



Natick Finance Committee

Pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 3 of the Town of Natick By-Laws, I attest that the attached copy is the approved copy of the minutes for the following Meeting:

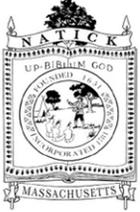
Town of Natick Finance Committee

Meeting Date: January 7, 2021

The minutes were approved through the following action:

Motion: xxx
Made by: xxx
Seconded by: xx
Vote: x – x – x
Date: <date>, 2021

Respectfully submitted,
Bruce Evans
Clerk
Natick Finance Committee



TOWN OF NATICK

Meeting Notice

POSTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF M.G.L. CHAPTER 30A,
Sections 18-25

Natick Finance Committee

PLACE OF MEETING

Virtual Meeting accessed via Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85844305049>

Meeting ID: 858 4430 5049

Passcode: 409248

One tap mobile

+19292056099,,85844305049# US

(New York)

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

DAY, DATE AND TIME

January 7, 2021 at 7:00 PM

Notice to the Public: 1) Finance Committee meetings may be broadcast/recorded by Natick Pegasus. 2) The meeting is an open public meeting and interested parties can attend the meeting. 3) Those seeking to make public comments (for topics not on the agenda or for specific agenda items) are requested to submit their comments in advance, by 2:00 PM on the day of the meeting, to the Chair: phayes.fincom@natickma.org. Comments will be posted on NovusAgenda and read aloud for the proper agenda item. Please keep comments to 350-400 words. 4) The Chat function on Zoom Conferencing will be disabled.

Posted: January 4, 2021

MEETING AGENDA

1. Call to Order
 - a. Pledge of Allegiance & Moment of Silence
 - b. Advisement of Pegasus Live Broadcast and Recording for On-Demand Viewing
 - c. Review of Meeting Agenda and Ordering of Items
2. Announcements
3. Public Comments
 - a. [Committee policy & procedures available via this link and also at the meeting location](#)
 - b. [Jim Connolly Letter to Select Board](#)
4. Meeting Minutes
 - a. Review and Approve Meeting Minutes for Review & Approve Meeting Minutes – October 6, October 27, and October 28, 2020 Minutes
5. New Business
 - a. Finance Committee Retreat:
 - i. Subcommittee assignments
 - ii. Member contact info update
 - iii. FATM 2020 session debrief

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- iv. SATM 2021 preview
 - b. Public Comments and Meeting procedures
 6. Committee and Subcommittee Scheduling
 - a. Update on upcoming Committee and Subcommittee meetings
 - b. Subcommittee Updates
 7. Adjourn

Meeting may be televised live and recorded by Natick Pegasus. Any times listed for specific agenda items are approximate and not binding. Please note the committee may take the items on this agenda out of order.

SUBMITTED BY

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Linda Wollschlager, Chairperson
Bruce Evans, Clerk
Dirk Coburn, Member
Jeff DeLuca, Member
Todd Gillenwater, Vice-Chairman
Bill Grome, Member
Julien LaFleur, Member (arr. 7:15 PM)
Mike Linehan, Member
Richard Pope, Member
Philip Rooney, Member
Jim A. Scurlock, Member

MEMBERS ABSENT:

David Coffey, Member
Jerry Pierce, Member
Chris Resmini, Member

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Linda Wollschlager, Chairperson.
Voice roll call – Ms. Wollschlager, Mr. Evans, Mr. Coburn, Mr. DeLuca, Mr. Gillenwater, Mr. Grome, Mr. Linehan, Mr. Pope, Mr. Rooney and Mr. Scurlock.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/CITIZEN’S CONCERNS:

Ms. Wollschlager announced that Ms. DeCarvalho resigned from the Finance Committee to run for Select Board.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

Mr. Evans moved to open the Finance Committee Public Meeting, seconded by Mr. Linehan, voted 10 – 0 – 0

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Linehan = yes
Mr. Coffey = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. DeLuca = yes	Mr. Rooney = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Ms. Wollschlager= yes

Meeting Minutes

October 6, 2020:

Mr. Linehan moved to approve, as amended, seconded by Ms. Wollschlager, voted 10 – 0 – 0

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Linehan = yes
Mr. Coffey = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. DeLuca = yes	Mr. Rooney = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Ms. Wollschlager= yes

October 27, 2020 minutes

Mr. Linehan moved to approve, as amended, seconded by Mr. Scurlock, voted 10 – 0 – 0

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Linehan = yes
Mr. Coffey = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. DeLuca = yes`	Mr. Rooney = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Ms. Wollschlager= yes

October 28, 2020 minutes

Mr. Linehan moved to approve, as amended, seconded by Ms. Wollschlager, voted 10 – 0 – 0

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Linehan = yes
Mr. Coffey = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. DeLuca = abstain	Mr. Rooney = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Mr. Scurlock = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Ms. Wollschlager= yes

Subcommittee Assignments

Name	Education & Learning	Capital	DPW	General Government	Planning & Governance	Other Committees (FinCom Appointees)
Coburn, Dirk			Member		Member	Financial Planning Committee alternate
Coffey, David	Member			Member		
DeLuca, Jeff	Member	Chair				Racial Equity Municipal Action Plan (REMAP)
Evans, Bruce	Member		Co-chair		Member	Kennedy Middle School Building Committee, Financial Planning Committee
Gillenwater, Todd		Member			Chair	Audit Advisory Committee (Chair appointee)
Grome, Bill		Member		Member		
LaFleur, Julien			Co-chair		Member	
Linehan, Michael		Member	Member			
Pierce, Jerry			Member	Member		
Pope, Richard	Member	Member				Racial Equity Municipal Action Plan (REMAP)
Resmini, Christopher				Member	Member	
Rooney, Phillip				Chair		
Scurlock, Jim	Chair					
Wollschlager, Linda					Member	Financial Planning Committee, Town Administrator Screening Committee (Chair appointee)
						West Natick Fire Station Building Committee - Patrick Hayes

Ms. Wollschlager stated that she had met with these subcommittee chairs to review subcommittee assignments and plan for preparation for hearings for Spring Annual Town Meeting 2021.

Ms. Wollschlager reviewed subcommittee assignments, [Link](#) (available to Fincom members only)

Ms. Wollschlager noted that in addition to the subcommittee assignments, the following people are the Finance Committee’s representatives to those Committees and

Racial Equity Municipal Action Plan (REMAP) Committee: Originally, this Committee requested one representative from the Finance Committee. However, both Mr. Pope & Mr. DeLuca both expressed interest in serving on this committee, so both are on the REMAP Committee. Mr. Coburn asked whether someone from the Planning & Governance Subcommittee should be on the REMAP Committee. Ms. Wollschlager said REMAP is an extracurricular activity, although could have impact on things that would be in the purview of the planning and governance subcommittee and these members will provide updates to the Planning & Governance subcommittee, as needed.

Ms. Wollschlager is the Finance Committee representative to the Town Administrator Screening Committee.

Mr. Evans is the Finance Committee representative to the Kennedy Middle School Building Committee.

Ms. Wollschlager stated she would be adding an update section for these other committees in the Committee and Subcommittee scheduling section of our agendas,

Mr. Evans and Mr. LaFleur will co-chair the DPW Subcommittee.

Mr. Gillenwater will chair the Planning and Governance Committee. This has been inactive prior years, but we’re hoping that we will be doing more planning and activity will pick up a lot since there likely will be a lot of planning, particularly if an operational override is on the table. Its scope is in the following areas:

1. Finance Committee Budget
 - a. Reserve Fund Budget
2. Governance:

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- a. Warrant Articles
 - b. By-Law Amendments (incl. Zoning)
 - c. Charter Amendments
3. Planning:
- a. Debt Service:
 - b. Planning & forecasting future needs
 - c. Stabilization Funds/Accounts (Except as listed elsewhere):
 - d. General
 - e. Operational Rainy Day
 - f. Revenues (from all sources)
 - g. Free Cash
 - h. Special Circumstances: Debt Exclusions, Prop 2^{1/2} Overrides

Ms. Wollschlager noted that she had put together a primer on the processes and procedures for chairing a Finance Committee meeting and will send that out to the full committee. Ms. Wollschlager noted that the budget is in a different format - the ClearGov format. There may be some things that we traditionally have seen that may be missing. As you review it, if you have any comments on it, I'd be interested in what you think. Members will receive an invitation to review the budget within ClearGov. Once you create a login, you can see the preliminary budget. Also, if you want a hard copy, you can either pick it up at Town Hall or request that they mail a copy to your home address. As always, please send questions off to the subcommittee chairs. You may want to do that after we hear the budget overview from Town Administration and NPS. Ms. Wollschlager said she finds it helpful as you're as you're going the budget book to list your questions and then send them directly to the subcommittee chairs, copying her, if you'd like.

Ms. Wollschlager said that the Finance Committee would hear the preliminary NPS budget on January 14 and the Town Administrator preliminary budget on January 19. Following those two meetings, the Finance Committee will start the Subcommittee meeting process and those meetings will take place the rest of January through mid-February. The Spring Annual Town Meeting 2021 warrant closes on Thursday, February 11 and we'll know the number of warrant articles we have to tackle. We'll start having the full committee process begin the end of February through March. Town Meeting starts on Tuesday April 13. This means that we'll need to have everything wrapped up around the end of March to meet our deadline of getting our recommendation book to Town Meeting members a week ahead of time. Easter is on April 4, so we'll lose Friday April 2 as a work day. Ms. Wollschlager asked for more assistance from committee members and writing the recommendation book. Specifically, the subcommittee chairs are typically of great help in doing their sections. But when it comes to the warrant articles, Mr. Evans has done them and has done a great job because he has the minutes but this is a pretty big burden to put solely on his shoulders. So I'd like everybody to think about maybe a way that we could we could divide it up.

Discussion

Mr. Linehan suggested that the General Governance subcommittee work with the submitters of warrant articles to help ensure that they are ready for primetime before they come before the Finance Committee. This might streamline the review process as well as the warrant article write-ups for the recommendation book. Mr. Gillenwater, Chair of the General Governance subcommittee agreed this was a great idea and has reviewed some of the notes that Mr. Hayes provided on standardization and discussions on how to handle non-compliance. The consensus at the time was that the chair or subcommittee chair could only provide certain amount of guidance, but not actually lean on somebody when they are non-compliant. Ms. Wollschlager said this had been discussed with Town Counsel and they said that we should not provide that kind of assistance because it implies that the Finance Committee supports that article.

Mr. Evans said there another aspect to the Town Counsel’s opinion. Mr. Evans agreed with the idea that we should help people submit a warrant article, but make it very clear that we're taking no position (pro or con) on their warrant article. We can provide information on standard form, the timeframe, who they should be contacting, etc. and be careful not to cross the line of saying “if you write it this way, the Finance Committee or Town Meeting may find it favorable”. Once the warrant closes, Ms. Wollschlager said gets the contact information from the submitter of a given article, contacts them and starts the process and tries to find out when they're will realistically be ready in order to put them on the schedule. That said, my thought was that even when we review the various budgets, the subcommittee doesn't really make a recommendation but summarizes the questions and answers that were asked during the subcommittee meeting and provides that information to the full committee, so the Finance Committee and ultimately Town Meeting can understand what they're trying to accomplish.

Mr. Gillenwater said he is trying to understand what the goal of the GG subcommittee is we need to discuss how things get divided, such as reserve funds, enterprise funds and things that cross the entire budget. I don't know if there's a separate place to have a hearing on that or whether it makes sense to have hearings.

Mr. Rooney said that the General Government that the goal of the General Government subcommittee is to determine whether the enterprise fund is collecting enough money to cover its expenses. It’s not really worth the planning and governance subcommittee going through that issue. In addition, if you wanted to get into a discussion on something like pensions, you’re going to have to look at actuarial reports and the Pension Fund has its own oversight board. Finally, the town provides information on the balances in the reserve funds.

Fall Annual Town Meeting De-brief

Ms. Wollschlager said one of the things that came up during the meeting of our subcommittee chairs was clarity on our public comments and meeting procedures and noted that they don't reflect the concept of a Zoom or online meeting and what happens when you have a lot of public participation and how this should be handled during the subcommittee process. Subcommittee chairs emphasized that there is a finite period of time for the subcommittee to complete its business and these needs have to be balanced against the public participation needs. Ms. Wollschlager posed these questions to Town Counsel and her preference is to develop a town-wide policy. Ms. Wollschlager spoke with Town Counsel in December and asked her for an update on January 4, but has not had a reply yet. Ms. Wollschlager said she will pursue that with her because our current policy is inadequate. We can use the current policy now, recognizing that it needs to be improved.

Mr. Linehan noted that need to distinguish questions and public comments. One of the things that has been difficult of Zoom is to make sure that all the questions go to the subcommittee chairman who can answer the question, refer it to someone in town administration to answer, or note the question and commit to providing an answer. Ms. Wollschlager noted that subcommittee chairs need to make it very clear when we start talking about individual agenda items when public when questions will be allowed from the public so that participants know when they will have a chance to ask questions or make comments. Mr. Rooney noted that this was always a struggle because if you tried to take control of the meeting like that, participants would say that this is a public meeting and you cannot stifle my ability to ask a question. And I tried to explain to them what the purpose of the subcommittee meeting is and that the question be directed to the chair, who will determine where that question goes. Mr. Rooney noted that it sometimes gets prickly where I’ve had people say that I’m violating Open Meeting Law.

Mr. Evans agreed with Mr. Rooney’s characterization of the difference between Finance Committee meetings and working meetings at the subcommittee level. They are both open meanings but the objectives are different. For example, the Planning Board has working group meetings that include two of their members, someone from the CED Office (typically, the Director) meet with a prospective developer and they outline the things that the developer needs to provide to us to enable us to evaluate your project.

Anybody from the public can come to those meetings and they are given the chance to speak. But they say thanks for your input and move on to complete their work. We need to have some tool that indicates to the public that we've received their input need to move on with our subcommittee work.

Ms. Wollschlager suggested that we include our current policy in the subcommittee agendas because we do have limitations in that policy. Ultimately, the subcommittee chair needs to make a judgment call to determine the course of action based on that comment from the attendee. If it's significant and cannot be answered in that meeting we should note it and include it in our recommendations to Town Meeting.

Mr. Coburn noted that it's important that the town-wide policy consider different types and purposes of meetings, and be sensitive to that because what would be effective in a subcommittee meeting may be inappropriate for a full committee meeting or for a meeting of another board in town. Mr. Evans agreed that there needs to be this differentiation because a Board of Health meeting is quite different from an Education and Learning subcommittee meeting. The Board of Health meets year-round and doesn't have the same deadlines as the Finance Committee has.

Ms. Wollschlager noted that Fall Annual Town Meeting not only had very tight deadlines, but we also had several meetings during town meeting and she commended members for stepping up to attend those meetings.

Mr. Gillenwater asked if there was a logical way to divide the labor to get sections of the Recommendation Book completed so that the burden isn't on two people. Ms. Wollschlager said that she welcomes the help in writing sections of the Recommendation Book. Mr. Evans said that it might be helpful to put similar articles together (for example, zoning) and, if they aligned with a member's interest or expertise or a given subcommittee, they could write up those articles. Then there are the issues of warrant article quantity and timeliness. Mr. Gillenwater agreed that the subcommittee chairs might take a first pass at what comes under the purview of their subcommittee.

Ms. Wollschlager noted that the typical process is that we have we've created a Google Doc where we keep track of all the warrant articles and all the votes so that we're all on the same page with that, and I do the templates. Mr. Evans and I both contribute to that document. Mr. Evans has done most of the narratives and we have a standard template that any member can use. It's has the outline of the purpose of the article is, the language in the warrant article, what our votes are, and has space for our discussions and questions that were asked and answer during our hearings.

Mr. Evans noted that the subcommittee meeting minutes are critical in generating the narrative and that he works closely with the subcommittee chairs to ensure that the narrative is accurate because budgets can change following subcommittee meetings, as they did last year. The best thing a subcommittee chair can do is provide relatively concise minutes because that gives us enough to expand on in the narrative. There's a certain amount of cut and paste, where the text changes very little, just changes to the balances, for example, the reserve fund balances

Ms. Wollschlager said that taking good meeting minutes is essential and our task is distilling them down into the sections of the Recommendation Book. It's more difficult for the Education & Learning subcommittee, but hopefully, the other committees are able to do this.

Ms. Wollschlager asked for the committee's thoughts on how to hear a series of articles on a single topic, for example, the downtown zoning articles in the past year and whether we should hear the articles individually on that night or hear them together and then vote them subsequently.

Mr. Linehan asked whether the Planning & Governance Subcommittee could work with the Planning Board to see whether all related Planning Board-sponsored articles could be completed and ready in time for Finance Committee review.

Mr. LaFleur noted that it may be difficult for members who miss a meeting to understand what has been discussed previously so they have incomplete information on the articles and playing catch-up made it difficult to cast a well-informed vote.

Ms. Wollschlager noted that she did coordinate with the Planning Board, but there were two issues. One is that they sometimes aren't able to finish their discussions at the scheduled meeting and must hear it at a subsequent meeting and they were considering articles after our window had closed because they have their own schedule and needs and the Finance Committee is trying to write up the Recommendation Book and to get things wrapped up before Town Meeting. We have our constraints and they have their constraints. And we try to fit them together as well as we can.

Mr. Evans noted regarding the Planning Board, this problem is acute in the fall because it's such a short window between when the warrant closes, and when we have to be ready for to put a book together for Fall Annual Town Meeting. For Spring Annual Town Meeting, we have slightly more time to complete our work. The process is that the warrant gets approved; the Select Board meets on Wednesday. If the warrant closes on Friday, they're going to meet on Wednesday to approve the warrant articles. That means the earliest the Planning Board can advertise a public hearing is three weeks after the Wednesday that the Select board approves it. Realistically, there are going to be some stragglers, and we're going to have to deal with those as they come.

Ms. Wollschlager said that the concept of having multiple articles, with similar topics on the floor at the same time was frustrating for the public because we didn't allow the public questions until we were all done with it, creating dissatisfaction with the process. It may make sense to allow the Finance Committee to ask questions on a particular article, and then invite public input on that article, and then move on to the next article. Finally, as a Committee, we can then discuss all the articles simultaneously.

Mr. Rooney noted that the subcommittee chairs must be prepared to answer questions from the public if those questions have been asked and answered at subcommittee meetings. Mr. Rooney asked whether subcommittee minutes are available to the public and how that is communicated to people. Ms. Wollschlager noted that the Finance Committee has had issues with the minutes being posted in a timely manner, simply because it's not clear whose responsibility it is to put minutes on the Finance Committee web site and we need to identify a contact in town administration that can do that. Ms. Wollschlager said you've all seen the website that we've put together for Town Meeting members – we post our agendas and minutes. Ms. Wollschlager suggested that we could use the Google web site that we created for Town Meeting members to provide misinformation.

Mr. LaFleur asked whether we could use Chat in the meetings, noting that it would be useful for members to get clarification on a term or acronym without disrupting the flow of the meeting. Ms. Wollschlager noted that it's difficult to monitor chat during a meeting and chat is an "all-or-nothing" capability – it's either or w available to everyone or to no one. She added that other boards and committees may allow it, but thought that most do not.

Mr. Scurlock said that he has received feedback about meetings that go past 11 PM and they cannot participate. Ms. Wollschlager acknowledged that it's difficult, especially when we get down to crunch time, to keep meetings from running late, because we have no choice because we have to do the business that that's required of us. Ms. Wollschlager noted that the Committee has set 11 PM as a cutoff time and in general, we are able to do so. She acknowledged that there were meetings that went beyond 11 PM due to the number of warrant articles that carried over from Spring Annual Town Meeting.

Mr. Evans suggested that we take a similar approach to what the Planning Board does in their meetings. The Planning Board Chair sets expectations from the outset as to how long a presenter will have to go through their presentation and how much time the public can comment on a given topic. Some presenters require 10 minutes; others require an hour. Perhaps, we can establish some time limits up-front before the discussion begins. The Moderator does this a Town Meeting where he asks whether a presentation will

take more than 10 minutes and then Town Meeting members can decide whether 10 minutes is appropriate or insufficient. Clearly, there's a big difference between reviewing the school budget and reviewing a warrant article.

Ms. Wollschlager agreed that this was a good approach and that we can consider asking presenters how much time they will require for their presentation properly set expectations in advance of the meeting.

Mr. Linehan noted that it's not always on the presenters. Some Committee members tend to talk more frequently and at greater length and that also draws out meetings. Mr. Linehan said that each member who wants to speak on an issue do so before a given member speaks further on that issue. Ms. Wollschlager noted that she keeps track of which members have spoken and will not permit members to speak for a second time before another member is seeking to speak on an issue.

Mr. Coburn noted that this may be a reason to revisit the chat issue because things are brought up that take time that others may consider trivial tech could be answered in the chat. Mr. Coburn noted that members should consider the weight and consequence of what a member seeks to contribute – if it isn't all that high perhaps there's another avenue to contribute.

Mr. Grome noted that the town administration presenters tend to give us their full presentation with all the fluff and the subcommittee doesn't need to hear that. It needs to know what was budgeted last year, what was spent last year and what their proposed budget is this year. Then, we often hear the same exact presentation at the full committee meeting and then at Town Meeting.

Members asked whether Spring Annual Town Meeting would be over Zoom. Ms. Wollschlager said Spring Annual Town Meeting will be held remotely until the pandemic and state of emergency are over. It's unknown whether changes to Town Meeting will result from our recent Town Meeting experience. Ms. Wollschlager said that she likes some aspects of meeting over Zoom, such as participation from home, which has benefits for both members and for the public to be able to more easily attend meetings. She has had conversations with some of the Select Board members who also feel the same way, but this would require changes in the Legislature to enable that flexibility to meet in-person (existing law prior to COVID) or remotely.

Subcommittee Meetings

Ms. Wollschlager said that there are no capital requests in the FY22 budget, so there is no present need for the capital subcommittee to meet.

Mr. Scurlock said that the education and learning subcommittee has reached out to NPS Town Administration and the first meeting will be on January 14. Schedule and topics are as follows:

January 14 - NPS Teaching and Learning Budgets

January 26 - NPS Technology and Transportation

February 2 - Libraries (both)

February 9 - NPS Special Education/Circuit Breaker

February 16 - Keefe Tech Budget (not yet confirmed)

February 23 - NPS Capital updates/Budget Overview Discussion

Mr. LaFleur said that the DPW subcommittee has requested dates from members and then will contact DPW to set up a total of two meetings in the next few days. Ms. Wollschlager said she would send Mr. LaFleur and Mr. Evans last year's DPW subcommittee agendas and minutes.

Mr. Evans moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Linehan, voted 10 – 0 – 0.

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Coburn = yes

Mr. Coffey = yes

Mr. DeLuca = yes`

Mr. Evans = yes

Mr. Gillenwater = yes

Mr. Linehan = yes

Mr. Pope = yes

Mr. Rooney = yes

Mr. Scurlock = yes

Ms. Wollschlager= yes

MEETING ADJOURNED 8:50 PM