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To: Norwich Selectboard  
From: Harry Roberts

As a follow-up to your meeting on Wednesday Nov. 28, I have a few comments that I'd like you to consider:

1) The comparison of Town salaries in Norwich to other Towns, and the charts presented in the Selectboard packet to help make that comparison, are misleading and really should not be used to argue one way or another for salary increases. To isolate the salary of a particular position in another Town, for reasons of comparison, completely ignores the factors of job description and population. Apples to oranges. For example, take the Town of Charlotte, Vermont. The population listed for 2010 in Charlotte is 3,754, fairly close to Norwich at 3,414. Charlotte has a single person serving as Town Clerk and Treasurer with one assistant, a Selectboard assistant, a Planning and Zoning Administrator with an assistant, a Recreation Director, and a Listers office with an appraiser. The Town Clerk, Mary, wears several "hats" in her job performing the duties of Clerk and Treasurer, while in Norwich we have a Town Clerk with assistant, a Finance Director with assistant, a Treasurer, and also a Town Manager with assistant. In Norwich we have at least seven people doing the work that Mary in Charlotte does with two people. It's apples to oranges when you try to compare salaries. And one can look at each and every Town and find that job descriptions and populations are not the same, repeated apples to oranges comparisons.

2) Perhaps it is better to compare per capita spending for Town government. Charlotte's 2010 budget was \$2,504,178, with a population of 3,754 the per capita spending on Town of Charlotte government was \$667 per person. Norwich Town spending in 2010 was \$4,049,500 and with a population of 3,414 per capita spending was \$1,186 for Town government.

When you start comparing town governments and compensation levels, such as you have with the Condrey report and others (such as the VLCT numbers reported Wednesday night), you begin a dangerous journey of "cherry picking" numbers in order to justify an action. None of the Towns used in the Condrey report for comparison run their Town in a comparable manner to Norwich, nor do any of the Towns used for comparison have the same infrastructure and commercial property mix that Norwich has, it's apples to oranges.

Our per capita spending is more comparable to spending in Hartford, Woodstock, and Hanover. Important to note is that those three Towns have much more municipal infrastructure, most notably municipal sewer and water, as well as considerably more commercial development, apples

to oranges. Take a look at the numbers comparing per capita Town spending in the municipalities used in the Condrey report:

Town	population	2010 Town Exp.	per capita expenditures
Hartland	3,393	\$2,221,725.32	\$654.80
Charlotte	3,754	\$2,504,178.00	\$667.07
Dorset	2,031	\$1,604,120.00	\$789.82
Norwich	3,414	\$4,049,500.00	\$1,186.15
Hartford	9,952	\$12,051,373.00	\$1,210.95
Woodstock	3,048	\$4,516,392.00	\$1,481.76
Hanover	11,260	\$19,744,099.00	\$1,753.47
Lebanon	13,151	\$42,312,510.00	\$3,217.44

One possible conclusion to reach would be that Norwich spending does not compare to other Towns, such as Hartland, Charlotte, and Dorset that don't have expensive municipal services, like sewer and water, or large commercial development, just as in Norwich. Norwich per capita spending is closer to the per capita spending found in those Towns providing much greater Town services and with much more commercial development. Norwich has "big city" spending with "small town" resources.

- 3) Norwich Town government is not comparable to other Towns in that we have built a Town administration that includes a Town Manager with full time assistant, a Town Clerk with part time assistant, a Finance Director with full time assistant, a Planning and Zoning Director with part time assistant, a Fire Chief, a Police Chief with full time assistant and three full time officers, a Recreation Director, and a Public Works Director. Throw in a few part time positions I may have missed that support some of these positions and I think you will find few, if any Towns at our population level that have such an extensive staff running their Towns. My point is that Norwich certainly has work that needs to be done at the municipal level, but that I doubt the work that needs to be done in Norwich is that much greater than the work that needs to be done in other Towns our size with a similar level of municipal services.

Do I think, and do others in Town think that our employees are underpaid? Well, if you pay to have a consultant look in isolation at each position to examine compensation levels then I guess you can draw such a conclusion. But if you look at the overall picture of Town size and population, staffing levels of the Town government, job descriptions, and the rural, residential, and commercial mix in other Towns then the picture is not so clear. If someone were to ask me if the Town Clerk/Treasurer,

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Mary Mead, in Charlotte should be compensated at a level that's as high as or higher than the Town Clerk in Hartland, I'd say "possibly, maybe Mary is performing more functions in a slightly larger Town ". Should our Recreation Director be compensated at a comparable level to the Director of Parks in Stowe or Barre? I can't answer that. Does Stowe or Barre have municipal parkland and facilities that are the full responsibility of the Director of Parks for maintenance and administration? Do those Towns serve more population, provide more programs, have more facilities, or have more employees to supervise? I can't answer those questions, but I think they need to be answered before we increase compensation to a level that compares to those other Towns.

These questions, and more, should apply to each and every salary level increase proposed in the new budget. We all want to compensate Town employees fairly, but the question remains "what is fair"? Has the Town violated some past commitment to these employees that their level of compensation would always keep up with the "market", however that is defined? Did these employees ask for these increases? Were they dissatisfied as a result of their level of compensation? Did they originally take their jobs expecting to eventually be at some consultant's benchmark level of compensation?

You've got a tough job here, the Town Manager has already put these salary increases on the table and you have to decide who better to serve, Town taxpayers or Town employees. I don't buy the idea that these huge pay increases will serve both constituencies. I personally worked more hours last year but earned 40% less. I also know some folks that have taken pay cuts of 10% or 20%, others who lost their COLA increases, and others whose jobs are gone. I don't know anybody who received a pay raise without a promotion last year, there may be some who did, but not many and likely none at the 30% increase level.

You folks were elected by the citizens to represent us.

Thanks for reading this long and somewhat repetitive letter!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "H. A.", is located at the bottom of the page.