

**Norwell Board of Selectmen  
Meeting Minutes  
October 14, 2015**

TOWN OF NORWELL  
TOWN CLERK

2015 NOV 24 PM 4: 05

Ellen Allen opened the meeting in lieu of Chair Gregg McBride, who was not feeling well, and introduced Jason Brown, Gregg McBride, Alison Demong, Peter Smellie and Town Administrator Peter Morin. *MOTION: Ellen Allen moved the Board exit Executive Session and enter into Open Session and approve the agenda as written. The board was polled to exit Executive Session; Ms. Demong voting yes, Ms. Allen voting yes, Mr. Brown voting yes, Mr. McBride voting yes and Mr. Smellie voting yes. The motion to approve the agenda as written was seconded by Peter Smellie and unanimously voted.*

**REPORTS**

**Citizen Comments** - None

**Selectmen's Reports** - Ms. Allen reminded all to complete the CPC survey. She also announced Chad Forman's resignation from the Advisory Board. He was replaced by Jane Stout. Susan Powell was also appointed to the Advisory Board.

**Town Administrator's Report** – None

**e) Pathwalk Peer Review-**

Con Com (represented by Chair Marynel Wahl) asked for a Peer Review regarding the impact of the pathwalk on Main Street with regard to storm water drainage. This second review will be done by Mr. Chesia, who will address the following topics during his review: storm water structures, snowblowing and sidewalk impact, change in runoff from the sidewalk, plus two other items. Mr. McBride asked if Con Com had first directed these questions to Town Engineer Paul Foulsham. Per Ms. Wahl, he was asked about salt impact, but he did not have answers for some of the other questions. Ms. Allen quoted Mr. Chesia as saying that salt impact is outside his area of expertise. Mr. Foulsham stated that it is "still same amount of salt, the pathwalk drainage just changes how quickly it gets there". The board discussed this issue further, and Ms. Allen expressed concern that two people are doing the same work for the Town. Mr. McBride stated that there are certainly times when a peer review is necessary, but a peer review for its own sake is not a good way to spend anyone's money, especially if the "peer" can't answer some of the technical questions. Ms. Wahl agreed completely, and stated that in a project of this size a peer review is normally done. She also stated that as there is only one engineer on the Con Com, they felt more comfortable asking for this review. Mr. McBride said that he would still like to see the Town use its own engineer first, as all Town boards have an obligation to the taxpayers to make sure the money is well spent. Mr. Foulsham has used the engineering firm EPG for years and has complete confidence in them. He had also reached out to the Water Commissioners for their opinion. They opined that "the overall net change in impervious surface will have a minimal effect on salt concentrations discharged to the ground". The board and Mr. Foulsham discussed drainage systems in the Town and expressed confidence in EPG.

Mr. McBride asked Mr. Foulsham if the EPG engineers can address these questions; the answer is yes. They will come back to the Con Com meeting next Tuesday to answer any questions. (BOS reps will also attend the meeting). Dave Osborne, Con Com member, explained the board's reasons for a peer review request. Mr. McBride stated that the engineers working on the project are working on behalf of the Town, and questioned the reason for the

hire. The status of this peer review will be determined after the Con Com meeting, and this topic will be continued on the BOS agenda for next week.

**a) Land discussion – Meadow Farms Way**

Mr. Foulsham stayed at the meeting to participate in this discussion. Mr. Brown gave a summary of the problems that occurred last winter, including a great deal of access issues and problems for the residents. What can be done to the road to improve safety and access before this winter? Mr. Foulsham called this road a dry river bed, and stated that it would require major reconstruction to take down the banks on the shoulders of the road. His crew got extra help last year from Chief Reardon to clear the road for residents and create access for any emergency vehicles. All discussion participants opined that it would be a lot of work to re-grade the banks. The road is not a public way, but a subdivision at the end of the road. Ms. Demong asked Mr. Foulsham if he had a solution, and Mr. McBride stated that the residents at the end of the road have an expectation to be able to get in and out of their road. The town-owned property has tenants who also need to get in and out of this road. Mr. Foulsham stated that the bad winter caused access issues for several subdivisions. Discussion ensued about problems unique to last winter, and ALL expressed the hope for less snow this winter! The residents have stated that it's just not good enough. Chief Reardon echoed Mr. Foulsham's concerns and cited other examples around town where access is difficult with large amounts of snow. The Town departments have become very good at working together and managing storm situations over the years. Residents should call the Town if there is an access issue that could be bettered with some pre-planning. Good prior planning will help get ahead of potential emergency situations. The BOS needs to communicate with those residents to help coordinate and work with them, but there is no magic solution. The Town will make every effort to keep the road open.

**b) Free Cash – Town Accountant**

Donna Mangan, Town Accountant and Finance Director, gave a presentation on Free Cash. She has received certified free cash from the DOR to present to the board. There is \$1,916,760, which is between 3-5% of the Town's operating budget, and represents an increase over the prior year's free cash. This amount is 4.22 % of the operating budget, which is within policy guidelines. Mr. McBride left the meeting at this point. Ms. Mangan's screen showed the calculation of the free cash amount. She also gave the history of free cash amounts for the last 15 years and the reasons for the varying amounts of excess local receipts, actual revenues received, Dept. turnbacks, and unappropriated free cash. The spike in FY14 was extraordinary, and mostly due to timing issues in the payment of health insurance premiums. Ms. Mangan also gave an analysis of the fund balance for FY15. Local receipts appear to be leveling out compared to FY14. Motor vehicle excise tax (MVE), ambulance revenues and permits and licenses are the three largest categories. Mr. Morin explained the cycle of the MVE tax; people tending to keep their cars in 5 year cycles. There was a higher Accounts Receivable number for MVE tax in FY15. Ambulance fees were affected by the number of transports, payer mix, and people in different categories. Chief Reardon explained the rise in prior years (the Town hired a new billing company, resulting in more timely billing), and federal laws and payments are not covering as much of the cost for providing the service. Licenses and permits have leveled off after a three year increase, and the BOS is looking at this very carefully. Ms. Allen stated the need for new growth in commercial development. Investment income is up slightly, but it's a tough climate and cautious budgeting is appropriate. Fiscal state aid is up slightly, but there may be cuts in FY16. The Town uses the Governor's proposed budget to estimate local receipts, which is conservative. Town departments returned \$842,000 at year end, due in part to Health Ins. costs decreasing in FY15 by \$27,000. Subscribers were down by 10, some due to opt-out provisions in the union contracts. Net savings from opt-outs is about \$200,000 and new hires at a 60/40 insurance payment plan, which is less expensive for the Town. Future estimates included highlighted areas for focus.

Ms. Mangan also reviewed the Target Sheet for the Reserve fund (which is under the care and custody of the AB and is used for unexpected expenses), of \$235,000. The Stabilization Fund is

targeted to be between 5-15% of the general fund expenditures, and is about 11% right now, is well within the guidelines. This Target Sheet is information used in determining the Town's bond rating. The Town met their goal on the use of Free Cash. It was noted that Overlay Surplus has varied from \$0 to \$500,000 in recent years. Ms. Mangan reviewed the parameters for debt policy for the Town. The debt is within the policy at an actual percent of 7% of the operating budget. There is a debt service floor of 2%, and is the Town's way of supporting continued investment in the town's infrastructure and operations. Net obligation is \$2.6 million. 60% should mature within ten years, and the Town meets that well within the parameters. Overall, the Town's financial profile remains strong.

**c) Web Design**

Mr. Morin reviewed the color and design of background for the new website. The board would like to choose the middle design.

**8. Adjourn to Executive Session**

Ms. Allen polled the board to adjourn into Executive Session to discuss Contracts; Ms. Demong voting yes, Ms. Allen voting yes, Mr. Brown voting yes, Mr. Smellie voting yes.

*Ellen H. Allen*

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Board of Selectmen

