the process of appointing people to such an important committee in town
- There have been a lot of good moderators in the past that have done a good job at appointing people
- Finance committee does recommend budgets for all departments that are going to be added to this selection committee, because of this some people feel as though it would create a conflict of interest
- Some discussion on whether or not surrounding towns have an appointing committee that is similar to the one that this article would implement

- Mr. Toole's motivation for a committee of 5 is to get as many elected officials within there
- Mr. Toole feels as though it could be more dangerous to have one person who is solely responsible for appointing
- Mr. Toole would really like this to get through to the Town Meeting so that the Town can decide whether or not they want more than one person being responsible for the appointing
- Discussion on who was involved with talking about this article, when it was discussed, and whether or not now is the right time to discuss making a change like this
- Mrs. Sawyer had been optimistic that after passing the debt exclusion for the athletic complex, the town hall, and the senior center/community resource center that we would be able to move past some of the issues between the town and the school
- Mrs. Sawyer is concerned with having the school committee, who is over 60% of the total budget, give input into who is named into the finance committee to approve that budget
- No one on the finance committee can serve on any other town board or committee or be elected to any other town office and no town employee can serve on the finance committee
- Guidelines are put in place so that everyone on the finance committee can remain impartial
- Discussion on additional concerns about conflict of interest and how it could be difficult to get more people to volunteer
- There has been nothing shown to indicate that the one person appointing process that is currently being used has had any problems
- Discussion on how little information was presented. No information on other towns that may have something similar in place and how it has worked for them, no information on the pros/cons
- The select board has not voted on this yet, has only had a discussion on the article
- Bill has served on the Norton finance committee and appointed it, he has a unique insight to this situation that not many people have because he has seen both sides to this, he does not think that having 5 people responsible for appointing will actually be a safeguard. There is nothing wrong with the system the way it is, do not change it.
- Further discussion on why this change does not seem like the most probable way to go, and that people do not feel like it is going to safeguard anyone but that it will instead give more power to people that are bias
- Discussion on if this article were to return to the finance committee that there needs to be more information to present and what information that should be in order for everyone to be as informed on this matter as possible

**Vote:**

Steve: I move we recommend article 15 as written

William: Second

No further discussion

Call for Vote: Yes – 9, No – 0, Abstain – 1 Motion Fails

Steve: I move we recommend article 16 as written

William: Second

No further discussion

Call for Vote: Yes – 9, No – 0, Abstain – 1 Motion Fails

**Article Two:**

- This article covers Separation expense
- The expenses needed are \$225,274.00
- This is for a retirement in the treasure's collector's office, the police department, three retirements in the fire department and one in the highway department
- Usually, a certain balance is kept in the separation expense fund
- This would cover sick leave, vacation unused, and vacation earned
- Discussion on what departments get what for sick days and vacation time and what the payouts are
- This could be added to the budget, but this account is specifically to be used for retirements and that's why it has stayed separate
- Discussion on how to structure these payments wo there were not so many being carried over

**Vote:**

William: I recommend article 2 as presented, including the chart, for a total of \$225,274.00 from free cash

Seconded

No further discussion

Call for Vote: Yes – 10, No – 0, Unanimously passes

**The selectboard votes on Article 2 during this meeting. All members vote yes to the article. Unanimous.**

**OPEB:**

- Our free cash was \$4,238,298
- With the retirement expenses that were just approved, and supplements for budgets, and the recommendation tonight for capital, OPEB, and stabilization it would leave about \$2,000,000 in free cash
- We want to leave free cash incase we have issues that come up throughout the year
- In the policy manual our goal is to get to \$200,000 a year
- This year \$110,000 is being proposed and then we can hopefully gradually work up to the \$200,000
- This would be until 2034/2035 when the pension system is fully funded the Bristol County retirement system, and then the \$3,600,000 that we pay into that system right now would be available to go into OPEB

- Discussion on how much money will hopefully be put into OPEB over time and the interest that will be earned in the account

**Vote:**

Aimee: I would entertain a motion to recommend article 18 in the amount of \$110,000 from free cash

Zach: Seconded

No further discussion

Call for Vote: Yes – 10, No – 0, Unanimously passes

**Article 19:**

- Article on stabilization
- Recommended that \$400,000 go into stabilization
- We can add more money later on
- The recommended number in stabilization is 5% of the annual budget

**Vote:**

Aimee: I would entertain a motion to approve article 19 in the amount of \$400,000 from free cash

William: Second

No further discussion

Call for Vote: Yes – 10, No – 0, Unanimously passes

**Selectboard votes on Article 18 and Article 19. Both articles pass unanimously.**

**Article 6:**

- Capital fund appropriation
- Recommended that \$800,000 go into the capital fund

**Vote:**

Aimee: I would like to entertain a motion to recommend article 6 in the amount of \$800,000 from free cash

William: second

No further discussion

Call for Vote: Yes – 10, No – 0, Unanimously passes

**Next meeting: October 13, 2021**

Move to Adjourn

Call for Vote: Yes – 10, No – 0, Unanimously passes

**Meeting adjourned at 8:25PM**

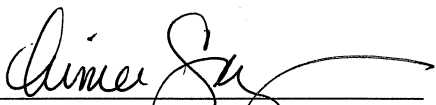
Respectfully submitted by

**Rachel Medas, FinCom Secretary**

Minutes Approved by Committee on:

6/6/2022

Signature:

  
Aimee Sawyer, Finance Committee Chair