



**Canton Finance Committee
801 Washington Street
Canton, MA 02021**

Minutes Voted on: 3/9/22
Vote: 8-0-0

**Meeting Minutes
March 2, 2022**

Finance Committee Members Present: Dave Clough, Dan Cole, Tom Emery, Karen Foley, Emilio Mauro, Tim McKenna, Reuki Schutt and Cindy Thomas.

Finance Committee Members Absent: All members were present for the virtual meeting.

Guests Present:

John Cronin, Director of Norfolk County Commissioners
Helena Rafferty, Deputy Police Chief
Ellen Jones, Finance Committee Recording Secretary
John E. Martin, Superintendent-Director
Regen Milani, Conservation Agent
Randy Scollins, Finance Director
Dr. Gabriel Solomon, Sponsor for Article 20 (Auction of 25 Neponset Street)
Richard R. Staiti, Trustee, Norfolk County Agricultural High School; Norfolk County Commissioner
John R. Wallace, Business Manager, Norfolk County Agricultural School

Call Meeting to Order: Chair McKenna called the virtual meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Discussion - Article 27 – Amend General By-Laws by Removing Article XIV Section 48 Alarm System, Registration and Regulations By-Law – Helena Rafferty, Deputy Police Chief

Ms. Rafferty stated that Article 27 To Remove Article XIV Section Alarm System, Registration and Regulations is an antiquated By-Law that needs to be removed from the Town’s General By-Laws. Years ago alarm systems had to be registered and regulated with the Canton Police Department. Registration is no longer required.

Mr. Clough inquired if the Police would respond to alarms at homes that have alarms that are registered with a private alarm company (such as ADT). Ms. Rafferty stated that the Police would receive an alert from the private alarm company and they would still respond to the homeowner’s dwelling. Article 27 is a housekeeping article to clean up the by-laws.

A motion made by Ms. Schutt recommend to Town Meeting the removal of Article XIV Section 48 Alarm System, Registration and Regulations from the General By-Laws was seconded by Mr. Mauro.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Schutt	Aye	Mr. Cole	Aye
Mr. Mauro	Aye	Mr. Clough	Aye
Ms. Foley	Aye	Ms. Thomas	Aye
Mr. Emery	Aye	Mr. McKenna	Aye

The motion to approve Article 27 passed 8-0-0.

Discussion - Article 29 – Transfer Pleasant Street Land from Select Board to Conservation Commission – Regen Milani, Conservation Agent

Ms. Milani presented information regarding Article 29 as follows:

- If approved at Town Meeting a 15-acre parcel of land would be transferred from the Select Board to the Conservation Commission.
- This property was donated to the Town by a developer who could not develop the property due to it being an unbuildable lot. The 15-acre parcel donation from the developer was a loss in tax revenue for the Town.
- The land is located adjacent to a 27-acre parcel the Town already owns and is under the control of the Conservation Commission, abuts property at the end of Angela Street at the cul-de-sac, abuts Pheasant Ridge Road, abuts Wampatuck Golf Club, abuts 225 Dan Road, is inaccessible from any road, is mostly

swamp land, is unusable land and is protected under the Wetlands Protection Act. After Mr. Clough inquired if there was a plot plan for the property, Ms. Milani was able to produce a GIS map on the Zoom screen.

- If the land is transferred to the Conservation Commission the Commission would adopt it as official Conservation Commission land with conservation restrictions. Any restrictions would apply to abutters of the property.
- Most likely there would be no cost to the Town to transfer the land to the Conservation Commission. If there is a cost for the deed transfer, Ms. Milani stated the cost could be covered by the Conservation Commission's expense budget or the Conservation Land Fund used for land purchases.
- Ms. Milani stated that conservation land is free and open to the public, cannot be filled in, and cannot be used for playing fields or for hunting.

Mr. Scollins suggested that it would be prudent to obtain an abutter's list to mail letters notifying abutters regarding Article 29. This could avoid any unintended consequences at Annual Town Meeting. Ms. Milani volunteered to send letters to abutters.

Mr. Mauro inquired if there would be any zoning and permitting restrictions changes for abutting properties as a result of the change in property designation and he asked if there were any surveys conducted regarding invasive species, site pollution, or other environmental issues since the Town acquired the property. Ms. Milani stated that any liabilities or problems with the property would be the Town's. She further stated that any property management costs such as control of non-invasive or native invasive species could be paid out of the Conservation Commission Land Fund. Dumping enforcement and education to the abutting neighbors could be handled through Conservation Agent's letters to abutters.

Discussion – FY23 Budget - Norfolk County Agricultural High School (NCAHS) – Richard Staiti, Norfolk County Commissioner

Superintendent Martin introduced John Wallace, the Business Manager for NCAHS. Mr. Scollins shared on the Zoom screen two letters the Town of Canton received (one in December 2021 and another in February 2022) from NCAHS regarding the request to increase the in-county tuition rates starting in FY23.

Norfolk County Commissioner Staiti stated that the tuition rates for NCAHS have not been looked at or increased for many years. He deferred to Mr. Martin, the Superintendent-Director of NCAHS to continue the presentation. Mr. Martin deferred to Mr. Wallace, the Business Manager for NCAHS. The following are some of the highlights of the presentation:

- NCAHS' structural deficit is an inherited problem by the Superintendent and Business Manager who have been employed with NCAHS from ½ a year to 4 months.
- The current tuition rates are not enough to cover the costs of operating the school.
- NCAHS engaged a consultant to assess the legality to charge in-county tuition. Tuition was debuted in 2011.
- Bristol County Agricultural School is the only other agricultural school in the state.
- Out-of-county students are paying 100% of the out-of-county tuition costs.

New in-county tuition costs being proposed for FY23 are being split into two pieces as follows:

- \$2,500 as the in-county base cost. This is an increase of \$300 from the in-county base cost in FY22.
- \$1,744 as the in-county capital cost. This is a new portion of the tuition rates.
- Total in-county tuition rates proposed for FY23 is \$4,244 per student or a 93% increase for FY23.

Mr. Wallace further explained the following:

- NCAHS is allowed to charge a capital charge. Bristol County Agricultural School has been charging a capital charge for many years.
- Most of NCAHS' debt borrowing has been on the books for a while.
- It is not the intention of NCAHS to make big changes in the future with the in-county tuition rates.
- The in-county base rates will increase 3-5% per year.
- The in-county capital rates will be based on growth to the extent there are capital projects.
- NCAHS' debt service costs will not change for five years.

Commissioner Staiti reported that there were a number of individuals vetting the tuition rates. The budget was presented at County Commissioner's meetings and NCAHS Trustees meetings. An independent consultant was hired to review the structural deficit in the school's budget. Canton has nine students that currently attend NCAHS and six students that have applied to the school.

Ms. Thomas thanked the NCAHS administration for the presentation because it provided the Finance Committee with information on how the school is funded. Some, not all, transportation costs are funded by the state. The school has transportation pick up spots in Canton. In-county special education student's tuition costs are covered by the school.

Out-of-county SPED students pay an additional SPED tuition along with the base and capital tuition. By law the school is allowed to charge a surcharge for in and out-of-county SPED students.

Chair McKenna noticed that in and out-of-county student enrollment is approximately 50/50 at 290 in county and 295 out of county estimated for FY23. The two towns sending the most out-of county students are Boston and Brockton. Three towns in Norfolk County send students to NCAHS. Mr. Staiti will provide better student enrollment counts as the enrollment/budget process unfolds.

Mr. Clough inquired if NCAHS is eligible for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. He also inquired if NCAHS receives circuit breaker reimbursement on SPED costs similar to what Canton Schools receive. NCAHS is eligible for ARPA funds, however, an amount has not been determined yet and the administration stated that it will not change the budget numbers already voted by the Commissioners and Trustees. NCAHS does not receive SPED circuit breaker reimbursement. The school is eligible to apply for and receive Massachusetts School Business Authority (MSBA) reimbursement. With regard to the Town of Canton ARPA funds through the Norfolk County Commissioners Office, Mr. Scollins stated that Canton has not applied for the ARPA funds because he is waiting for the hopeful change with regard to revenue replacement from the Treasury Department.

Mr. Mauro inquired if in-county applications were considered as a first priority and if out-of-county admissions are based on availability beyond the accepted students within the county or if it is an evenly weighted application process. The new admissions policy that was written in December at the behest of the Department of Education (DOE) includes language that says NCAHS will give preference to in-county applications. How "preference" is defined is subject to interpretation. NCAHS has been strongly encouraged by the DOE to look at in-county applications but there is no specific number that NCAHS is trying to obtain with regard to that ratio.

Mr. Mauro also inquired with regard to in-county and out-of-county rates and if out-of-county rates automatically increased based on costs of educating the student and if county towns would have to approve their rate increases. NCAHS answered this question there is a different process for in-county rates than out-of-county rates. The out-of-county process is straightforward with regard to figuring out the cost, which is the total cost to educate the students divided by the number of students (actual cost per student). For in-county tuition it is up to the NCAHS working with the County Commissioners Office to determine if and by how much in-county tuition rates should increase to meet school budgetary needs. It is not automatic.

Mr. Mauro inquired if the increase in tuition rates would help bring the school out of operating with a deficit and up to balance or if it would take multiple years of increases to help bring the budget to a budget equilibrium. School officials responded that NCAHS has made the "bold" tuition increase to get NCAHS back in the black and on the path to financial stability. NCAHS did not want to imply that their problem was not caused by not charging enough. There are a lot of factors with the revenue and expenses with the school that were considered. NCAHS thought the tuition increase is fair, just and an appropriate way in the right direction.

Discussion – Article 20 – Auction of Town-Owned Property Located at 25 Neponset Street – Dr. Gabriel Solomon

Mr. Scollins provided information regarding the citizen petition Article 20. The Town foreclosed on 25 Neponset Street many years ago. The Town has to go through a process to sell the property through an auction. Dr. Solomon has a strong interest in the Town auctioning off the property.

Unbeknownst to Mr. Scollins during the process of guiding Dr. Solomon through the Town Meeting process and auction process, he was unaware at that time that the Select Board was also initiating a similar article for the exact same purpose to be able to make the property available for public auction. Article 19 was put together by the Town. Mr. Scollins realized that there is probably some frustration for Dr. Solomon. Mr. Scollins apologized for this but was out of the loop for this other article going forward. Article 19 and Article 20 would affect the same result. However, Mr. Scollins was informed at the Select Board's meeting on March 1 the Select Board discussed Article 19 and did take a publicly voted position on Article 19 and voted to withdraw Article 19. They will bring this vote forward to the Finance Committee on March 16. The reason for this recommendation to withdraw Article 19 is the proximity of the 25 Neponset property to the downtown area as well as the proximity to an adjacent lot with a house that is currently for sale. The Select Board's position is that given the scarcity of parking in the downtown area these two lots could be combined and made into a parking lot that could greatly benefit the Town.

Dr. Solomon provided information regarding his interest in the 25 Neponset Street property:

- Moved to Canton four years ago from West Roxbury.
- Is a professor at Bridgewater University. Is a neuroscientist.
- Has two children. One at the middle school and one at the high school.
- Is very interested in establishing roots for the long term in the community.

- Attended the open house for the property that is adjacent to 25 Neponset Street.
- Adopted by a Jewish mother and likes the connection with the Jewish community in Canton.

Mr. Scollins further updated the Finance Committee regarding Article 20 as follows:

- If Dr. Solomon does not want to withdraw Article 20 at Town Meeting. The article will still be brought up on Town Meeting floor. If Article 20 is approved at Town Meeting the property will be auctioned off.
- If the Town supports Dr. Solomon's article, the Select Board could view this as the will of the Town and it will go forward with the Auction.
- Mr. Scollins will need to check the by-law that dictates disposition of foreclosed properties and if the by-law is instructive as to whether it lies with the ATM vote or the Select Board vote.
- Mr. Scollins is the Treasurer of the Town and is the Custodian of all properties.

Mr. Mauro noted that the Town's interest in 25 Neponset Street is aligned with their interest in the adjacent property which is currently listed for sale and he asked whether or not the timeline of this article would align with the Town's possible acquisition of this adjacent property. Mr. Scollins could not answer Mr. Mauro's question but stated the Select Board has Article 19 on the Finance Committee's March 16th agenda for discussion. Mr. Mauro also inquired how the 25 Neponset Street property was zoned.

Ms. Thomas suggested the Finance Committee hold off on any action until they have met with the Select Board.

Mr. Scollins stated that the language in Article 19 was more traditional, less problematic and more instructive in how the property would be handled. He recently was advised that the Select Board has an interest in the property abutting 25 Neponset Street so that the two properties might be combined into one lot for additional downtown parking.

Mr. Clough thanked Dr. Solomon for his story and said Dr. Solomon should "follow his dream" and that no resident should be precluded from bringing an article forward to Town Meeting. He further commented that one Town Meeting article had an article attempting to reduce the number of parking spaces and another article is adding more parking spaces to the Town. He inquired as to how many parking spaces the two lots could accommodate. Mr. Scollins was not aware of the number of parking spaces.

Dr. Solomon attended the open house for the property abutting 25 Neponset Street and he thought the property was approximately the same 5,000 square footage as the empty lot. Ms. Thomas thanked Dr. Solomon and is glad to have interested/vested citizens in the community, but that the Finance Committee needs to hear from the Select Board and that it is up to the voters on how they want to see the Town use the property. Mr. McKenna concurred and that he is glad to have a family interested in the property.

Discussion – Pre-ATM Informational Virtual Meeting – Mr. Staiti, Moderator-Elect

Mr. Staiti discussed that last year's pre-ATM informational virtual meeting was COVID driven and that the Town had not had an informational meeting pre-pandemic. He complimented Alan Hines for doing a great job last year and that the meeting gives residents a heads up regarding articles in advance of the ATM. Mr. Staiti will look at some dates but it would be useful to have the pre-ATM planning meeting first to look at zoning articles, which articles could be clustered and which articles could be considered for the Consent Agenda. The Finance Committee Recommendations are scheduled to be delivered to the voters no later than April 18th with Annual Town Meeting scheduled for May 9th.

Mr. Scollins summarized the following ATM 2022 articles:

Discussion – Article 6 – Personal Service Contracts under the Select Board – Mr. Scollins recommended that Article 6 be indefinitely postponed since there are no personal contracts for approval.

Discussion – Article 12 – Accept General or Session Laws Enacted by the General Court – This is a standing article at every Town Meeting. Mr. Scollins recommended that Article 12 be indefinitely postponed since there are no general or session laws enacted by the General Court that need to be accepted at ATM.

Discussion – Article 13 – Appropriations to Supplement the Commonwealth's Chapter 90 Program – Mr. Scollins stated that no one has put in for a supplement to the Chapter 90 Program so he recommended that Article 13 be indefinitely postponed.

Discussion – Article 21 – Appropriation to Supplement the Budget for Construction of Pickle Ball Court

Mr. Scollins reported that Article 21 was placed on the Annual Town Meeting warrant as a placeholder and that the original budget for the pickle ball court was grossly underestimated. Town meeting approved \$110,000 of CPA funds for the construction of a pickle ball court. After the Town Engineer reviewed the work, the Elder and Human Services Director, Diane Tynan, and the Select Board’s Clerk, Tom Theodore, along with Charlie Aspinwall, John McCourt and himself consensed that an incremental amount of \$210,000 would be needed in order to complete the groundwork for the project. Because other funding has been identified through ARPA funds, the Recreation Revolving Fund and the Elder & Human Services gift account, Mr. Scollins is recommending that Article 21 be indefinitely postponed.

Discussion – Article 22 – Appropriation to Supplement the Budget for Memorial Hall Exterior Renovation

A prior Town Meeting approved \$2.6 million for this project. Mr. Scollins was not recommending Article 22 be indefinitely postponed because there is no definitive information on the supplemental funding needed for the project. Meetings with the designer and the Building Renovation Committee estimate this project will need a supplement of approximately \$400,000 to enter into a contract with the general contractor. Another independent estimator has been hired to come up with their own cost estimates so the bid documents could be received prior to Annual Town Meeting to determine if a supplement would be needed and how much.

Mr. Scollins stated that the Town would probably not have an amount prior to the Finance Committee Recommendations being sent to the printer. Mr. Scollins shared on the Zoom screen a sample of a motion that could be used for Article 22: “A recommendation will be made at Town Meeting when the most current cost information will be available.”

Mr. Scollins suggested that the Finance Committee could put whatever other information in their discussion that was available prior to sending to the printer. If the project does need a supplement of \$400,000 he stated that the Bolivar Pool project still has a surplus that could fund this amount. Even after \$204,000 had been transferred to the Rink project there is still \$15,000 to \$20,000 remaining to finish the pool project. Bolivar project funds were borrowed through a debt exclusion, any funds reappropriated to a non-excluded debt project would be a relief to the taxpayers.

Vote – Articles 6, 12,13 and 21

A motion made by Mr. Mauro to recommend to Annual Town Meeting that Articles 6, 12, 13 and 21 be indefinitely postponed was seconded by Ms. Thomas.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Schutt	Aye	Mr. Cole	Aye
Mr. Mauro	Aye	Mr. Clough	Aye
Ms. Foley	Aye	Ms. Thomas	Aye
Mr. Emery	Aye	Mr. McKenna	Aye

The motion passed 8-0-0.

Discussion – Article 22 – Appropriation to Supplement the Budget for Memorial Hall Exterior Renovation Project

Mr. Clough suggested waiting to take a vote on Article 22 and that the Finance Committee would not have enough information to make an informed decision. He was also concerned about the cost of labor and materials escalating due to inflation. Mr. Scollins stated that the price was locked in at the time of the contract and that there are two signed contracts to date: one with the Owner’s Project Manager and the other with the Designer for full plans and building specs. What remains is the Town going to bid for the construction costs.

A motion made by Mr. Mauro that the Finance Committee defer a recommendation for Article 22 at Annual Town Meeting was seconded by Ms. Thomas.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Schutt	Aye	Mr. Cole	Aye
Mr. Mauro	Aye	Mr. Clough	Aye
Ms. Foley	Aye	Ms. Thomas	Aye
Mr. Emery	Aye	Mr. McKenna	Aye

The motion passed 8-0-0.

Discussion – Assignment of Article Discussions/Comments

Mr. Scollins shared the Article Checklist on the Zoom screen. The Finance Committee Secretary would send the Word document of last year’s Annual Town Meeting report to the Finance Committee to aid them in writing the Finance Committee’s article discussions. Committee members will draft the discussions for review by the Finance Committee Chair and Vice Chair. The Committee will hold one meeting in which the final discussions are reviewed.

Committee members volunteered for writing the following Article discussions. Remaining articles would be dispersed among the Committee members. An updated checklist would be sent to the Committee.

- Mr. Mauro – Article 15 (Capital Planning), Articles 31-42 (Planning Board).
- Ms. Thomas – Articles 22-30 (various topics).
- Ms. Schutt – Articles 7 (Motion #2) 14 and 16.
- Mr. Cole – Article 17.
- Ms. Foley – Articles 18-21.
- Mr. Clough – Articles 8, 9, 11, 20 and 27.

The Committee discussed Article 7 Motion 2 (Set Salaries of Elected Officers) and decided not to make any changes with the salaries of elected officers at this year’s Annual Town Meeting. They discussed the following:

- Bring their concerns to and work with the Select Board.
- Compare the salaries with other communities.
- Schedule a Finance Committee meeting for establishing the Committee’s goals.
- Decide if the salaries of elected officers are really the Finance Committee’s to spearhead.
- Look at the salaries but wait until next year’s Town Meeting once more data has been gathered and have the support of the Select Board.
- Invite the Select Board to a Finance Committee to discuss the Article.
- Decide if a Finance Committee Sub-Committee should be formed.

Approval of Minutes: - The Finance Committee did not approve any meeting minutes.

AAA Bond Rating

Mr. Cole congratulated Mr. Scollins on the Town receiving a AAA Bond Rating from S&P Global Ratings for the upcoming \$15+ million Bond Sale on March 7, 2022. Mr. Scollins thanked Mr. Cole and stated it was a reflection of many people and everyone’s hard work to have received this rating.

Next Meeting Date: The Finance Committee will meet on Wednesday, March 9, 2022 to discuss the FY23 School Department budget and the Recommendations of the Community Preservation Committee to Annual Town Meeting.

A motion made by Ms. Thomas to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. was seconded by Ms. Schutt.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. McKenna	Aye	Ms. Thomas	Aye
Mr. Emery	Aye	Ms. Foley	Aye
Mr. Cough	Aye	Mr. Mauro	Aye
Mr. Cole	Aye	Ms. Schutt	Aye

The motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. passed 8-0-0.

Minutes reviewed by: Tom Emery

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy McKenna
Chair, Canton Finance Committee

**Canton Finance Committee Meeting
Meeting Documents
March 2, 2022**

Please note: Some meeting documents may be found on the Town's website under the Posted Minutes section (Laser Fiche).

Information regarding the FY23 Municipal Budget may be found at the following link:

<https://www.town.canton.ma.us/407/Municipal-Budget-Capital-Information>

Agenda for March 2, 2022 (1 page).

Copies of Article 27 (Amend General By-Laws by Removing Article XIV Section 48. Alarm System, Registration and Regulations By-Law) and Article 29 (Vote to Transfer Pleasant Street Land from Select Board to Conservation Commission).

Letter to Norfolk County Community from John E. Martin, Superintendent-Director, regarding tuition rates, dated December 21, 2021 (1 page).

Letter to Norfolk County Community from John E. Martin regarding tuition rates, dated February 5, 2022 (1 page).

Presentation from Norfolk County Agricultural High School – Tuition Calculations for FY23 (8 pages).

Norfolk County Agricultural High School – Summary of Budget Requests & Estimated Revenue, Fiscal 2023 (1 page).

Norfolk County Agricultural High School – Revenue & Expense Budgets, FY23 and FY22 (1 page).

Copy of Dr. Gabriel Solomon's letter to the Town regarding his interest in 25 Neponset Street.

Draft Motions for ATM Articles 6, 12, 13, 20, 21 and 22 (6 pages).

Finance Committee Checklist (2 pages).