

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES – March 22, 2021**

7:00 p.m. - Introduction to Remote Meeting

Vice Chairman Kaelin 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.

Vice Chairman Kaelin 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.

Vice Chairman Kaelin 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. Vice Chairman Kaelin noted that this meeting will allow for Public Comment only under the Joint Budget Hearing and the Public Comment portion of the agenda. He indicated the various ways that the public may view or participate in this meeting as listed on the posted agenda.

Meeting Business Ground Rules

Vice Chairman Kaelin covered the ground rules for effective and clear conduct of the business. He asked members of the Board to mute their phone or computer when not speaking and to speak clearly and in a way that helps generate accurate meeting minutes. He will go through the items on the agenda. Following presentations, Board members will be offered an opportunity to speak, followed by staff members answering any questions, if necessary. 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 Vice Chair, taking care to identify themselves.

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.

Vice Chairman Kaelin confirmed that the following members and persons anticipated on the agenda were remotely present and could be heard:

Board of Selectmen

Jason Perreault, Chair  
Timothy Kaelin, Vice Chair  
Leslie Rutan, Clerk  
T. Scott Rogers

Others

John Coderre, Town Administrator  
Rebecca Meekins, Assistant Town Administrator  
David Parenti, Fire Chief  
William Lyver, Police Chief  
Scott Charpentier, DPW Director

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 8, 2021 MEETING**

Selectman Rogers moved the Board vote to approve the March 8, 2021 meeting minutes as submitted, Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Rogers	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Rutan	“aye”	Kaelin	“aye”

**7:00 p.m. - JEFFREY McCARTHY D/B/A YOAGIES HIP HOAGIES**

To consider an application for a Common Victualler License as submitted by Jeffrey McCarthy d/b/a Yoagies Hip Hoagies for premises at 309 Main Street.

Jeffrey McCarthy was remotely present to request a Common Victualler license for Yoagies Hip Hoagies for premises located at 309 Main Street (formerly The Texas BBQ). He informed the Board that the existing building will be used for storage and food preparation for a seasonal Food Truck to be located adjacent to the building. The license is needed for the outside picnic tables only. There is no seating inside the building.

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to approve the application for a Common Victualler License as submitted by Jeffrey McCarthy d/b/a Yoagies Hip Hoagies for premises located at 309 Main Street with the condition that the licensee receive satisfactory inspections by the Building, Fire and Health Departments; Selectman Rogers seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Rogers	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Rutan	“aye”	Kaelin	“aye”

**7:05 p.m. - BILL FRAHER, TOWN AUDITOR**

Presentation on FY2020 Audit Report.

Bill Fraher, CPA was remotely present and made a presentation to the Board on the completed Final Audit Report for FY2020. 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 audit with no material weaknesses or deficiencies being found. He stressed the fact that the FY2020 audit results for Northborough is excellent compared to other communities, especially considering the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

Mr. Fraher’s presentation included exceptional five-year summaries of the following, all of which have a positive impact on future bond ratings and investments:

- General Fund revenues and expenditures
- Use of Free Cash
- Status of Town Reserves
- Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB)
- Outstanding long-term debt
- Capital assets

In response to a question from Selectman Rutan, Mr. Fraher assured the Board that the Town's progressive contributions to the OPEB Trust Fund will not only help in the long run to lower the Town's liability, but the actuarial assumptions are also more favorable as the Trust Fund continues to grow.

Mr. Coderre stressed how pleased he is with receiving another positive Audit Report. He publicly acknowledged the efforts of the Financial Team, 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.

Members of the Board thanked Mr. Fraher for his presentation and also thanked Mr. Coderre, Mr. Little and the financial team for their efforts.

**7:40 p.m. - JOINT PUBLIC HEARING - BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**  
FY2022 Proposed Budget.

Mr. Nieber called the meeting of the Appropriations Committee to order and confirmed that the following members were remotely present and could be heard:

Rick Nieber  
Bob D'Amico  
Anthony Poteete  
George Brenckle  
Janice Hight

Mr. Coderre briefly reviewed the events of FY2021 as follows:

- April 27, 2020 Town Meeting delayed until July 18, 2021
- Postponed Capital Projects and used \$378,000 in Free Cash to offset anticipated revenue reductions
- Final State FY2021 Budget delayed 6 months but ultimately level funded State Aid
- Final FY2021 Town Budget and tax rate approved November 23<sup>rd</sup> using level State Aid estimate, resulting in an Average Single-Family Home tax bill reduction of \$65 in FY2021

Mr. Coderre reviewed the following FY2022 Budget Assumptions as follows:

- Tax increase limited to Prop 2½ (no levy capacity used)
- State Aid per Governor's January 27<sup>th</sup> Budget increases 1.6%
- Local Receipts increase 8.7% based on actuals
- No financial reserves used beyond \$500K in Free Cash per Town policy
- No contribution to OPEB Trust Fund for just FY2022
- No contribution to Stabilization Fund for just FY2022
- Federal Aid received to offset pandemic expenses could have a positive impact on the FY2022 Budget, but details are unknown

Mr. Coderre noted that the primary factors influencing the FY2022 Budget are the pace and depth of the economic recovery, service delivery impacts of the “new normal” and the potential receipt of additional Federal assistance. He reviewed the revenue assumptions for FY2022 as follows:

- Tax Receipts increase 2.9%, or \$2.52 million
- Local Receipts increase 8.7% to \$4.17 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 reviewed the FY2022 State Aid Forecasts as follows:

- December 15, 2020 State Revenue Consensus Hearing forecast agreed on a 3.5% increase
- After an initial economic boost from vaccination efforts, a slow economic recovery is expected
- Governor’s FY2022 Budget released January 27<sup>th</sup> includes 1.6% increase for Northborough
- Any State Aid received above the Town’s estimate can only be used to reduce taxes

Mr. Coderre reviewed Federal Assistance in response to COVID-19, stating that the deadline for use of the \$1.3 million in the first round Coronavirus Relief Fund is December 31, 2021. To date approximately \$500,000 of this funding has been spent or is committed. A large amount of this was used by the School Department for a weekly testing program for students and all school and municipal staff. He reminded the Board that these funds cannot be used for general revenue replacement. He added that the Federal Government’s \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act will give Northborough an estimated \$4.42 million in Direct Aid. It appears that some limited portion of these funds can be used for revenue replacement and needed capital projects. He added that the funds are expected to be disbursed in two rounds, one in April or May of this year and another in March of next year. Until the Federal Treasury Department provides detailed guidance, Town’s can only speculate on exactly how the funds can be used.

Mr. Coderre reported that the FY2022 General Fund Operating Budget, including General Government, Northborough K-8 Schools, Regional High School, Assabet Valley Regional High School and Special Warrant Articles is \$67,726,437, or a 2.24% increase over FY2021. All budgets were developed in conformance with the goals and objectives discussed at the January 14, 2021 Financial Trend Monitoring System joint meeting and are in compliance with the Town’s comprehensive financial policies.

Mr. Coderre reported that the overall General Fund budget increase of 2.24% includes the proposed budgets for the key departments, which are proposed to increase as follows:

- Northborough K-8 Schools increase by \$621,834 or 2.47% to \$25,799,678
- General Government (Town) increase by \$725,911, or 3.17% to \$23,639,610
- Assabet Valley Vocational High School combined operating assessment and debt service increase by \$65,644, or 6.55% to \$1,068,490
- Algonquin Regional High School (ARHS) combined operating assessment and debt service increase by \$433,310, or 3.28% to \$13,652,714

The General Government Highlights of the FY2022 Budget include the following:

- All FY2022 Collective Bargaining Agreements are settled for 2% COLA.
- Public Buildings budget includes \$92,616 for a new Facilities Manager position. This position was supported unanimously by the Board of Selectmen and the Appropriations Committee last year, but was cut due to the impacts of the pandemic.
- Recreation's 2 full-time positions included in General Fund pending recovery of revolving fund program fees.
- Family & Youth Services includes \$15,500 for INTERFACE mental health referral service based on increasing demands due to the pandemic.
- Library Books & Materials Budget increased by \$30,000. This was previously cut in FY2021 and the FY2022 increase is being offset by some reductions in personnel expenses.
- Includes \$38,500 for tuition and transportation for student attending Norfolk Agricultural High School.
- Worcester Regional Retirement System Assessment up 8.57%, or \$195,005. Employees hired after 1996 are essentially self-funding their retirement. The high assessments are primarily needed to pay for the underfunding of the system prior to 1996.
- Health Insurance Budget increases only 2.10%, or \$125,783. This is significant news and is directly related to consistently being able to work with employees on Design Plan changes over the past several years.
- Pavement Management Plan requires minimum of \$1.1 million annually. The Town's top legislative priority is the need for increased funding of the Chapter 90 State Transportation Funding Program for eligible roadway improvement projects that will maintain the Town's infrastructure such as roadway construction and repairs. State Chapter 90 Transportation Funds include approximately \$500,000, the Public Works operating budget includes \$300,000 and the FY2022 Capital Budget includes \$310,000 in Free Cash for roadway improvements. This combined FY2022 funding provides for the target of \$1.1 million.

Mr. Coderre noted that the FY2022 estimated tax impact is \$290 (3.7%) on an average single-family home value of \$484,504. The tax impact is based on a 5% estimated increase in FY2021 on the single-family home value of \$461,432. He added that the tax impact will likely be less once more detail regarding the new Federal Assistance is known.

In summary, the FY2022 Budget is within the confines of Proposition 2½ and complies with all Town polices while endeavoring to minimize the tax impact on residents. It supports core departmental services and missions, eliminates the FY2021 Financial Reserve subsidy, invests in equipment, facilities and infrastructure while not deferring capital costs.

Selectman Kaelin thanked Mr. Coderre and Town staff for their efforts, adding that the \$260 tax increase less the \$65 tax reduction in FY2021 averages out to an approximate tax increase of just \$100 over the last two years. This is outstanding considering the effects that the pandemic has had on the economy.

Selectman Rutan thanked Mr. Coderre for his presentation and asked about the Facilities Manager position? Mr. Coderre responded that the Facilities Manager will be responsible for the preventative maintenance of all municipal buildings and would drive the bid specification process and grant writing for building projects, which has historically been done by the Administrative Office. The Facilities Manager would also work on capital projects, green communities

improvement projects, as well as other building projects as needed. He added that this position is long overdue. He reminded the Board that the upcoming workload includes the White Cliffs property, which requires a significant amount of attention, the Town Hall Feasibility Study and the new fire station project.

In response to a question by Selectman Rutan, Mr. Coderre indicated that the amount of accounting, tracking and paperwork involved in reporting expenditures from the Coronavirus Relief Fund is overwhelming. He expects it to be the same for reporting expenditures from the American Rescue Plan Act, although it remains to be seen how this latest relief package will work.

Mr. Nieber noted that the Appropriations Committee has heard presentations on everything that was presented this evening with the exception of the latest Federal Relief Package. He invited the public to view the Appropriations Committee meeting on Northborough Remote Meeting on YouTube on April 1<sup>st</sup> where they will review the Town Meeting Warrant Articles and will vote on their recommendations.

Mr. Coderre noted that the purpose of tonight's Joint Budget Hearing is to allow an opportunity to hear public comment prior to the Appropriations Committee voting their recommendations.

Selectman Kaelin invited questions and comments on the Budget Hearing from the public, asking that when they are called upon, they provide their full names and addresses. Each public commentator will be afforded 3 minutes to speak.

Kerri Martinek of 16 Hemlock Drive asked if there will be any funds set aside for use by the Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC)? Mr. Coderre responded that \$10,000 is included in the Planning Department's Operating Budget for consulting services. He added that placeholders have been added in the Capital Plan for any projects that come from the MPIC that are of a capital nature.

Laura Zitton of 17 Franklin Circle asked for a status update on the sale of the old Fire Station at 13 Church Street. Mr. Coderre responded that because Town staff has been extremely busy with Covid-19 response efforts, including vaccination clinics, this project will be considered sometime during the Spring months. Ms. Zitton asked for a status update on the Feasibility Study for the Town Offices. Mr. Coderre responded that this project has been delayed due to the absence of an Assistant Town Administrator and Health Agent during the first six months of the pandemic. He added that Assistant Town Administrator Becca Meekins will begin working on both of these projects, among many others following this year's annual town meeting. Mr. Coderre added that the option to take back the Old Town Hall at 4 West Main Street is set to begin in May of 2022.

Kristin Wixted of 2 Stirrup Brook Lane asked if the budget includes funding for an additional police officer to deal with the increasing traffic in Town. Mr. Coderre responded that there are no plans to add an additional police officer, adding that a comprehensive staffing study was conducted several years ago with a full analysis of the Police Department, at which time several police officers were added. At the request of Ms. Wixted, Mr. Coderre explained that OPEB stands for Other Post-Employment Benefits. Starting several years ago, Cities and Towns are now required to report

their OPEB Liability, and as a result, the Town created a Trust Fund to offset the unfunded liability of health insurance benefits for retirees. He noted that an annual contribution of \$500,000 is allocated to the OPEB Trust Fund, adding that this annual contribution was postponed in the FY2022 Budget, due to the pandemic. He expects that the annual contribution will return in the FY2023 Budget.

Laura Ziton of 17 Franklin Circle asked how the approved funding for the Town Offices Feasibility Study relates to taxes? Also, is there is a specific timeline that projects need to be completed once they are approved at Town Meeting? Mr. Coderre responded that this project was approved using Free Cash as a one-time revenue source and does not have any additional impact on taxes. He added that his office will begin working on this project with the goal of making a decision of how to move forward sometime in the Fall of this year.

There were no more public comments.

Selectman Rogers moved the Board vote to close the public hearing at 8:50pm; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Rogers	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Rutan	“aye”	Kaelin	“aye”

Mr. Nieber adjourned the Appropriations Committee from the public hearing at 8:50pm.

**8:50 p.m. - KRISTIN BLACK, HEALTH AGENT**  
COVID-19 Update.

Health Agent Kristin Black’s COVID-19 update, which can be found on the Health Department page of the Town website, included updates on the following:

- Current Case Counts
- Reopening and Travel Advisory
- Vaccination Schedule for Remaining Groups
- Local Vaccine Clinics at the Senior Center
- Regional Vaccination Clinic

The Board thanked Ms. Black for her continued efforts and for tonight’s update.

## **REPORTS**

### **T. Scott Rogers**

- Noted that the Munchie Madness event hosted by the Community Affairs Committee (CAC) will continue through April 5<sup>th</sup>. Those who dine-in or take-out at any Northborough restaurant will be eligible to receive a prize. More information can be found on the CAC Website and Facebook Page. The CAC continues to plan for monthly events, including the annual Town Clean-Up.
- Attended a recent meeting of the Regional School Committee where they welcomed a new Chief Information Officer/Chief Information Security Officer. They also discussed their efforts regarding diversity and inclusion.

- Attended a recent presentation on Civil Discourse by the Massachusetts Municipal Association. This served as a reminder that the Board of Selectmen is doing a good job setting the tone for the standard of conduct, which flows to other Boards and Committees, as well as Town staff. He has seen some toxic communication through emails and social media and asked everyone to treat their neighbors and fellow volunteers with respect.

#### Leslie Rutan, Clerk

- Extended best wishes to parents, faculty and students as the schools plan to return to in-person learning.
- Extended her appreciation to Girl Scout Troop 356 for their efforts to support our community over the years and especially for donating their remaining \$1900 to the Northborough Food Pantry after recently disbanding.
- Read a recent post from social media thanking the DPW and Police Departments for their quick response in removing a tree limb that was dangling over Route 135.

#### Jason Perreault, Chair

- Thanked Selectman Kaelin for conducting tonight's meeting while he is feeling under the weather.
- Thanked Town staff for their enormous efforts that resulted in another pristine audit, for their preparation of the budget leading up to tonight's budget hearing and for developing the Town Meeting Warrant for the Board's consideration this evening. He also thanked Health Agent Kirstin Black for her continued Covid-19 updates and her efforts, along with other Town staff in coordinating local vaccination clinics and a future regional clinic. He reminded residents of the heavy demand that is placed on Town staff, noting that the extra workload goes well beyond their normal day-to-day routines. He extended his appreciation to everyone that is stepping up and putting in the extra effort.

#### Tim Kaelin, Vice Chair

- Thanked Town staff for the quality of work that they produce year after year, and especially this year. From his professional experience, he understands that the amount of work and effort to financially run an organization of this size is tremendous. He added how impressed he always is with the outcome of their efforts.
- Noted that the Diversity & Inclusion Committee continues to meet and is making great progress. He thanked the Committee members for working over the weekend to issue a formal statement standing in solidarity with the Asian-American and Pacific Islanders Community. The Statement, which he read in its entirety, can be found on the Town website.

#### John Coderre

- No report.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Selectman Kaelin noted that the Public Comment portion of the agenda allows for the public to provide input, comments, questions, or concerns. Those who wish to speak under Public Comment will be asked to provide their full name and address. Public comment will be limited to 3 minutes per person.



Kristin Wixted of 2 Stirrup Brook Lane requested confirmation that the Board of Selectmen is in receipt of a petition regarding the upcoming appointments/reappointments to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Chairman Perreault confirmed receipt.

### **PROPOSED ALTERATION TO LAYOUT OF KING STREET**

Mr. Rashid Sheik was remotely present along with his attorney Spencer Holland.

Town Engineer Fred Litchfield informed the Board that Mr. Rashid Sheik, Trustee of ZHS Trust received a Site Plan Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) on March 27, 2018 for an Assisted Living Facility to be constructed on his property at 39-43 King Street. As part of the ZBA approval, improved access was required to be constructed from Southwest Cutoff to King Street over property at 38 King Street, which is also owned by ZHS Trust. He noted that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) presented this evening has been approved by Town Counsel. The MOU outlines the responsibilities and process necessary for the developer to perform the work required to alter the access from the State Highway, (Southwest Cutoff) to a Town Road, (King Street) in order to improve access to his project at 39-43 King Street in accordance with ZBA's decision.

Mr. Litchfield indicated that the developer would build a new access point on King Street in accordance with the approved plan. The Trust would then submit a request to the Board of Selectmen for the alteration of the Town layout of King Street at the next available Town Meeting. If approved at Town Meeting, the Board of Selectmen would revise the traffic pattern on a portion of King Street making it one way. The Town would then be responsible for maintaining the newly altered King Street as a public way going forward.

Selectman Rutan asked if the Fire Department was involved in the planning process to be sure that safety vehicles can safely enter and exit through the newly designed layout? Chief Parenti responded that the Fire Department was involved from the beginning. Mr. Charpentier added that there were two review periods during the design process that allowed input from the Fire, Police, DPW and Engineering Departments, as well as Mass Highway to be sure that it meets the needs of the residents and neighbors. He added that public outreach to the neighbors living on and around King Street resulted in positive feedback.

Mr. Shaikh thanked Town staff for their efforts and due diligence in moving this project forward. Attorney Holland added that this project will create significant traffic safety improvements at no cost to the Town. Selectman Rutan thanked everyone for working together, adding that she is looking forward to this project as she looks at this area as the entryway into the Town's downtown business area.

Selectman Rogers moved the Board vote to approve and execute the Memorandum of Understanding between the Town and Rashid Shaikh, Trustee of ZHS Trust for the proposed alteration of the Layout of King Street; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Rogers	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Rutan	“aye”	Kaelin	“aye”

**APPROVE/EXECUTE MAY 1, 2021 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT**

Mr. Coderre informed the Board that tonight's draft Town Meeting Warrant is the same as what was presented at the Board's March 8<sup>th</sup> meeting with the exception of Article 39, which was added in order to give the Board of Selectmen the authority to restrict Compression (Jake) Brake Use on a Town road through a public hearing process. In answer to a question from Selectman Rogers, Mr. Coderre stated that if a request for a Compression Brake restriction is approved through the public hearing process, signage would be installed and the restriction would then be enforceable by the Police Department.

Mr. Coderre noted that the Warrant as presented this evening includes the budget information (including tables) and handouts for amendments to the personnel bylaw and the stormwater management bylaw. The complete Warrant that is prepared for the Annual Town Meeting will include motions for each article, as well as the final reports of the Financial Planning and Appropriations Committees.

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to approve and execute the May 1, 2021 Annual Town Meeting Warrant; Selectman Rogers seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Rogers	"aye"	Perreault	"aye"
Rutan	"aye"	Kaelin	"aye"

**APPROVE/EXECUTE MAY 11, 2021 ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION WARRANT**

Selectman Rogers moved the Board vote to approve and execute the May 11, 2021 Annual Town Election Warrant; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Rogers	"aye"	Perreault	"aye"
Rutan	"aye"	Kaelin	"aye"

**OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

The open meeting ended at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Diane M. Wackell  
Executive Assistant to the  
Board of Selectmen

Documents used during meeting:

1. March 22, 2021 Meeting Agenda
2. March 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes
3. Information packet – Common Victualler Application
4. Information packet – FY2020 Audit Report
5. Information packet – Joint Budget Hearing
6. COVID-19 Update Presentation
7. Information packet – Layout of King Street
8. Annual Town Meeting Warrant
9. Annual Town Election Warrant