

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES – March 23, 2020**

7:00 p.m. - Algonquin Regional High School Library,
79 Bartlett Street, Northborough, MA

Chairman's Introduction to Remote Meeting

Chairman Perreault stated that this Open Meeting of the Board of Selectmen 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.

Chairman Perreault 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.

Chairman Perreault 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. He added that ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law.

Chairman Perreault noted that public comment will only be accepted for the Joint Public Hearing of the Board of Selectmen and Appropriations Committee on the FY2021 proposed budget. He indicated that this meeting is being held by video conference via Zoom as posted on the Agenda on the Town's Website identifying how the public may join.

Meeting Materials

Chairman Perreault noted that all supporting Town Meeting and Budget materials that were provided to members of the Board of Selectmen and Appropriations Committee are available on the Town's website.

Meeting Business Ground Rules

Chairman Perreault covered the ground rules for effective and clear conduct of the business. Each speaker on the agenda will be invited by name to provide comments, questions or motions. He asked that remote participants hold until their name is called.

Chairman Perreault asked those that participated remotely to mute their phone or computer when not speaking and to speak clearly and in a way that helps generate accurate minutes. Those responding were asked to wait until the floor was yielded to them. Members were asked if they wish to respond to the comments of others, to do so through the Chair, taking care to identify themselves.

Meeting Business Ground Rules Cont. . .

Chairman Perreault stated that those citizens that wish to provide public comment at any time during the FY2021 Budget Hearing will be afforded 3 minutes to speak by dialing 1-646-558-8656 and entering Meeting ID 413182184.

Lastly, any votes taken this evening will be done by roll call to ensure that the records of the vote are clear and accurate to the members attending the meeting remotely.

As a preliminary matter, Chairman Perreault confirmed that all members and persons anticipated on the agenda were present and could be heard.

Chairman Perreault called each member of the Board of Selectmen by name and each member of the Board of Selectmen below responded in the affirmative:

Jason Perreault, Chairman – physically present
Dawn Rand, Vice Chairman – physically present
Leslie Rutan – physically present
Timothy Kaelin, Clerk – remotely present
Julianne Hirsh – remotely present

Chairman Perreault called each member of the Appropriations Committee by name and each member of the Appropriations Committee below responded in the affirmative with the exception of Ms. Kelly, who was absent:

Rick Nieber, Vice Chairman – remotely present
George Brenckle – remotely present
Robert D’Amico – remotely present
Janice Hight – remotely present
Anthony Poteete – remotely present

Chairman Perreault called each Staff member by name and each Staff member below responded in the affirmative:

John Coderre, Town Administrator – physically present
William Lyver, Police Chief – physically present
David Parenti, Fire Chief – physically present
Jason Little, Finance Director – physically present
Greg Martineau, School Superintendent – physically present
Kathy Dalglish, Cable Access Director – physically present
Dana Volke, Cable Studio Assistant – physically present

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 9, 2020 REGULAR MEETING

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2020 meeting; Selectman Hirsh seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Rand	“abstain” (Not present at March 9, 2020 Meeting)
Rutan	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Kaelin	“aye”		

7:20 p.m. - JOINT PUBLIC HEARING WITH APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FY2021 Proposed Budget.

Chairman Perreault indicated that following the presentation, comments will be accepted by the Board of Selectmen and Appropriations Committee, followed by comments from the public.

Mr. Coderre reviewed the following FY2021 Budget goals from the December 12, 2019 Financial Trend Monitoring Joint Meeting:

- To protect and improve the Town's Overall Financial Condition
- To develop a budget that is in conformance with the Town's comprehensive financial policies
- To maintain Northborough as an affordable place to live and operate a business
- To protect the Town's long-run solvency beyond the immediate budget cycle

Mr. Coderre reviewed the significant budgetary items, including Health Insurance, Debt Service, State Aid estimates and New Growth figures.

Mr. Coderre reviewed the revenue assumptions for FY2021 as follows:

- Tax Receipts increase 4.75%, or \$2.52 million
- Local Receipts are level funded at \$4.47 million
- State Aid funded at \$5.50 million
- Other Available Funds include \$500,000 in Free Cash to be used in the operating budget per policy target

Mr. Coderre reported that the FY2021 General Fund Operating Budget, including General Government, Northborough K-8 Schools, Regional High School, Assabet Valley Regional High School and Special Warrant Articles is \$68,775,737, or a 4.25% increase over FY2020. All budgets were developed in conformance with the goals and objectives discussed at the December 12, 2019 Financial Trend Monitoring System joint meeting.

Mr. Coderre reported that the overall General Fund budget increase is 4.25% with the proposed budgets for the key departments estimated to increase as follows:

- Northborough K-8 Schools increase by \$785,859 or 3.15% to \$25,714,417
- General Government (Town) increase by \$783,694, or 3.50% to \$23,174,967
- Assabet Valley Vocational High School combined operating assessment and debt service increase by \$166,536, or 19.91% to \$1,002,846
- Algonquin Regional High School (ARHS) combined operating assessment and debt service increase by \$544,766, or 4.23% to \$13,418,722

JOINT PUBLIC HEARING CONT. . .

The General Government Highlights of the FY2021 Budget include the following:

- All FY2021 Collective Bargaining Agreements are settled for 2% Cost of Living Increase
- Police Education incentives increase \$55,622 per new contract
- DPW MS4 Stormwater permit related expenses increase by \$40,000
- Vacant Assistant DPW Director position funding reallocated to new Heavy Equipment Operator
- Public Buildings budget includes full year funding for new Facilities Manager position
- Recreation program cancellations result in reduced revolving fund revenue
- Family Youth Services up 10.38%, or \$15,885 with new mental health referral service contract
- Solid Waste Enterprise budget decreases by 6.47% based on new contract and general fund subsidy decreases \$80,000 while bag fees remain unchanged
- Worcester Regional Retirement System Assessment up 11%, or \$228,042 in accordance with approved plan to be fully funded by 2035
- Health Insurance budget increases 2.56%, or \$149,958
- Includes \$550,000 appropriation into the OPEB Trust Fund
- Pavement Management Plan requires minimum of \$1.1 million annually (State Chapter 90 funds approximately \$500,000; Public Works operating budget includes \$300,000; and FY2021 Capital Budget includes \$300,000 in Free Cash for roadway improvements)

In summary, the FY2021 Budget supports core departmental services and missions, protects long-run solvency by addressing unfunded liabilities and invests in equipment, facilities and infrastructure. It is within the budgetary increase allowable under limits of Proposition 2½ and Town policies while endeavoring to minimize the tax impact on residents.

Mr. Coderre acknowledged that due to the Covid-19 crisis, budget adjustments will be required, but it is still too early to know the specifics or magnitude. The purpose of the budget hearing this evening is to put a stake in the ground for a level service budget from which adjustments will need to be made as more information becomes available.

Comments were first heard from the Appropriations Committee, where it was acknowledged that the Covid-19 crisis will likely impact the budget. Mr. Coderre reiterated that adjustments will need to be made in advance of Town Meeting, which is likely to be postponed. Furthermore, budget adjustments will likely occur in the Fall, but with so many unknowns, he is not prepared to discuss any reductions in staff or services at this point in time.

Comments from the Board of Selectmen were similar to those of the Appropriations Committee, focusing on how the Covid-19 crisis will play out and what its effect will be on the budget presented this evening. Mr. Coderre assured everyone that any significant

JOINT PUBLIC HEARING CONT. . .

budget adjustments would go through the same process with the appropriate Boards and Committees and would have to ultimately be approved by Town Meeting.

Chairman Perreault invited questions and comments from the public, asking that when they are called upon, they identify their names and addresses. Each public commentator was afforded 3 minutes to speak.

Lisa Maselli of 13 Maple Street called to express her concerns on what will be done to help residents pay their taxes in light of the Covid-19 crisis. She added that discussions about budget reductions, such as fleet replacements and personnel should begin now.

Millie Milton of 50 Fay Lane called to say that in light of the Covid-19 crisis, the budget presented this evening may not be in the Town's best interest.

Laura Ziton of 17 Franklin Circle called to express her appreciation to the School Superintendent and their teachers for their support to the students and their families during these uncertain times.

Mr. Coderre again reiterated that the FY2021 proposed budget will continue to be reviewed and adjusted as more information becomes available, adding that it is still too soon to consider specific reductions based upon the limited data available.

At 7:22 p.m., Chairman Perreault closed the Public Hearing.

At 7:22 p.m., Mr. D'Amico moved the Appropriations Committee vote to adjourn from the Joint Public Hearing; Mr. Poteete seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Rick Nieber	"aye"	George Brenckle	"aye"
Robert D'Amico	"aye"	Janice Hight	"aye"
Anthony Poteete	"aye"		

Joint Meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

REPORTS

In an effort to expedite the meeting, Chairman Perreault asked that reports be kept to that of an urgent or time sensitive nature.

Julianne Hirsh

- No report.

Leslie Rutan

- Reminded the public to practice social distancing.

Tim Kaelin, Clerk

- No report.

Dawn Rand, Vice Chair

- No report.

Jason Perreault, Chair

- No report.

John Coderre

- No report.

Chairman Perreault noted that the Public Comments portion of the agenda has been suspended for this meeting, but that he expected and intended to restore it at a future meeting.

DECLARATION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY DUE TO COVID-19

Mr. Coderre indicated that although this is not required, the decision to declare a local state of emergency will send a clear message to the community that we are taking the Covid-19 crisis seriously. It will also allow the Town to participate fully in any funding that becomes available from the Federal and State government.

Following an update on the Town's efforts in keeping the community safe from the Covid-19 virus, Mr. Coderre read the Emergency Declaration in its entirety.

Selectman Hirsh encouraged residents to sign up for the CodeRED service through the Town website to receive important emergency notifications. Mr. Coderre added that residents can also subscribe to Town News to receive important updates as they are added to the Town Website. Selectman Rutan requested that Covid-19 updates be included on future Selectmen agendas. Chairman Perreault assured the public that informational updates will continue to be provided and asked the public to be patient.

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to approve and execute the Emergency Declaration declaring that as of 12:00AM, March 24, 2020 a State of Emergency exists in the Town of Northborough due to the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19. This Declaration of Emergency shall remain in effect until further notice is given, pursuant to the Board's judgment that the conditions leading to this declaration no longer exist; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	"aye"	Rand	"aye"
Rutan	"aye"	Perreault	"aye"
Kaelin	"aye"		

APPROVE/EXECUTE WARRANT FOR ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Mr. Coderre indicated that anticipated actions by the State will likely allow communities to extend the date of Town Meeting. The public hearing this evening, along with the approval and execution of the Annual Town Meeting warrant, will allow the Town to extend the date of the Annual Town Meeting once the proposed laws are enacted by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

APPROVE/EXECUTE WARRANT FOR ANNUAL TOWN MEETING CONT. . .

Mr. Coderre stressed that the budget and warrant articles presented this evening can be adjusted down at Town Meeting as needed, but not upward, adding the importance of having a clear starting point for a level service budget from which any necessary reductions can be made moving forward.

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to approve the Annual Town Meeting Warrant as presented; and further that the warrant be posted as required by Town Code 1-80-030 no later than April 13, 2020; Selectman Rand seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Rand	“aye”
Rutan	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Kaelin	“aye”		

APPROVE/EXECUTE WARRANT FOR ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION

Mr. Coderre indicated that pending actions by the State will allow communities to postpone their Annual Town Election as appropriate. With the Board’s approval and execution of the Town Election Warrant this evening, the Town will be in a position to extend the date further as authorized by the State.

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to approve and execute the Warrant for the May 12, 2020 Annual Town Election as presented; Selectman Rand seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Rand	“aye”
Rutan	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Kaelin	“aye”		

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to adjourn; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Rand	“aye”
Rutan	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Kaelin	“aye”		

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Wackell
Executive Assistant to the
Board of Selectmen

Documents used during meeting:

1. March 23, 2020 Meeting Agenda
2. March 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes
3. FY2021 Proposed Budget presentation
4. Emergency Declaration
5. Information packet – COVID-19 Planning for Town Meeting and Town Election Warrants
6. Town Election Warrant
7. Town Meeting Warrant