

Norfolk Select Board's Open Session Meeting Minutes February 18, 2020

Members Present: Kevin Kalkut; Christopher Wider. Members Not Present: Cici Van Tine. Also Present: Blythe Robinson, Town Administrator; Judith Lizardi, Executive Assistant.

The meeting was held in Room 124, Town Hall. Mr. Kalkut called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Kalkut announced this meeting is being both video and audio taped. All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Robinson reviewed the agenda.

Public Hearing on FY21 Water Rates

Interim DPW Director Barry Lariviere narrated a slideshow presentation and reviewed the proposed water rates for FY21. He discussed the water rate overview, the budget and revenue status, and the water system updates. He stated that water rates had not been raised in five to six years until FY20. The annual minimum charge will be raised each year until \$150. There will be separate rates for FY20, FY21, and FY22. The rates are designed to generate approximately \$1,800,000 each year. The rate increase is needed to cover new debt, Holbrook Street Well, and to fund capital projects and strengthen the Enterprise Fund by \$100,000 each year. He reviewed the FY20 Step Rate increase of 11 percent to 24 percent. He noted that quarterly billing was implemented January 13, 2020. He stated that for FY21, the water rate increase proposed is 5 percent. This will provide incremental rate raises versus a large increase. He stated that with the proposed rate changes for FY21, the typical resident would see an increase from \$60 to \$70. As well, the consumption rate will increase for all users. He discussed proposed billing examples for FY21 and reviewed the Water Enterprise budget appropriation, budget expenses, and water revenue. He stated that the total FY20 water billing commitment should be about \$1,634,500. He explained that it is important to maintain a level of six months reserves of unreserved retained earnings in the Water Enterprise Fund that is sufficient to address the financing of working capital, revenue shortfalls, emergency expenditures, and new regulatory requirements. Ms. Robinson provided background information on Enterprise Funds. Mr. Lariviere stated the Holbrook Street wellfield was approved as a water supply at a maximum pumping rate of 400,000 gallons per day in October 2019. Addition of a groundwater supply in the flow range will provide the Town with a redundant supply that is crucial to the water system, which currently only has two supplies. He discussed the Chemical Conversion Project including the Gold Street Well and the Spruce Road Well, and he reviewed the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system upgrades.

Ms. Robinson reviewed that the Town had an outside consultant perform a rate study last year that revealed that water rates needed to be raised significantly in FY20 in order to raise revenues sufficient to manage the system, and that in the following years they should be raised consistently so as to keep pace with expenses and ensure a responsible level of retained earnings. She noted that a copy of the rate study is included in the Select Board's meeting packet. Mr. Lariviere stated the proposed water rate increase is in line with the consultant's recommendations. Select Board members asked questions. Ms. Robinson pointed out assumptions in the report such as to add a superintendent's position, but noted that is not planned. She discussed items that the Town needs to be prepared for. For instance, the PFAS regulation was not expected; money has had to be added to the budget to plan for that. As well, they did not put together a five-year plan for having to spend money consistently on transite pipe replacement. She stated that no one wants to promote a rate increase in any year, but even though the Town had the 11 to 24 percent increase, we cannot say

with assurance that we are going to bring in that amount of money each year. Whether people have chosen to use less water, or it was wetter year and people did not water their lawns, these factors contribute to fluctuations in revenue. Therefore, we have to be prepared for some of those ups and downs so that as the new regulations come into play, or we have to address something new, like any business, we have the ability to deal with it.

Mr. Kalkut stated single-family homes with irrigation systems are not encouraged. Mr. Lariviere said he is crafting a letter to residents about water conservation. Ms. Robinson said the Holbrook Street Well was approved as a redundant water supply, but it will not provide more water. It is important to be able to make sure people are conserving and living within the Town's current water permit. It is responsible for the Town to continue to raise the rates a small amount to be prepared. Mr. Wider asked how to stop consumers from large water use. Mr. Lariviere discussed how much the Town wants to enforce lawn irrigation use. He stated the department can see who the people are with high water use in the summer, and a letter could be sent to them about conserving water. Select Board members asked questions. Mr. Lariviere discussed some of the items in the consultant's report. Ms. Robinson said the report is a living document as things keep changing. Mr. Lariviere stated the Town is down to two to three percent for leaks.

Mr. David Rosenberg, 123 North Street, mentioned the 14.5 percent interest rate for residents who are late in paying their water bills. He stated the Town ought to be more considerate of people having financial difficulty. He stated that the switch from semi-annual to quarterly billing is annoying, inconvenient, and of no benefit to the Town. Mr. Kalkut said the interest rate is meant to deter people from paying late; if someone is having a financial issue, arrangements could be made. Mr. Lariviere stated the office staff would address a customer's financial concern. Mr. Rosenberg said that he would like to let residents know this. Mr. Kalkut suggested a notice be included in the water bills indicating that if a resident is having difficulty paying the water bill, they should contact the office. Mr. Lariviere stated he will review how often the interest rate penalty has been used. Mr. Kalkut stated that the idea for the quarterly payments is to help people rather than have people receive larger bills semi-annually. Mr. Lariviere said this billing method puts the Town in line with other communities.

A motion was made by Mr. Kalkut to continue the Public Hearing on FY21 Water Rates to the March 17, 2020 Select Board meeting at 7:00 p.m. It was seconded by Mr. Wider, and so voted. All were in favor.

Public Comment

Ms. Christina Gleason, 249 Main Street, stated that there is a very large sign which is lit at night at the Freeman-Centennial building. However, the Police Station/Dispatch Center has a sign that is very difficult to see. The public does not know the building is there. She would like the sign situation to be remedied. She stated the sign should be lit at night and be larger to indicate the building is there. She stated she does not know if there are any sign restrictions. She suggested that a sign be put on Sharon Avenue to indicate the Police Station location. Ms. Robinson said they have been looking into the Police Station signage. The Town does not own the right of way or land on the state road. The current small blue sign is the largest sign the Town can put on the post that is already there; there is no electricity for a sign. She stated that in the short term, they are looking at a small solar sign which would be something better than what is there currently. In the long term, Shire Drive is planned to be paved in the next year or so, and possibly, there will be an area to install a larger sign for such a significant public building. This signage issue is being worked on.

Mr. Rosenberg requested that the Town ask the State for permission to put a sign on the state-owned land. He said that he has previously spoken to the Select Board about his desire to increase citizen engagement in Town government. He stated the item was postponed due to preparation for Fall Town Meeting. He reminded the Select Board that this topic is important. He stated that he feels he got a commitment from the Select Board to work on this topic and he would like to work on it.

Action Items

Please consider authorizing the Select Board Chair to execute the Town's Green Community Designation Grant Application

Ms. Robinson stated that the Town has been named a Green Community for which we will be receiving a grant of \$144,600 to begin implementing the energy reduction measures to reduce our consumption over the next five years. The State requires that the Town submit an application to request these funds, and that application must be executed by the Chief Executive Officer which is defined as a person designated by the Select Board. The Energy Committee met earlier this week, and will be proposing two projects with this grant. The projects include lighting upgrades in a portion of the H. Olive Day School, and insulation of the truck bay at the DPW. Both projects were identified on the energy reduction plan previously approved by the Select Board, and staff believes both can be accomplished within the grant amount. Approval is being requested to designate the Select Board Chair to execute the application on the Town's behalf. The application has to be submitted by the end of the month. She stated they are in the process of getting experts to analyze both projects and vet the numbers to finish up the application and submit it. The projects are planned to be completed during the summer, and the Town can get started on the next round of funding to obtain every dollar available from the State. She confirmed the \$144,600 covers both projects.

A motion was made by Mr. Kalkut that the Board authorize the Select Board Chair to certify the Town's application for \$144,600 from the State Green Community Grant program. It was seconded by Mr. Wider, and so voted. All were in favor.

Please consider approval of the Board's revised Public Comment Policy

Ms. Robinson stated that at the last meeting the Select Board discussed the public comment policy by reviewing two versions proposed by the Chair. The Select Board also reviewed advice from Town Counsel regarding the amendments, and determined that the second version as modified by Town Counsel was the direction they wished to take. That second version, in its final form, has been provided in the Select Board's meeting packet for the Board's consideration. Mr. Kalkut confirmed this is the final version from previous discussions. Mr. Wider questioned who "others" were in Item H. Ms. Robinson stated "others" was everyone including the public.

A motion was made by Mr. Kalkut that the Board approve the revised version of the Public Comment Policy. It was seconded by Mr. Wider, and so voted. All were in favor.

Please consider approval of the 2nd Annual Norfolk SEPAC 5K Road Race on Sunday, May 31, 2020 beginning at 10 a.m., with a rain date of Sunday, June 7, 2020

Ms. Robinson stated that included in the Select Board's meeting packet is a request to hold the 2nd annual Norfolk SEPAC Road Race on May 31st. The course is the same as it was last year. Comments from both Police and Fire were requested; they are supportive of the race again this year and have no concerns.

A motion was made by Mr. Kalkut that the Board approve the request to hold the 2nd Annual Norfolk SEPAC 5K Road Race on Sunday, May 31, 2020 beginning at 10 a.m., with a rain date of Sunday, June 7, 2020. It was seconded by Mr. Wider, and so voted. All were in favor.

Please consider approval of the Norfolk Grange's 11th Annual Clean & Green Town-wide Cleanup on Saturday, April 18, 2020 from 9-4 p.m.

Ms. Robinson stated that included in the Select Board's meeting packet is a letter from the Grange requesting that the Town provide a dumpster to facilitate their 11th Annual Clean & Green Town-wide Cleanup Day on April 18th. She stated that she reviewed this with Public Works and understands that historically the Town has hauled away roughly three tons of materials per year. It is estimated that the same should occur this year, and the cost of this to the Town would be approximately \$452.00. That cost includes \$68.97 per ton to dump general refuse as well as the Town's labor or trucking costs to drop off and pick up the dumpster and truck the materials to Wheelabrator in Millbury. The cost of this would be borne by the Transfer Station budget. Staff recommends approval of this request to support a very worthy volunteer town-wide initiative. Residents are helping to keep the community green. Mr. Kalkut confirmed this is the 11th annual event.

A motion was made by Mr. Kalkut that the Board approve a request by the Norfolk Grange to provide a dumpster in support of their 11th Annual Clean & Green Town-wide Cleanup on Saturday, April 18, 2020. It was seconded by Mr. Wider, and so voted. All were in favor.

Discussion Items

None.

Report of Warrants

Please consider approval of the following warrants:

A motion was made by Mr. Wider to approve the following warrants:

- 1/31/2020 15P20 and 15PS20 \$843,797.70
- 2/04/2020 32VS20 \$28,340.75
- 2/04/2020 32V20 \$3,191,775.36

It was seconded by Mr. Kalkut, and so voted. All were in favor.

A motion was made by Mr. Kalkut to approve the following warrants:

- 2/11/2020 33VSA20 \$1,600.00
- 2/11/2020 33V20 \$245,941.94

It was seconded by Mr. Wider, and so voted. All were in favor.

Approve Minutes

None.

Information Section

Follow-up to questions from February 8, 2020 Budget Presentations Workshop

Ms. Robinson stated that there were a number of questions raised at the budget workshop on February 8th both by Select Board members and residents. In the Select Board's meeting packet, which is available online, are responses to those questions. This information is provided as background for the Select Board in its further deliberations on the budget. She stated that if members of the public have follow-up questions, they can send her an email.

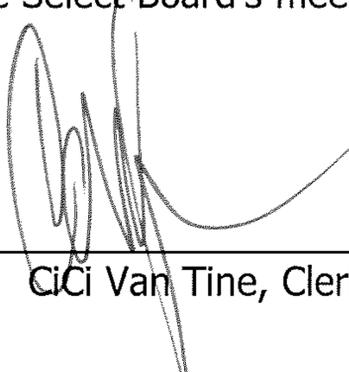
Mr. Kalkut recognized a moment of silence for the passing of Mr. Frank Gross, former Norfolk Town Moderator for 30 years, Chairman of the Norfolk School Committee for 21 years, and member of many groups and committees.

Ms. Robinson discussed the next scheduled Select Board meeting date. She noted the presidential primary is being held on March 3, 2020. Legally, the Select Board can hold a meeting on that date; however, typically the Town does not hold meetings on an election night. Select Board members discussed possible meeting dates. Mr. Kalkut stated that budget deliberations would be part of this meeting; therefore, Room G-7 would not work well for the public attendees. Ms. Robinson noted that there may be some executive sessions on the agenda, as well. Select Board members agreed the next meeting will be held on March 5th and commence at 5:30 p.m.

At 7:54 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Kalkut to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Mr. Wider, and so voted. All were in favor.

The next meeting will be held in Room 124, Town Hall, on Tuesday, March 5, 2020, at 5:30 p.m.

This is a true and accurate report of the Select Board's meeting of February 18, 2020.



CiCi Van Tine, Clerk