

**NORFOLK BOARD OF FINANCE
MINUTES OF MAY 12, 2020 MEETING**

Members present were: M. Sconyers, G. Mudge, N. Ritson, J. Tarrant and D. Torrey.

Member absent: Graham Allyn

Alternate members present were: S. Anderson; L. Battis and A. Bennett.

S. Anderson was appointed to fill in for G. Allyn.

L. Battis was appointed to fill in for D. Torrey until he later joined the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m. by M. Sconyers.

Minutes of the April 21, 2020 meeting were approved on a motion by J. Tarrant, second by N. Ritson and unanimously approved.

Minutes of the May 5, 2020 meeting were approved on a motion by J. Tarrant, second by N. Ritson and unanimously approved.

The Selectman reported positive news that the current budget should be at 83 or 84% and the Town is doing quite well; he has had to spend money on road repairs and might try to get a couple of things done before July 1st.

As far as spending next year, the Town did not receive funding for the Mountain Road Bridge, although everything was in place, the Governor delayed bonding. In Fall or early next year the Selectmen are hopeful to get funding, after going through the process again and relayed that borrowing will have to be discussed at that time. Similar situation is with the oil tank at the school. Mr. Riiska is in the process of seeing if he can get the engineering quotes together for the roof and furnace. Those items are on hold now because of the times and trying to save some money and to give a breather with taxes. There are no plans for further capital spending.

The First Selectman relayed: as far as other projects, major projects that the Town could be doing, infrastructure has been delayed for years. He was recently asked to provide five years of budget history to the "broadband group". His spreadsheet goes back to 2012. It was very interesting to see that in 2012 the Town had actually budgeted for road work \$548,000 and this year budgeted \$380,000. He reports that while the Town has been fiscally responsible, it has been irresponsible when it comes to maintaining what we have. Mr. Riiska notes that bond rates are extremely low, between 1-2%, he has talked to a couple of engineers to get some numbers for roads that need to be done, such as Maple Avenue as well as some of the other roads that paving people have said need to be paved, not chip sealed.

He previously said there is \$13,000,000.00 in infrastructure work needed, that figure is now closer to \$15,000,000.00. This can be accomplished in other ways other than bonding but things are going to need to get done. He is hopeful he can put together enough information by the next BOF meeting scheduled on June 9th to make plans for future work. Chairman Sconyers expressed maintenance delayed is a problem.

As far as the budget, the Selectman knows it was discussed at the last BOF meeting. In reviewing other budgets, meaning the two (2) schools, he would like to see Town Hall increases put back into the budget. Their total cost is \$8,400, he has taken into consideration that there are a couple of people/individuals in both school budgets that are getting almost twice that individually. The Selectmen do not believe that increasing the mill rate from 25.98 to 26.01 would be that much of a burden and it would certainly be appreciated by those working at Town Hall, who have continued to come to work throughout the pandemic.

The Board voted to change the approved budget to provide for raises for employees at the Town Hall on a motion by M. Sconyers, second by D. Torrey and unanimously approved.

Mr. Riiska relayed if the Town moves \$216,000 from the Positive Fund Balance (rather than \$207,500) the Town Hall employees would still get a 2.5% raise and the mill rate would remain 25.98. The final figure from the PFB is \$225,000.00.

Next the Board discussed Region 7's Budget. M. Sconyers reported that the chairs of all 4 Boards of Finance (Barkhamsted, Colebrook, New Hartford and Norfolk) had a zoom meeting. New Hartford is upset about the Budget; Barkhamsted would like it to be lowered; Colebrook is happy. Chairman Sconyers thinks a letter should be sent to Molly Sexton-Read asking what savings they have realized.

One member mentioned that as the Board just discussed the long-term health of the town, the same logic applies to the BOE, that this is completely unprecedented in our working history. She emphasized that we cannot foresee the impact it will have on education both on the students and financially.

Another member observed that of all the budgets they listened to this spring, Region 7 did the least to reduce their budget and did not sacrifice.

Another member stated while buses are not running, the Region did have to invest in distance learning in terms of software, handing out chrome books, and it would not hurt to send a letter, but to take into consideration that the Region may have had to spend more money to enable distance learning.

Chairman Sconyers wants to ask Region 7 to make some reductions, wants to inquire to see if they can make some savings. M. Sconyers will pose a polite letter. Another member agreed that this Board needs to do this, to point out that the Board is aware of the figures and the situation and is monitoring the situation. Region 7 realizes it is going to have to deal with a reduction in population. The Board voted to send a letter to Region 7, on a Motion by M. Sconyers, second by D. Torrey and unanimously approved.

Chairman Sconyers reminded the Board that there is a place where members of the public can send a formal comment and before the Board finishes the Budget Hearing on May 28th now scheduled for 6:00, the Board will have to acknowledge every single comment.

Under Public Comment: Town Clerk Linda Perkins stated that money is so cheap right now, and the Town should consider doing a bond, that a lot could be taken care of with 1%. It is fiscally responsible, not to do so would be irresponsible.

Linda Perkins further reported upon heavily increased activity at the transfer station, with people home and cleaning out, etc. The bins are filling fast. She talked about some of the expenses that people do not necessarily think of, such as transfer station and dog licenses. A great deal of people come into Town Hall, so instead of reducing the budget, add funds for the transfer station, give each resident a sticker now in the form of a gift to the community.

The Selectman raised the possibility of slightly increasing the sticker price for the transfer station as the transfer station is getting a lot of use right now and the cost to haul all of municipal solid, bulky and recyclables has gone up.

The Board agreed to change the time for the Budget Meeting on May 28th to 6:00.

On Motion of J. Tarrant, second by D. Torrey and unanimously approved, the meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer M. Ryan, Secretary

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