

Minutes, Meeting of Norwich Finance Committee
February 25, 2019, 8:00 PM – Tracy Hall small conference room

Present: Omer Trajman (Chair), David Barlow (Vice Chair), Ryan Gardner (Secretary), Emmanuel Tesone (by phone)

Absent: Garrett Palm, Cheryl Lindberg

Public Present: Linda Cook

1. A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 8:14 PM.
2. The Committee reviewed and discussed the agenda. Ryan Gardner moved to amend the agenda by moving items 6 and 7 on the draft agenda (discussion of Selectboard financial policies and the Committee’s meeting process) to a subsequent meeting, and to approve the amended agenda. David Barlow seconded the motion. The motion to approve the amended agenda was passed unanimously.
3. The Committee reviewed and discussed the draft meeting minutes from its February 4, 2019 meeting. David Barlow moved to approve the minutes. Emmanuel Tesone seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.
4. No public comments.
5. The Committee reviewed a draft statement (“FY2020 Opinion,” copy attached as Exhibit A) intended for sharing at Town Meeting (March 4, 2019). David Barlow moved to approve the FY2020 Opinion. Ryan Gardner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- 6-7. Items 6 and 7 on the agenda were moved to a subsequent meeting.
8. The Committee discussed the date for its next meeting, and agreed to next meet on Monday, March 25, at 8 PM.
9. At 8:30 PM, Ryan Gardner moved to adjourn the meeting. Emmanuel Tesone seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn was passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ryan Gardner, Secretary

FY2020 Opinion

The Norwich Finance Committee was reconstituted late last year, just as the budget season was kicking into full swing. The FY2020 budget process was particularly challenging due to a number of factors, including new Department heads, and a relatively new Town Manager who has been through limited budget cycles with the current Selectboard. The town is also managing the fallout of large cash outlays for the July 1, 2017 storm repairs and cost overruns on the Public Safety Facility and the Town Garage.

After reviewing the various budget proposals, hearing input from the department heads, the public, Selectboard members, and reviewing budgeting processes from other towns, the Committee's recommendation to the Selectboard was to review all spending with a goal of maintaining a level-fund, or at most a minimal increase of the municipal tax rate in a manner that balances both: (a) minimizing risks that could lead to significant budget increases in FY2021 due to unanticipated consequences resulting from FY2020 reduction in contributions to Designated Funds, and (b) replenishes the Undesignated Fund, which has been reduced primarily by the July 1 storm expenses and facility cost overruns.

There is consensus among the Committee that the revisions to the FY2020 budget as prepared by the Town Manager and approved by the Selectboard will serve to achieve these goals, and that, given the challenges faced in this particular budget year, the Selectboard followed an appropriate process to re-examine each Department balance and discussed the impact of decreasing contributions to certain Designated Fund balances for FY2020. The Committee also recommended the Selectboard look to replenish the Undesignated Fund so we are better prepared for future large scale emergencies.

The Committee supports approving the FY2020 municipal budget and recommends the citizens of Norwich to vote in favor.