

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES – January 27, 2020**

7:00 p.m. - Selectmen's Meeting Room, 63 Main Street, Northborough, MA

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jason Perreault, Chairman  
Dawn Rand, Vice Chairman  
Timothy Kaelin, Clerk  
Leslie Rutan  
Julianne Hirsh

\*Pledge of Allegiance

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JANUARY 13, 2020 REGULAR MEETING**

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2020 meeting as submitted; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

**7:00 p.m. - BILL FRAHER, TOWN AUDITOR**  
Presentation on FY2019 Audit Report.

Bill Fraher, CPA made a presentation to the Board on the completed Final Audit Report for FY2019 that included a summary of revenues and expenditures of the General Fund, use of reserves and budgetary results, status of Town reserves, OPEB liability, OPEB trust and net pension liability, total outstanding long-term debt and Town capital assets. In summary, the Town continues to be in a strong financial position. Mr. Fraher credited the Town's adoption and adherence to comprehensive financial policies, especially the Free Cash and Debt Policies.

Mr. Fraher reviewed his Management Letter comments, which detailed a clean and unqualified audit report. No material weaknesses, no reportable conditions in regard to compliance with laws and regulations and no deficiencies were found. No audit adjustments were required other than to convert to a Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) presentation.

Mr. Coderre stressed how pleased he is with receiving another positive Audit Report. He publicly acknowledged the efforts of Treasurer/Collector Amy Haley, the Department Heads and especially Finance Director Jason Little for his preparation of statements and controls that resulted in an unqualified management letter. He also thanked members of the Board, the Appropriations Committee, Financial Planning Committee and the School Committees for their continued support of the Town's comprehensive fiscal policies and long-run financial planning efforts.

Following the presentation, the Board extended their appreciation to Mr. Coderre, the Financial Team and the Department Heads.

**7:30 p.m. - JOHN CODERRE, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR**

Presentation of the Town's Tenth Consecutive Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Award for FY2020.

Mr. Coderre announced that the Government Finance Officers Association has awarded Northborough its tenth, consecutive Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for its annual budget document for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2019 (FY2020). This is the highest award offered in public budgeting.

During 2019, Northborough provided training sessions on budgeting best practices and long-range financial planning for the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association (MMA), the Association of Town Finance Committees Annual Conference, several individual municipalities and Suffolk University. In part, as a result of Northborough's training and advocacy for the GFOA Award program, several of the more recent Massachusetts recipients either received training by the Town or borrowed liberally from the Town's budget document.

The key significance of this tenth award highlights the Town's commitment to a high level of excellence and continuous improvement. Mr. Coderre thanked the Department Heads and staff, especially Finance Director Jason Little and former Assistant Town Administrator Kim Foster for all their hard work and dedication.

Following the presentation, the Board extended their appreciation to Mr. Coderre and the Financial Team.

**7:45 p.m. - DAVID PARENTI, FIRE CHIEF**

Review of Ambulance Billing Fees.

Mr. Coderre informed the Board that tonight's presentation is to provide information to the Board regarding the current ambulance billing structure and fees and how they relate to the current industry standards. At a future meeting, the Board will consider the recommendations made by the Fire Chief.

Chief Parenti reported that the Northborough Fire Department has conducted a review of all municipal fees for ambulance service. The last time ambulance fees were increased was in 2009. He indicated that the Fire Department currently charges a base fee with additional charges for any specialized skills that are performed. Many communities use a bundle billing method in which all specialized skills are included in the base rates. This is the preferred method advocated by Medicare and the Town's current billing agent.

Chief Parenti's presentation included an overview of the past practice of the ambulance billing, the levels of ambulance billing, a review of the billing rate survey, the last five years of billing data, and current industry standards.

Review of Ambulance Billing Fees Cont. . .

Following his presentation, Chief Parenti recommended the following for the Board's consideration at a future meeting:

- Transition from the current base rate/specialty services method to a bundle billing method. The bundle billing method will allow for more consistent and easier billing with fewer documentation errors, as well as bring the Town into line with Medicare's recommended approach.
- Update the billing fees using the formula of Medicare Rates X 250%. The proposed rates below were arrived at using a combination of survey data from area departments, consultation with the Town's current billing company and an analysis of the departments cost data.

Level	CMS Code	Rate
BLS Emergency Base Rate	A0429	\$1,398
ALS No- Emergency Base Rate	A0426	\$1,048
ALS - 1 Emergency Base Rate	A0427	\$1,660
ALS - 2 Emergency Base Rate	A0433	\$2,402
Mileage	A0425	\$ 35
Paramedic Intercept		\$1,221

- Adopt the following new billing policies.
  - Implement a Town EMS billing policy that allows the waiving of balance billing for unpaid fees for Northborough Residents.
  - Approve the Northborough Fire Department EMS billing write-off policy.
  - Contract with a debt collection organization through the Town's EMS billing company to help collect unpaid fees from non-residents.

Mr. Coderre informed the Board that the information presented by Chief Parenti this evening represents a good balance given that maximum cost recovery is appropriate for these services. He added that, by design, the Federal Medicaid and Medicare programs do not come close to covering the cost of providing services, which is why all EMS providers charge more.

In response to questions from Board members, Chief Parenti further explained how updating the current fee structure will greatly reduce the amount of unintended subsidy to private insurance carriers and non-resident service users. He provided examples on how non-Northborough residents can take advantage of the current EMS billing policy as it relates to balance billing.

Mr. Coderre indicated that the Chief's recommendations will increase the level of cost recovery so that the Town can continue to maintain and provide a high level of service, while pushing some of the burden back onto the insurance carriers.

The Board will formally vote on Chief Parenti's recommendations at the February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## **REPORTS**

### **Julianne Hirsh**

- Attended the Open Meeting Law Training session on January 14<sup>th</sup> at the Library. Thanked Town Clerk Andy Dowd for organizing this training.
- Attended the MMA's Annual Meeting this past weekend. Attended a workshop on Economic Development.
- Noted that the Historic District Commission is looking to gather information on the history of the Northgate neighborhood. Anyone who has information, can reach her by email on the Selectmen's Page of the Town Website.
- Noted that the 2020 Applefest weekend is scheduled one week later than usual due to the Jewish holidays. The 2020 Applefest dates will be September 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>.
- Noted that at the last meeting it was suggested that Town staff give the Board a cost estimate to print notification of the Annual Town Meeting on the outside of the tax bill envelope. Mr. Coderre informed the Board that the cost estimate is approximately \$500.

### **Leslie Rutan**

- Attended the Open Meeting Law training session held at the Library.
- Expressed her concern and frustration that residents are referring to Carney Park as a dog park on social media. Mr. Coderre acknowledged that this continues to be a problem, adding that Animal Control continues to monitor the situation and is issuing tickets when appropriate.
- Noted the passing of Roger Leland and thanked him and his family for everything they have done for the Town. Reminisced about Roger and his presence at Town Meetings.

### **Tim Kaelin, Clerk**

- Noted that he was not able to attend the live Open Meeting Law Training session at the Library, but was able to view it on video that was provided by Town Clerk Andy Dowd. Thanked Mr. Dowd for providing this training opportunity.
- Thanked the Trails Committee and other volunteers for their continuous efforts in maintaining the trails around Town.
- Noted that the Open Space Committee is seeking feedback from the public regarding open space in Town. A survey can be found on the Town website.

### **Dawn Rand, Vice Chair**

- Extended her sympathy to the family and friends of Roger Leland. Thanked him for his many years of service to the Town. Reminisced about how influential Roger was to the Town.
- Thanked the Police and Fire Departments for their professionalism during a recent incident at her dance studio that required an ambulance.

### **Jason Perreault, Chair**

- Congratulated the Fire Department on their receipt of a Senior SAFE Program grant in the amount of \$6,313. Thanked Captain Brillhart for taking the initiative on this grant opportunity.

Jason Perreault Report Cont. . .

- Noted that at their January 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, the Planning Board presented their proposed revisions to the final Master Plan draft. The proposed changes are open for review and written comments from the public will be accepted. Final action on the Master Plan will take place by the Planning Board at their February 18<sup>th</sup> meeting. In the interim, the Master Plan Steering Committee will review the Planning Board's proposed revisions and will provide feedback to the Planning Board for their February 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Noted that it was his honor and privilege to work with Roger Leland over the years. Reminiscid about Roger and all that he meant to the Town. Extended his condolences to Lorraine Leland and her family.

John Coderre

- Noted that Roger Leland spent 30+ years serving the Town in one capacity or another and will be sorely missed. Reminiscid about Roger and all that he did for the Town.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Lisa Maselli of 13 Maple Street was present to express her displeasure with the increased assessment to her property. She also stated her preference for the future relocation of the Town Offices to 4 West Main Street.

**UPDATE ON FY2019 STATE AID**

Mr. Coderre provided an update on the preliminary estimates for State Aid. Governor Baker released his House 2 Budget, which is the Town's first look at potential FY2021 State Aid. As in past years, the FY2021 budget model assumes a 1% increase in State Aid. As anticipated, the impact to Northborough will be minimal, as the Governor's budget as presented would increase Northborough's aid by just 0.89%, the net of increased State Assessments.

Mr. Coderre added that additional information will be forthcoming as the House and Senate take up the budget in the coming months.

**INTERVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**Recommendation for Appointments to the Trustees of Special Benevolent Funds

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to appoint Karen Scopetski to the Board of Trustees of Special Benevolent Funds for a partial two-year term to expire on April 30, 2021, as recommended by the Interview Subcommittee; Selectman Kaelin seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to appoint Marcia Roman to the Board of Trustees of Special Benevolent Funds for a partial three-year term to expire on April 30, 2022, as recommended by the Interview Subcommittee; Selectman Kaelin seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Recommendation for Appointment to the Cultural Council

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to appoint Terry Underwood to the Cultural Council for a three-year term to expire on January 31, 2023, as recommended by the Interview Subcommittee; Selectman Kaelin seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

**REAPPOINTMENT OF BICH-NGAN NGUYES TO THE CULTURAL COUNCIL**

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to reappoint Bich-Ngan Nguyes to the Cultural Council for a three-year term to expire on January 31, 2023; Selectman Rand seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

**EXECUTION OF CEMETERY DEED 1091**

Selectman Kaelin moved the Board vote to execute Cemetery Deed 1091; Selectman Rand seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to adjourn; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Wackell  
Executive Assistant to the  
Board of Selectmen

Documents used during meeting:

1. January 27, 2020 Meeting Agenda
2. January 13, 2020 Meeting Minutes
3. Information packet – FY2019 Audit Report
4. Information packet – GFOA Award
5. Information packet – Ambulance Billing Fees
6. Information packet – FY2019 State Aid Update
7. Interview Subcommittee Recommendations for Appointment
8. Memo – Cultural Council Reappointment
9. Cemetery Deed 1091