



The TOWN OF NORWOOD

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Town Meeting Members,

This is the usual Yellow Sheet which we send out to you just before a Special Town Meeting. This one is intended for use at the Special Town Meeting scheduled for Monday, May 10, 2021. We hope it will be helpful to you as you deliberate on the 15 articles on the warrant.

Article 1 This is the school department's annual purchase of transportation vehicles in accordance with the capital plan. Many of the existing vans are in poor shape and as such this purchase must be made as soon as possible. We are working to purchase additional school transportation vans by July 1, and again this fall to finally get caught up on the school transportation fleet to ensure student safety and reliable transportation. By FY23 the operating budget should have enough funding in place to replace rolling stock annually without additional appropriation. The consolidation of transportation in house has saved the Town approximately \$300,000 per year in costs. The school department requires this capital appropriation in May in order to be prepared for fall transport. The timeline for acquiring busses/vans and the cost has gone up as companies like Amazon have bought up so many vans. The total amount requested is \$231,000 for a total of four vehicles.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 2 This project, if approved, is part of the NPS annual capital program but must be completed this summer to be ready for fall instruction. This project would replace six network switches for next school year. Each of these switches will be approaching 10 years old next year; all switches are located at Norwood High School. In addition, this project will refresh 25 wireless access points at all 5 of our elementary schools. Each of these switches is approximately 7 years old. This is the first part of a three year plan to replace all of these wireless access points. NPS receives a substantial discount on all of this technology through bulk and cooperative purchasing with other school departments and education related discounts. All of the labor for these installations will be handled in house.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 3 Both Police and Fire Departments are experiencing significant degradation of our radio communications system on an increasingly frequent basis seriously impacting operations. This is directly attributable to the use of POTS (Plain Old Telephone Service) copper lines.

As you may be aware, Verizon is ending support for copper telephone lines. The Police and Fire Departments currently use these lines to transmit radio traffic between the Public Safety Building and three repeaters, one each at the Coakley Middle School, the PODS building on University Avenue and one at the Highland Cemetery. We need to convert these copper wires to fiber.

The conversion will require equipment and fiber service. To keep costs as low as we can we will use the Light Department Network for the fiber service. The equipment and installation will be provided by our radio vendor Cyber Communications.

While this project is being brought forward by the Fire Department it is important to note that the plan was developed with the advice and input of the Police Department and Cyber Communications. All technologies in consideration are scalable and fully capable of supporting Public Safety Radio Communications into the foreseeable future.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 4

Last year, FY20, the Town was reimbursed by the state for two projects. One project was Chapter 90 Highway Construction and the other was the Complete Street Prioritization Plan Project. Under our old accounting system, AMC, we did not have the ability to set up reimbursable grants, so all costs were posted to our operating budget. We continued this process in FY20 and \$112,761 of Chapter 90 (road money received from the state) costs were buried in our highway budget fund so the Town was unaware we had \$112,761 available which we would have encumbered otherwise. Right after year end, when accounting moved the cost from the highway budget to the proper Chapter 90 fund, the \$112,761 available in our budget was returned to Free Cash. Due to this clerical error, Free Cash was overstated at the end of FY20 and that amount of road repair was subsequently lost. We are asking Town Meeting to appropriate Free Cash in that amount to make Public Works (and the streets) whole. We now understand that reimbursable grants may be set up in MUNIS so this error will not recur. A similar process in the amount of \$34,952.80 happened with a Complete Streets Grant and we ask that amount be restored as well. We respectfully ask that Town Meeting appropriate a total of \$147,714 from Free Cash to complete these necessary road repairs. The Department of Public Works now understands the mechanics of MUNIS and our responsibility regarding State reimbursable projects and appreciates your patience with us during the learning curve. To summarize, money that was supposed to be for roads instead became free cash, and this article would correct that.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 5 Replacement of meters has slowed considerably as a result of COVID-19 and we are currently behind. When a meter is not functioning properly there is a time-consuming process to issue an estimated bill and it is possible that either the customer is overpaying or the Town is losing money. This article would appropriate \$300,000 out of the meter fund (the “AMR meter charge”) for replacement of meters. After years of this fund being used just as a general fund revenue there are finally funds available to pay for meter replacement and repair. Approximately 700 meters will be replaced with this funding. These meters are read digitally and the MTU (meter transmission unit) lasts about 10 years with the physical meter lasting 10-15 year.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 6 This appropriation would fund critical repairs to the only elevator at the public safety building. The elevator at the public safety building has been down intermittently for close to two months now. The boards controlling the elevator have been repaired several times, we have used two different vendors and a contractor who specializes in elevator construction to evaluate the continued failure of the elevator. The consensus recommendation is that a full replacement of the control board, estimated to cost approximately \$70,000. The elevator is only about 20 years old; the cab and hydraulics appear to be in good shape.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 7 This article would allow the town or the school department to enter into contracts for software and related textbooks for a period of 6 years. Currently, under Massachusetts procurement laws contracts for supplies and services of this nature are limited to just 3 years unless the legislative body (in our case Town Meeting) authorizes contract terms of longer than 3 years. NPS has identified a software package and related textbooks that a 6 year contract would be very advantageous for. The specific project that NPS identified where this would be helpful shows a savings of over \$40,000 over the life of the contract. As more software programs move to subscription models there is the potential for greater savings for the Town being able to enter into longer contracts. All purchases for software (and in this case textbooks if related to software) still have to go through the Town and the state’s normal procurement process and contracts longer than 3 years can only be entered into if there is fiscal savings to the Town. This article is requested by the School Superintendent and the General Manager and the language has been reviewed and approved by Town Counsel.

The Board of Selectmen voted 4-1 to support this article.

Article 8 This article would permit the School Committee to establish a special education reserve fund pursuant to M.G.L. c. 40, Sec 13E. Upon an acceptance of the statute by a majority vote of both the School Committee and Town Meeting, the school department will have the ability to establish a Special Education Reserve Fund and appropriate and/or transfer money to the fund. The money in the fund will be utilized in upcoming fiscal years to pay, without further appropriation for unanticipated or unbudgeted special education costs, out-of-district special education tuition, and transportation. Distribution from the fund to pay for unanticipated or unbudgeted special education expenses will require a majority vote of the School Committee and the majority vote of the Board of Selectmen. The balance in the Special Education Reserve Fund cannot exceed 2% of the annual net school spending of the school district. This article is being requested by the School Committee.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 9 A “housekeeping” article, this article would establish a single revolving fund for school facility rentals such as the rent paid by the extended day program, parking rentals, and gym/auditorium rentals. The departmental revolving fund would allow revenues received to be placed in a single fund, costs for rentals to come out of the fund, and gives the School Committee the ability to expend from the fund for school facility related costs including building, furniture fixtures and equipment, and salaries for additional facility work. The funds would also not close to the general fund each year, thereby allowing the school committee to be judicious in expending revenue from this fund. The cap of the fund is set at \$75,000.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 10 This is another local adoption that is considered “housekeeping”. While our charter and by-laws have procedures for sharing facilities and human resources we are being cautious and adopting this local option that formalizes the Town’s ability to share administrative functions between the school department and the Town. Approval by both the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen is required prior to sharing certain administrative responsibilities and this adoption has been recommended by the labor counsel used by both general government and NPS.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 11 This article was actually approved at Town Meeting just a few months ago. However, upon discussing the approval with the Department of Revenue, they requested that it be separately voted on by Town Meeting as a separate article (as

opposed to listing it separately in the article and in the motion which is the norm in Norwood). Town Counsel has reviewed the article again and conferred with the Department of Revenue and assures us that this will complete the process. The original article approved places a tax on short-term rentals (rentals through sites like “Air BNB” and “VRBO”). Town Meeting approved this several months ago, but a technical correction is required per Town Counsel and the Department of Revenue.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 12 This is our annual 0% interest borrowing from the MWRA that is used for routine cleaning and lining. This appropriation must be requested each year in the spring to ensure we have access to this zero percent interest loan. We have added to our annual cleaning and lining program and continued access to the MWRA 0% interest loans helps reduce costs for ratepayers. Our current project this spring will be relining 70 year old water pipes.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 13 This borrowing approval would allow the light department to replace the aging switchgear at the Dean Street substation. Switchgear is the electrical disconnect switches, fuses/circuit breakers used to control, protect and isolate electrical equipment. Switchgear is used both to de-energize equipment to allow work to be done and to clear faults downstream. The switchgear at the Dean Street substation has been in service since 1970. Various life extension measures have been undertaken but the switchgear is now reaching the end of its service life and needs to be replaced.

The NLD had a study performed to develop and document the design, procurement, construction, and commissioning requirements associated with replacement of the switchgear. In conjunction with replacement of the switchgear, it is recommended that a roughly 300 sq. ft. addition to the substation building be constructed, that necessary modifications be made to the building to provide access for installation of the new switchgear, and that electrical supporting systems consisting of the substation batteries, the ac station service and the main alarm annunciator also be replaced and upgraded. The total estimated cost of this project is about \$6 million with approximately \$3 million coming from light department depreciation funds and the remaining funds through borrowing. Paying a combination of cash and borrowing is similar to how we financed the DPW yard as well as the NLD facility on Access Road. Construction is estimated to begin in the fall and take approximately 24 months. While the substation will be down at different points in time, this will not lead to a loss of electric service for any customers.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 14 Another “housekeeping” article, this article if approved would memorialize a 1975 acceptance statute allowing the Town to have a Historic Commission. While adopting a bylaw does not change anything about the acceptance statute or the role of the Historic Commission there is also no harm in memorializing the acceptance in a bylaw. The bylaw is requested by the Historic Commission

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support this article.

Article 15 Each year we must go to Town Meeting to pay any bills for previous fiscal years per state statute. We do not have any unpaid bills as of the printing of the yellow sheet; however we anticipate possibly having some for the special in June or this coming fall.

Norwood Board of Selectmen

Thomas F. Maloney, Chairman
William J. Plasko
David E. Hajjar
Helen Abdallah Donohue
Matthew E. Lane