



APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, June 11, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: George Brenckle
Rick Nieber
Tony Poteete
Janice Hight
Bob D'Amico

MEMBERS ABSENT: Elaine Kelly, Chair.

At 7:00pm, Mr. Coderre stated that this Open Meeting of the Appropriations Committee was being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 Virus.

Mr. Coderre added that in order to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 Virus, the Town has been advised and directed by the Commonwealth to suspend public gatherings, and as such, the Governor's Order suspended the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible *physical* location. Further, all members of public bodies are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely.

Mr. Coderre noted that the Order allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting.

Mr. Coderre noted that members of the public who wish to view the live stream of this meeting may do so by going to "Northborough Remote Meetings on YouTube via the link listed on the agenda. He added that ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law or posted on the agenda. He noted that this meeting will not feature Public Comment.

Mr. Coderre reminded the public that the Board of Selectmen and the Appropriations Committee held a joint Public Hearing on Monday, June 8th. The Appropriations Committee also participated in a joint meeting presentation regarding the FY2021 Budget on June 4th with the Board of Selectmen, Financial Planning Committee and the Northborough K-8 School Committee. He encouraged interested residents to view that presentation, which is available for streaming on the Northborough Local Access website.

Lastly, he indicated that the purpose of tonight's meeting is for the Committee to receive any outstanding information relative to the financial articles on the Town Meeting Warrant and ask any final questions before voting its recommendations.

Mr. Nieber confirmed that the following members and persons anticipated on the agenda were remotely present and could be heard.

Appropriations Committee

George Brenckle

Rick Nieber

Tony Poteete

Janice Hight

Bob D'Amico – Joined the meeting at 7:15pm

School Department

Greg Martineau, School Superintendent

Rebecca Pellegrino, Director of Finance & Operations

Town Staff

John Coderre, Town Administrator

Jason Little, Finance Director

David Parenti, Fire Chief

Kathy Joubert, Town Planner

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 7, 2020 REGULAR MEETING

Mr. Poteete requested that the minutes be amended to reflect that he was absent from the March 7, 2020 Meeting.

Ms. Hight moved the Committee vote to approve the March 7, 2020 Meeting Minutes as amended; Mr. Brenckle seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Brenckle	“aye”	Hight	“aye”
Nieber	“aye”	D'Amico	not yet present
Poteete	“abstain”		

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 12, 2020 REGULAR MEETING

Ms. Hight moved the Committee vote to approve the March 12, 2020 Meeting Minutes; Mr. Poteete seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Brenckle	“aye”	Hight	“aye”
Nieber	“aye”	D'Amico	“aye”
Poteete	“aye”		

TOWN PLANNER PRESENTATION REGARDING COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ARTICLES

Town Planner Kathy Joubert indicated that at the January 9, 2020 and March 5, 2020 Community Preservation Committee (CPC) public hearings, the CPC voted unanimously to recommend the following applications be placed on the 2020 Annual Town Meeting warrant:

Historic Preservation Category:

\$225,300 for debt service associated with the acquisition of the White Cliffs property at 167 Main Street.

\$109,194 for repairs and restoration to the slate roof and chimney masonry and interior painting and molding repairs to the Northborough Free Library.

\$8000 to assist the Historic District Commission with the process of preparing the documents to nominate the Howard Street Burial Ground and Cemetery for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Open Space and Recreation Category:

\$452,225 for the DPW and Recreation Department for the renovation of the Assabet Park Playground which will include removal of existing playground equipment and basketball courts and installation of a poured rubber accessible play surface, new accessible play equipment, shade elements, sitting area, and an open free-play space. The CPC funding is part of a larger project totaling \$555,000 with the other \$102,775 in funding coming from Free Cash – Town Meeting Warrant Article 17.

\$135,000 for the Conservation Commission for a multi-year program to perform weed control measures on Bartlett Pond. The work will improve the health of the pond by decreasing the growth of invasive and nuisance vegetation and will include monitoring, surveying, reporting, permitting, application of herbicide, and mechanical harvesting.

\$26,071 for the Recreation Department for the creation of an 18-hole disc golf course at Edmunds Hill. Ms. Joubert indicated that the Conservation Commission has issued a Cease & Desist Enforcement Order on this project for excessive tree removal. The project developers are scheduled to appear before the Conservation Commission at their meeting on June 29th, but due to the number of items on the agenda, there is a possibility that this item may get rescheduled.

Housing Category:

\$62,350 will be allocated for the Housing Reserve Account.

Administrative Funds:

\$31,000

REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION VOTE ON TOWN MEETING FINANCIAL ARTICLES

Mr. Coderre indicated that during tonight's meeting, the Appropriations Committee will be asked to vote their recommendations on the financial articles for Annual Town Meeting. The votes will provide recommendations on the revised budget and capital articles that were originally included in the Town Meeting Warrant posted on March 23, 2020. The Committee's recommendations will reflect the revisions presented at the joint meeting on June 4th and the public hearing with the Board of Selectmen on June 8th.

Mr. Coderre noted that as a result of the final adjustments to the ARHS revenue budget, the Town's final Assessment will increase 2.73%, or \$334,661. The "Budget in Brief Summary" table on the following page reflects all the final budget revisions anticipated to go to Town Meeting. Below is a summary of the Key Budgets. He added that back in December, the single largest budgetary issue was the escalating ARHS assessment due to shifting enrollment. The Town's assessment was forecasted to increase between 8-9%. With everyone working together the ARHS assessment was down to an increase of 4.36% in the original budget and has since been revised to an increase of just 2.73%.

Key Budgets

- Northborough K-8 Schools increase \$249,286 or 1% to \$25,177,844
- General Government (Town) increases \$144,426 or 1% to \$14,641,062
- Health Insurance increases \$149,958 or 2.6% to \$5,997,041
- WRRS increases \$228,042 or 11.1% to \$2,275,596
- Assabet Valley Vocational HS combined Operating Assessment and debt service is an overall increase \$166,536, or 19.91% to \$1,002,846
 - Operating Assessment increases by \$170,364, or 24.52% to \$865,186 as enrollment increases from 45 to 53 students
 - Debt service associated with the completed renovation project decreases by \$3,828, or -2.71% to \$137,660
- ARHS combined Operating Assessment and Debt Service increases \$345,448 or 2.68% to \$13,219,404
 - Operating Assessment increases by \$334,661, or 2.73% to \$12,587,175 due to shifting enrollment and anticipated reductions in transportation reimbursement and Chapter 70 State Aid
 - ARHS Debt Assessment increases by \$10,787, or 1.74% to \$632,229 and will remain relatively constant until final payment in FY2027

FY2021 Budget in Brief Summary

EXPENDITURES	FY2020 Budget	FY2021 Proposed	Variance	% Change
General Government (Town)	\$14,496,636	\$14,641,062	\$144,426	1.00%
Health Insurance	\$5,847,083	\$5,997,041	\$149,958	2.56%
Retirement Assessment	\$2,047,554	\$2,275,596	\$228,042	11.14%
Schools				
Northborough K-8	\$24,928,558	\$25,177,844	\$249,286	1.00%
Algonquin Reg. HS 9-12	\$12,252,514	\$12,587,175	\$334,661	2.73%
Algonquin Debt Exclusion	\$621,442	\$632,229	\$10,787	1.74%
Assabet Valley	\$694,822	\$865,186	\$170,364	24.52%
Assabet Valley Debt	\$141,488	\$137,660	-\$3,828	-2.71%
Warrant Articles				
Reserve Fund	\$175,000	\$375,000	\$200,000	114.29%
Transfer to Stabilization	\$200,000	\$0	-\$200,000	-100.00%
Free Cash Capital Projects	\$861,167	\$712,775	-\$148,392	-17.23%
Transfer to OPEB Trust	\$550,000	\$0	-\$550,000	-100.00%
Zeh School Debt Service	\$350,578	\$0	-\$350,578	-100.00%
Colburn St. Debt Service	\$62,315	\$59,923	-\$2,393	-3.84%
Library Debt Service	\$364,928	\$354,248	-\$10,681	-2.93%
Senior Center Debt Service	\$394,645	\$380,145	-\$14,500	-3.67%
Lincoln Street Debt Service	\$1,075,875	\$1,051,475	-\$24,400	-2.27%
Fire Station Debt Service	\$0	\$17,098	\$17,098	100.00%
Other Funds	\$952,083	\$755,886	-\$196,197	-20.61%
Adjustments	-\$45,821		\$45,821	-100.00%
Subtotal General Fund	\$65,970,867	\$66,020,342	\$49,475	0.07%
Water Enterprise Funds	\$2,548,680	\$2,600,970	\$52,290	2.05%
Sewer Enterprise Fund	\$2,244,114	\$2,296,295	\$52,181	2.33%
Solid Waste Enterprise Fund	\$933,959	\$873,550	-\$60,409	-6.47%
Subtotal Enterprise Funds	\$5,726,753	\$5,770,815	\$44,062	0.77%
TOTAL ALL FUNDS	\$71,697,620	\$71,791,157	\$93,537	0.13%

Mr. Coderre shared the Budget in Brief summary on the previous page and reviewed each warrant article listed below, which shows the original article amount from March 23, 2020, as well as the final revised figures for the Committee's consideration and recommendation this evening.

<u>Operating Budget Articles</u>				
Article	Purpose	Funding Source	Original Amount	Revised Amount
4	Town Budget - See Appendix	Raise & Appropriate / Free Cash / Transfers	\$ 23,448,710	\$ 22,192,186
5	Water, Sewer, & Solid Waste Enterprise Funds	Enterprise Fund Revenues / Raise & Appropriate / Enterprise Fund Balance	\$ 5,798,965	\$ 5,770,815
6	Northborough K-8 Public Schools	Raise & Appropriate	\$ 25,714,417	\$ 25,177,844
7	Algonquin Regional High School	Raise & Appropriate	\$ 13,418,722	\$ 13,219,404
8	Valley Regional Vocational School District	Raise & Appropriate	\$ 1,002,846	\$ 1,002,846
9	Revolving Funds Annual Limits	Revolving Funds	\$ 910,000	\$ 910,000
10	Appropriations Committee Reserve Fund	Free Cash	\$ 175,000	\$ 375,000
11	Stabilization Fund Contribution	Free Cash	\$ 200,000	\$ -

Mr. Nieber stated that based on Mr. Coderre's review of the budget articles this evening, as well as at the Joint Meetings on June 4th and June 8th, he recommended that rather than going through each article individually by roll call vote, that the Budget articles (4–11), CIP articles (12-24) and CPA articles (30-7) be voted on as three separate motions in order to minimize the number of roll calls vote needed.

Mr. D'Amico moved the Committee vote to recommend approval of the revised Town Meeting Warrant Articles 4-11 as presented; Ms. Hight seconded the motion.

In answer to a question by Mr. Poteete, Mr. Little responded that the amount to be raised and appropriated by taxation for Article 5 is \$337,166 for the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund Subsidy from the General Fund. He added that this amount has not changed from the original budget.

The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Brenckle	"aye"	Hight	"aye"
Nieber	"aye"	D'Amico	"aye"
Poteete	"aye"		

CIP Articles

Mr. Coderre noted that the Committee is tasked with evaluating the articles considered by the Financial Planning Committee for both Capital Articles and those recommended by the Community Preservation Committee. He reviewed each warrant article listed below, which shows the original Article amount from March 23, 2020, as well as the final revised figures for the Committee's consideration and recommendation this evening. Mr. Coderre noted that the Committee previously received detailed presentations on each of the proposed projects by the various departments at the time their operating budgets were also presented. The Financial Planning Committee has since recommended postponement of several capital projects in order to free up funding to deal with recent revenue losses due to COVID-19.

CIP Articles				
Article	Purpose	Funding Source	Original Amount	Revised Amount
12	Police Cruiser Replacements	Free Cash	\$ 98,000	\$ 50,000
13	Town Offices Feasibility	Free Cash	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
14	DPW Wing Mower Replacement	Free Cash	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000
15	DPW Loader Replacement	Free Cash	\$ 240,000	\$ -
16	DPW Highway Garage Generator	Free Cash	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000
17	DPW Assabet Park Accessibility Improvements	Free Cash	\$ 102,775	\$ 102,775
18	DPW Culvert & Drainage Replacement	Free Cash	\$ 250,000	\$ -
19	DPW Dump Truck with Plow	Free Cash	\$ 110,000	\$ -
20	DPW Pickup Truck with Plow	Free Cash	\$ 65,000	\$ -
21	DPW Road Improvements & Maintenance	Free Cash	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
22	Water/Sewer Garage	Enterprise Fund Balance / Borrowing	\$ 900,000	\$ 900,000
23	Water Storage Tank Rehabilitation	Borrowing	\$ 725,000	\$ 725,000
24	MMS Paving & Accessibility Upgrades	Free Cash	\$ 100,000	\$ 50,000

Mr. Nieber moved the Committee vote to recommend approval of the revised Capital Budget Warrant Articles 12-24 as presented; Ms. Hight seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Brenckle	“aye”	Hight	“aye”
Nieber	“aye”	D’Amico	“aye”
Poteete	“aye”		

CPA Articles				
Article	Purpose	Funding Source	Original Amount	Revised Amount
30	DPW Assabet Park Accessibility Improvements	CPA Revenues / CPA Unreserved Fund Balance	\$ 452,225	\$ 452,225
31	Conservation Commission Vegetation Mgmt	CPA Revenues	\$ 135,000	\$ 135,000
32	Recreation Disc Golf Course	CPA Revenues	\$ 26,071	\$ 26,071
33	White Cliffs Debt Service	CPA Revenues / CPA Premium Reserve	\$ 225,300	\$ 225,300
34	Library Repairs	CPA Revenues / CPA Historic Reserve	\$ 109,194	\$ 109,194
35	Howard Street Burial Ground	CPA Revenues	\$ 8,000	\$ 8,000
36	Affordable Housing Reserve	CPA Revenues	\$ 62,350	\$ 62,350
37	CPA Administration	CPA Revenues	\$ 31,000	\$ 31,000

CPA Articles

Following Mr. Coderre’s review of the CPA Articles, Ms. Joubert explained that even though there is a Cease and Desist Order on the Disc Golf Course, Article 32 remains on the warrant as it is expected that the Cease & Desist Order will be rescinded and the project will continue forward.

Mr. Poteete noted that the funding recommendations vote is separate from the Conservation Commission's oversight issues, unless the CPC votes to no longer recommend the project or if the Conservation Commission's issues are not resolved.

Mr. Poteete moved the Committee vote to recommend approval of the Community Preservation Warrant Articles 30-37 as presented; Mr. Brenckle seconded the motion; the roll call was taken as follows:

Brenckle	"aye"	Hight	"aye"
Nieber	"aye"	D'Amico	"aye"
Poteete	"aye"		

Mr. Nieber noted that if, for any reason, Town Meeting cannot be held by the June 30th end of the fiscal year, the Town will prepare a 1/12 budget for the Board of Selectmen's consideration to be approved in accordance with the process outlined in Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020.

Mr. Martineau thanked Mr. Coderre and his team for the commitment and collaboration in developing the FY2021 revised budget. Mr. Little echoed Mr. Martineau's comments and extended his appreciation to everyone involved. Mr. Coderre agreed as well, adding that the relationship and positive culture must be constantly fed by all Boards, Committees and Staff.

Mr. Coderre stated that he will work with the Chair on the Committee's Town Meeting report, which will contain the recommendations voted on this evening. He recommended that the Committee meet again on June 18th to finalize and approve the report.

Lastly, Mr. Coderre briefly updated the Committee regarding the Town Meeting venue discussion that took place at the June 8th Selectmen's Meeting. This discussion has resulted in Town staff looking into holding an outdoor Town Meeting. He added that the current date of June 22nd for Town Meeting may be rescheduled to a later date.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Hight moved the Committee vote to adjourn; Mr. Poteete seconded the motion; the roll call was taken as follows:

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John W. Coderre
Town Administrator

Documents used during meeting:

1. June 11, 2020 Meeting Agenda
2. March 7, 2020 Meeting Minutes
3. March 12, 2020 Meeting Minutes
4. FY2021 Revised Budget Update Memo
5. CPC Memo
6. Information packet – Town Meeting Warrant Articles