

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, June 24, 2015 at 6:30 PM

Members present: Linda Cook, Chair; Christopher Ashley; Steve Flanders; Dan Goulet; Mary Layton, Vice-Chair; Neil Fulton, Town Manager and Jonathan Bynum.

There were about 15 people in the audience.

Also participating: Watt Alexander, Kris Clement, Rob Gurwitt, David Hubbard, Dennis Kaufman, Cheryl Lindberg, Suzanne Lupien, Stuart Richards, Doug Robinson, Liz Russell, Demo Sofronas.

Cook opened the meeting at 6:32 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). The Selectboard, by consensus, approved the Agenda as is.

2. Public Comments. No action taken.

3. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). Fulton spoke about the fiscal year end and the previous night's forum on the Pool Dam structure. There was discussion of the logistics of requesting an extension for dam construction from FEMA. No action taken.

4. Finance – Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). After some questions, Flanders **moved** (2nd Goulet) to approve Check Warrant Report #15-29 for General Fund in the amount of \$218,759.01, for Conservation Commission Fund in the amount of \$5,000.00 and for Highway Equipment Fund in the amount of \$58,900.00 for the period from 06/19/15 to 06/24/15, and to approve Check Warrant Report #16-1 for General Fund in the amount of \$139,090.13 for the period from 6/25/15 to 07/1/15. **Motion passed.**

5. Review and Receive Financial Management Questionnaire from Treasurer (Discussion/Possible Action Item). In the absence of Cheryl Lindberg (who was expected later), it was agreed to postpone this item to later in the meeting.

6. Interview/Appoint Ann Harvey as a Trustee of Public Funds (Action Item). After discussion, in the absence of Ann Harvey and Cheryl Lindberg, it was decided to postpone this item until later in the meeting.

7. Meet with Rob Gurwitt re DailyUV.com (Discussion). Rob Gurwitt and Watt Alexander of dailyuv.com presented a demonstration of the capabilities of this free local website. The current traffic is about 600-1400 visits per week. They are interested in helping the Town of Norwich use this platform as an information utility for communication with townspeople. No action taken.

5. Review and Receive Financial Management Questionnaire from Treasurer (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Cheryl Lindberg had filled out a one-page questionnaire on the Town's financial management practices that had been created by the Vermont Auditor of Accounts. After a number of questions on bank reconciliations, who approves Town payments, and whether there has been misuse of Town funds or property, Ashley **moved** (2nd Flanders) to receive the Financial Management Questionnaire from the Treasurer. **Motion passed.**

6. Interview/Appoint Ann Harvey as a Trustee of Public Funds (Action Item). Cheryl Lindberg had recruited Ann Harvey to this position, and endorsed her appointment. After discussion, Flanders

moved (2nd Ashley) to appoint Ann Harvey as a Trustee of Public Funds until the next regular Town meeting. **Motion passed.**

8. Norwich Conservation Commission Request to Spend \$9,000 from the Conservation Commission Reserve Fund to Help Conserve 50 Acres on Sugartop Road (Discussion/Possible Action Item). David Hubbard of the Conservation Commission explained that the plan was for John & Judith Wiggin, Trustees to donate a conservation easement on 50 acres of land to the Upper Valley Land Trust. The parcel abuts other conserved land along the Appalachian Trail corridor. The \$9,000 is to assist with legal costs pertaining to the transfer and to create a fund for future stewardship of the land. Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to approve the Conservation Commission's request to spend \$9,000 from the Conservation Commission Reserve Fund to Help Conserve 50 Acres on Sugartop Road. Dennis Kaufman expressed concern over a previous conservation easement donated to a different land trust that contained language that did not create a permanent protection for the donated land.

After further discussion, Ashley **moved** (2nd Flanders) to append to Flanders' original motion the words, "provided that the Conservation Commission verifies in writing that it's a permanent easement." **Motion passed 4-1** (yes—Ashley, Flanders, Goulet and Layton; no—Cook). The Selectboard then voted on Flanders' amended motion, to approve the Conservation Commission's request to spend \$9,000 from the Conservation Commission Reserve Fund to Help Conserve 50 Acres on Sugartop Road, provided that the Conservation Commission verifies in writing that it's a permanent easement. **Motion passed 4-1** (yes—Ashley, Flanders, Goulet and Layton; no—Cook).

9. Norwich Conservation Commission Request to Spend \$30,000 from the Conservation Commission Reserve Fund to Help the Upper Valley Land Trust Conserve 345 acres on Turnpike Road (Norwich Farms) (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Hubbard then explained that the Upper Valley Land Trust planned to acquire 345 acres of former Sigler land recently donated to Vermont Technical College. The \$30,000 is a donation from the Conservation Commission towards the purchase price (which will in turn be used to support VTC's new Norwich dairy operation) and other expenses associated with the transfer. After discussion, Ashley **moved** (2nd Flanders) to approve the Conservation Commission's request to spend \$30,000 from the Conservation Commission Reserve Fund to Help the Upper Valley Land Trust Conserve 345 Acres on Turnpike Road, provided that the Conservation Commission verifies in writing that the protection is permanent. **Motion passed 4-1** (yes—Ashley, Flanders, Goulet and Layton; no—Cook).

10. Follow-up from Norwich Pool Dam Forum (Discussion/Possible Action Item). After discussion, Ashley **moved** (2nd Goulet) to authorize the Town Manager to submit the Pool Dam application as soon as possible, but to present the application to the Selectboard as soon as possible after it is finalized. **Motion failed 2-3** (yes—Ashley and Goulet; no—Cook, Flanders and Layton). Flanders then **moved** (2nd Goulet) to authorize the Town Manager to submit the application for the rebuilding of Norwich's Pool structure. **Motion passed 4-1** (yes—Ashley, Flanders, Goulet and Layton; no—Cook).

11. Finance Committee/Budget Advisory Committee (Discussion). After discussion, no action was taken.

12. FY16 Tax Rate Setting Preparation (Discussion)

- a) Undesignated Fund Balance Policy.
- b) EOY Projections.

Fulton presented the key considerations in setting the tax rate, the Selectboard Undesignated Fund Balance Policy, and the End of Year projections. Discussion, no action.

13. FY16 Selectboard Goals and Calendar (Discussion/Possible Action Item). On Selectboard Goals, there was discussion of revisiting strategic planning and whether a report should be expected from the Quality of Community Committee. On the Selectboard calendar, there was discussion of the two unscheduled meeting dates of July 22nd and August 12th. It was agreed to wait until the next meeting to see whether the Selectboard needs to schedule further meetings over the summer.

14. Capital Facilities (Discussion/Possible Action Item). There was discussion of the difficulties of the process and the message the Norwich voters were trying to send in the two failed bond votes. There was also discussion of how to move forward, and whether the Selectboard could bring another bond proposal to the voters prior to next Town meeting. Layton **moved** (2nd Goulet) to ask Dan Goulet to conduct research of comparative regional construction costs and costs of creating working construction drawings. Results should include statements in writing from qualified professionals. After discussion of whether a motion was needed for this, Layton withdrew the motion, and Goulet withdrew the 2nd. It was agreed that Goulet would pursue this research. It was also agreed to revisit the letter from Paul Gillies on the role of the Town Manager in overseeing building projects at a later meeting.

15. Update of Personnel Policies (Discussion Item). Fulton said that he had a major reworking of the Personnel Policies underway. It was also pointed out that the VLCT is shortly coming out with a new Personnel Policy template. It was decided to postpone further discussion of the Personnel Policies to a later meeting.

In view of the lateness of the hour, Cook **moved** (2nd Ashley) to put agenda items 16(a)-(d) off until the next meeting, and move on to 16(e). **Motion passed.**

16. Selectboard

- (e) Review of Next Agendas (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Next agenda items—
 - Summer schedule
 - Letter from Paul Gillies on Town Manager oversight of building projects
 - FY16 Paving
 - Tax rate setting
 - Correspondence (Selectboard to see two deeds from Upper Valley Land Trust)

Goulet **moved** (2nd Ashley) to adjourn. **Motion passed.** Meeting adjourned at 10:34 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on July 8, 2015.

Jonathan Bynum

Linda Cook
Selectboard Chair
Next Regular Meeting – July 8, 2015 at 6:30 PM

PLEASE NOTE THAT CATV RECORDS ALL REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE NORWICH SELECTBOARD.