

Norfolk Board of Selectmen's Open Session Meeting Minutes February 21, 2019

Present: Kevin Kalkut; Jim Lehan; Todd Lindmark, Interim Town Administrator; and Susan Jacobson, Executive Assistant

The meeting was held in Room 124, Town Hall. Jim Lehan called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. He announced that this meeting is being both video and audio taped. All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Robert St. John, Candidate for Conservation Commission

Mr. St. John was present to discuss his application for a position on the Conservation Commission and the potential reclusion issues that may arise because he is a resident of Lake Street. Jim said one of the reasons he wanted to have Mr. St. John to come in and speak with the Board was to be sure that he had a clear understanding of what he could and could not participate in. He cannot participate in any of the hearings of Lake Street from either the Board or the audience. Mr. St. John said he has issues with the Town at the moment. He has tried to make that clear and he would encourage the Town to include him in the conversation rather than keep him away. Jim said the Town cannot do that. Mr. St. John said that he would have to wait because he has to participate. Mr. St. John said his whole career has been expediting the project. Jim said he has a wonderful resume and he would be great. Jim asked if his request was to wait until the Lake Street issues are resolved. Mr. St. John stated he will wait and that he must protect his property. The Board did not want any conflicts to arise out of his appointment.

Barry Lariviere, Assistant Director-DPW, Budget Discussion

Barry presented the Budget for Fiscal Year 2020. Kevin said his involvement with the DPW budget has been mainly to stay away; the group has done a great job. Barry discussed the increase of each department. Water budget went down and Administration went up. Highway went up 14% on contractual obligations. Mr. Vito's retirement has made them begin to prepare to outsource some items. Snow and Ice will remain the same. Regarding the Water Enterprise Fund, there is a decrease. Barry is focusing more on the day to day operations but is still involved with water.

They are having an assessment on the waste water treatments. Jim asked if any decisions had been made on re-arranging the distribution/allocations. Barry said that he is working on the process and trying to make some head way. Jim asked if there is any potential on taking it down Main Street towards Dunkin Donuts. Barry said that he would like to get all of the parties together and to see how to move forward with it. Some members are not paying their bills on time and not participating. All users would have to agree to allow the DPW to make the allocations. The most important thing is to take the five contracts and turn it into one. Barry said that the contractor is Kadash Excavation LLC. He provides a tremendous amount of support to their operations. The DPW is looking to extend his contract for two additional years. Kevin asked what he assists with during the winter. Barry said he is with them all year and is a wonderful asset. He is mobile and gets the job done.

A motion was made by Kevin Kalkut to extend the Contract for Equipment Rentals for Drainage, Pavement Preparation, Grading and General Site Work, and; Water Services to Include On-Call Emergency Work, to R. Kadash Excavation LLC for the period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 with an addition to go to 2020. Jim seconded, and it was so voted. All were in favor.

Jim asked the audience what discussion they were here for so we can move it forward. They were here to discuss the Real Estate Tax Rate with regard to Pin Oaks and River's Edge. Jim explained that the property values went up 6%. Jim explained that it took 8 years for property values to get back to where they were (from 2008 to 2016); and this was all approved by the State. Since 2016 we have had some good growth and property values have increased. Jim said he met with the Assessor and part of it has to do with resales. Jim used his own street as an example. They have built 9 new homes and his taxes have gone up \$1,000 as a result. Condo's that were purchased in the \$400,000 range have gone up to \$600,000 now and some in Boyd's are selling for \$700,000. It appears that while the property values went up last year, most of the values went down and there is no explanation for that. They have a new team and when they went out and re-assessed, the values went down. Condo's valued at \$533,000 the following year should have gone up; however, they went down to \$520,000. This year it went up to close to \$600,000. Jim said we are looking into it. Jim said all should have the Assessors come into their homes and have them re-assess the property. That will get an accurate assessment of the property. Jim wanted them to know that it could go up or down. Jim said this is the most current information he has at this point. Larry Sullivan of Margauxs Way (Pin Oaks) stated for the record that the residents of Pin Oaks and River's Edge pay for the services that would otherwise be provided by the Town. He itemized the services.

Jim explained that the State mandates what can and cannot be done. He also explained that developer's roads are not accepted roads. The developers maintain those roads. The roads are not wide enough to be accepted. The DOR certified the numbers. A gentlemen from the audience said two individuals came to his home and he asked what the next step is. Jim said the Assessors will be getting back to him with any adjustments. Jim said if they have visited the property they will send them out a correction. Andy Bakinowski of the Board of Assessors introduced himself. He said five years ago Pin Oaks filed 30 abatements. Much of the information was incorrect and they have corrected it if your inspection was done as abatement. Andy said some people will say they are overpriced. Andy said that we have had a couple of times that new growth has skewed numbers. We may see a ripple effect if it is acceptable to the State. Andy said everyone should check their cards. A woman in the audience said their homes are not as new as River's Edge. Why are they being charged the same as the new homes are being charged? The value of Pin Oaks is not yet what they paid for them. In 2018 Pin Oaks had a number of sales. They had no sales in 2017. She stated that they have gone down not up. River's Edge is selling more rapidly. Andy explained that neighborhoods have multipliers. What can also drive it is that there is no developable land out there. Board of Assessors gets the information from the Building Department and if it's incorrect and you don't let them in, assumptions are made. Andy said Norfolk is becoming an expensive place to live.

There was continued discussion. The residents of Pin Oaks feel that River's Edge killed their values. They were not able to get what they paid for them. They have gone up 14%. There was general discussion about what types of items cause higher taxes.

Consideration of Acceptance of Deed and Grant of Easements for Norway Farms Drive LLC

A motion was made by Kevin Kalkut to accept the deed grant and easement for Norway Farms Drive LLC. It was seconded by Jim Lehan and so moved. All were in favor.

Consideration of Request by NCTV to Use Town Hill for a Fundraiser

A motion was made by Kevin Kalkut to allow NCTV to use Town Hill for a fundraiser on April 27th from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It was seconded by Jim Lehan, and so moved. All were in favor.

Consideration of Appointment of the Fire Chief

Kevin stated that he met with Peter Petruchick and it went very well. He learned about Peter's 40 years of experience in Town and his vision for the department. Kevin and Peter discussed Kevin's concerns about Peter's tenure and how close he is to retirement. Kevin said one of the big things that stood out in his mind was that Peter was dedicated to making the product put out to residents as high a quality as possible. Kevin's only reservation was the possible long term financial impact to the Town in terms of Peter's pension. However, after discussing this in detail with Todd, it turned out that it was not a huge impact to us. Kevin said if you take everything that Peter can offer us, he thinks that far exceeds the Town's financial liability. He would wholeheartedly support offering the position to him. Jim said he agrees with everything Kevin said and that Peter truly cares for the Town. Jim said he will keep our department stable and he will help us through the new building project. The three years will be instrumental to us.

A motion was made by Jim Lehan to appoint Peter Petruchick Fire Chief effective July 1, 2019, subject to successful contract negotiations. Kevin seconded, and it was so moved. All were in favor.

Report of the Warrants

A motion was made by Jim Lehan to approve the following warrants:

32v19 \$573,467.23 (JL) 02/05/2019
16P19 \$802,301.71 (JL) 02/01/2019

It was seconded by Kevin Kalkut, and so moved. All were in favor.

Selectmen's Goals:

Kevin said that when they first discussed goals, they outlined a number of initiatives and he would like to re-visit those to provide some updates and any progress that has been made or any reason why certain goals may have been put on the back burner.

He updated on the following initiatives:

- Community Engagement to connect the Town's website "What's New" section with the Town's Facebook – this is complete.
- To implement a system to accept direct messages from the Town's Facebook page to increase engagement while still limiting open meeting law exposure - this is currently in process.
- To utilize the Town's Facebook page to manage and communicate upcoming events, dates and meetings of interest - this in progress.

- Other initiatives including recurring monthly office hours; expanding Conversation Corner Program; and including some visual budget component to the Town website - are all awaiting proposal.
- Strategic planning and vision mapping is on hold while we work through the B1 working zoning committee. And then we will move on to master plan updating.
- Town facilities evaluating needs and school expansion this will be discussed in March.
- Recalibrating Police and Fire projects – this is well in process and there will be an open house at the new Police Station on March 27th.
- Assess Town government base needs including Senior Center, Recreation, Parking, etc. We recently issued 34 parking permits which mitigated some of the overflow concerns from the upper lot and we are continuing to look at additional mitigation methods. Senior Center parking area improvements will be looked into as well as plans for the Recreation expansion of land on Pond Street.

Jim discussed goals related to the King Philip budget cycle which is in progress with several meetings to date. Initial proposal is approximately 5.3%. It is better than the 10 -12% we have seen in the past. We have asked them to hit a 3% target on overall budget. At least three towns initially agreed on that. The preliminary allocation appears not to hit us as hard this year. Todd is meeting with the Superintendent of King Philip on Monday. Health Insurance came in at a decrease. It is in writing and signed.

Jim also provided Police and Fire updates: The police station has only one major glitch left with regard to the HVAC system. The sub-contractor is being difficult. The Regional Dispatch Center will be operational on April 1st. The lease has been signed as well as the contract for maintenance. Staffing for MECC has been settled. All of our full time people have been hired. It is state of the art. Matt did a great job for the tour of the girl scouts. Jim said we should have final reconciliation in 30 days. Jim and George Cronin, Chair of the Public Safety Building Committee, met today on the Fire Station and they are proposing an alternative version of the station. They feel that renovating is the wrong answer and tearing it down is the right answer. The architect's numbers are not great. They will present to the group on Tuesday and if they get four votes they will move forward. It will be less square footage and will come in with what we can afford. Jim reviewed the project timeline. Hopefully they will take a major step forward on Tuesday. Jim said it has been a much more complicated project than anyone expected. There were some significant errors that were drawn up by the architect.

Jim discussed new growth and that this is going to be a challenge. The schools are looking at their enrollment increasing. Susan discussed progress of 10% of affordable housing. There is going to be a meeting in mid-March. She was recently hired by the Town of Medway to sell a unit which will bring revenue to the Affordable Housing Trust. Jim said Sue has generated revenue. This has worked out very well. He also stated that there is a buyer for Southwood.

Approve Minutes

A motion was made by Kevin Kalkut to accept the following open session meeting minutes:

May 1, 2018; May 8, 2018; October 2, 2018;
October 22, 2018; December 12, 2018; February 8, 2019

It was seconded by Jim Lehan, and so voted.

Jim said he spoke with the auditors and they are very happy with us and we may get bounced up. They were very pleased with our controls. Todd said when he first got here they were here for two weeks and now they are here for two and half days.

Unanticipated Business

Todd explained that Bob McGhee is looking for approval to deficit spend the snow and ice budget. He is at a positive balance now; however, it is likely that they will be deficit spending with the upcoming storm.

A motion was made by Kevin Kalkut to approve the request for snow budget deficit spending for the year 2019. It was seconded by Jim Lehan, and so moved.

Updates

We are now at a \$500,000 gap in the budget. KP will help. We have \$400,000 in free cash. There was a discussion about articles and Capital expenses such as a car for the Police and communication devices, and if some things can possibly wait and be pushed off the fall. Todd will check to see if we can wait on communication devices. COA paving can wait until fall. We want to keep \$200,000 of free cash. We are within \$200,000 or \$250,000 away.

Kevin provided an update on Lawrence Street Bridge stating that it is progressing, however, slowly. They did update the format that identified different areas and tracking progress with complete transparencies. May 17th is the target date for the opening of the road.

Jim stated that the Mill River Bridge will be a huge project.

Jim said there are 30 applicants for Town Administrator; most of which are new. There is a screening committee meeting on February 28th to review applications and there is another screening committee meeting on March 9th to interview candidates. A candidate could be selected at the March 13th Selectmen's meeting or they can make a decision the following Tuesday. Jim is hopeful that they can make a decision that night.

Kevin thanked Todd for doing a great job.

A motion was made by Kevin Kalkut at 8:35 p.m. to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Jim Lehan, and so moved.

The next meeting will be held in Room 124, Town Hall, on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

This is a true and accurate report of the Board of Selectmen's Meeting of February 21, 2019.


Kevin Kalkut, Clerk