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TOWN OF NORTON

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Norton High School Media Room
MAY 30, 2019
7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

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

The May 30, 2019 joint meeting of the Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen, School Committee, and Building Committee was held in the Norton High School Media Center and was called to order at 7:00 P.M., by Mr. William Rotondi, Chairman as well as the Chairman of each committee attending.

Members Present: Mr. Peter Carignan, Mr. Thomas DeLuca, Mr. Richard Dorney, Mr. Stephen Evans, Mr. Michael Fiore, Mr. Paul Helmreich, Ms Aimee Sawyer, Mr. Aaron Smith, and Ms Bonnie Yezukevich.

Absent: Mr. Walter Eykel

II. New Business

Review of the New Town Hall and Community Center Project

Mrs. O'Brien, Chairwoman of the Building Committee, began by updating the boards with information on the CEC report received on Friday, May 24, 2019. The CEC report stated that the EPA and DEP are not going to completely clean the site as was initially understood. The Building Committee is not comfortable with the review or the timeline and wanted to bring this information forward before the Special Town Meeting. Mrs. O'Brien also stated that the Building Committee has voted to continue with their goal to build a New Town Hall and Community Center and will look at different sites.

Mr. Carmichael, Norton Building Inspector, also gave an update regarding the rapid deterioration of the buildings on the Elm Street site. The buildings on Cross Street have been condemned and are about to collapse. He will be closing the street down next week to raze them. The Town hasn't spent any money on these buildings as of today. When a building poses an "Imminent Threat" to the public, it becomes the town's responsibility to take it down. He has three contractors out to bid at this time. There is very little asbestos, etc., in the building and there is money set aside (\$1.2 Million from Red & Barton) to remove any public safety threat from chemicals, etc. Last fall when the EPA was on site cleaning the bank they found an oil leak coming from underground oil storage units. The Coast Guard will take care of cleaning the oil leakage at the lagoon site. He has been continuously working with the EPA & DEP.

Ms. Deley stated that the CEC report will be put on the website.

Mrs. O'Brien stated the Building Committee's Article for the Special Town Meeting is not site specific. They are concerned about the standing from the Board of Selectmen and whether they are to go forward with this research for a new site.

Mr. Flaherty stated he is not comfortable moving forward without a full plan in place

Mr. O'Neill stated this project was contingent on the site being clean and he is not comfortable moving forward

Mr. Bramwell stated that legally it is too late to cancel the town meeting and the vote.

Mr. Gouveia stated that if the Finance Committee changes their recommendation then anyone at the Town Meeting can move the article from the floor. If it is seconded, there will be discussion and a vote. However, he stated that someone is going to explain to the public what has happened. Also, the election cannot be cancelled.

Mrs. O'Brien stated that their committee has worked diligently with the information they had and would rather have this new information now then let the town vote it in and find out the details later. She is willing to bring it up for discussion at the Town Meeting.

Mr. Helmreich made a motion to reconsider Article 1 of the Special Town Meeting

Ms Yezukevich Seconded

Unanimous

Ms Sawyer would rather move the article from the floor of the Special Town Meeting than have the FINCOMM recommend.

Mr. DeLuca agrees that we should remove the recommendation.

Mr. Helmreich made a motion to retain our recommendation of Article 1 of the Special Town Meeting

Ms Sawyer seconded

Yes - 0

No - 10

Unanimous to not recommend the article

Mrs. Cohen asked where the disconnection was between an email dated February 2019 and the one dated May 2019? Mr. Conway doesn't know at this time.

Mr. Carmichael requested information a month ago from the CEC and at that time he received just information addressing the sampling. He just received the complete 300 page report last week.

Mr. Bramwell and the other members from the Board of Selectmen agree that it is important to continue with the plan but may need to move the site.

Communication between boards

Mr. Bramwell stated that he would like to have a member from each committee (Board of Selectmen, School Committee, and Finance Committee) in each of the committee meetings. This will keep the lines of communication open.

Mrs. Cohen also stated that she hopes we can have these joint meeting more frequently. All committees agreed.

Mrs. Stern asked how we continue keeping communications open; share minutes? Have 1 member from each board/committee to attend each other's meetings?

Mr. Rotondi stated that the Finance Committee agreed at the last meeting that at least one member should go to the Board of Selectmen meetings. Also, agrees that it is a good idea to attend School Committee meetings as well.

Dr. Baeta stated a few things: first that he felt attacked at one particular meeting. He felt that the School Committee was set up at this particular meeting and expressed his frustration. The second point he made was there was non-factual

information being sent to the other boards. From what he witnessed tonight; the entire process continues to be a problem and broken. He will send monthly reports to the Finance Committee regarding expenses and line item spending. Lastly, he also stated that in his opinion the three Chairs should communicate regularly.

Mrs. Cohen stated that we would like to see the town grow together and communicate openly throughout the budget season as well as through the year. Trust between boards needs to be built to allow this growth.

Mr. Dorney stated that Dr. Baeta's point is well taken and that it was a particularly difficult meeting and apologized for tone of that meeting. The questions were needed but perhaps done in a better manner. As a committee, we're in session twice a year and wonder how we get up to speed on new information? Maybe we should meet throughout the year.

Mr. Rotondi stated that if the Board of Selectmen or School Committee talk about anything regarding money, the Finance Committee should be included. Getting our information at the last second is frustrating and makes it more difficult to divvy up where the dollars go in that short amount of time.

Mr. Evans stated that we need to make it clear about what we need and when we need it to make good decisions.

Mr. Fiore stated that not all departments are equal in size; some of them only have one figure to work with and there's nowhere we can make recommendation changes.

Mr. Savas stated that he thinks the Finance Committee should pick apart the budget and that it is OK to ask questions. We should be able to answer those questions. If we can't we will have to change those numbers.

Dr. Baeta suggested forming a 3 person subcommittee when the School Budget is being created, rather than discussing all at the Finance Committee meeting.

Mr. Rotondi stated that he has asked Mr. Yunits for a forward looking plan.

Mr. Helmreich stated that planning is good but not always reliable. The town still needs to stay within the 2 ½% and there still needs to be flexibility within a future looking plan. Capital Improvements plan has been very helpful, but thinks it will be far more difficult to plan in other areas and would probably not have the ability to be as flexible.

Ms Sawyer stated we should have a best estimate. We cannot go to town for an override if we don't know what a future plan will look like.

Mr. Gouveia stated that we fund backwards. Rather than take what we have for dollars and adjust the budget accordingly, we should state what the town needs (School Committee, Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, Finance Committee, and Superintendent) then take that to the town and let them decide.

Mr. Bramwell thinks there should be an override every year, even if it is a small one.

Mr. DeLuca stated that the Finance Committee does get the Town Budget ahead of time and it is reviewed line by line. Maybe we should stop using Free Cash for recurring items instead of its purpose (non-recurring items) and see what happens.

Ms Yezukevich agrees that an override message needs to come from this table. Leadership needs to take this on to get information out to the town.

Mrs. Cohen thinks we should meet at the least quarterly.

Mr. Savas recognized that this as Mr. Helmreich's last committee meeting. All showed great appreciation for his 46 years on the Finance Committee and 9 times as the Chairman. Standing ovation for Mr. Helmreich.

Mr. Gouveia stated that no one has given better service to this town.

III. Old Business

IV. Open items

Next Meeting: Monday, June 3, 2019 at 6:00 P.M. at the High School Cafeteria before the Special Town Meeting.

V. Minutes

VI. Adjournment

Mr. Helmreich motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:47 P.M.

Seconded by Mr. DeLuca

Unanimous

Respectively submitted by: William Rotondi 7/10/19
William Rotondi, Finance Committee Chair Date Approved

Patricia Tarantino
Patricia Tarantino, Recording Secretary