

TOWN OF NORWICH
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Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Tuesday, December 10, 2002 at 6:30 PM

Members Present: Liz Blum; Linda Cook; Neil Fulton; Douglas Hoffman, Chair; Nancy Hoggson; Dennis Pavlicek, Town Manager; Tina Moses, Secretary.

Also Participating: Commissioner Gregory –Brown, Department of Housing and Community Affairs; Adele Fulton, Dennis Kaufman, Jim Masland, Jeff Mathias, Alison May, Creigh Moffatt, Henry Scheier. There were approximately 15 members in the audience at this meeting.

Hoffman opened the meeting at 6:30pm.

- 1) Approval of Agenda – Cook **moved** to approve the agenda with changes (second Blum). Fulton said he is voting against the agenda as he feels some of the Selectboard members had private discussions about the regional planning commission discussion and invited Commissioner Brown without consent of the entire Board. Fulton said he is disappointed at this action as in the past there had been complaints from the community that the board was not “public” enough and the goal of the Selectboard has been to have all discussions in the open. . He said it has been reported to him by an employee that we will be changing regional planning commissions. He said this indicates there have been conversations taking place between Selectboard members and the public or employees which do not accurately reflect the feelings of the board as a whole. He referenced Hoggson's letter of March 13, 2001 where she urged the Selectboard to practice ‘fair leadership and sound planning and sound decision-making. Fulton stated that since the invitation to Commissioner Brown had not been issued under what he considered to be proper procedures, he is voting against the agenda. (4-1). Fulton- No. **Motion passed.**
- 2) Public Comments – Blum said that she was grateful to Ames Byrd for updating the Selectboard on the work of the Energy Committees and the interaction with Efficiency Vermont. She said their budget is being cut during this budget season and she urged residents to contact the appropriate governmental department to let them know you are opposed to the cuts.
- 3) Town Manager’s Report – Pavlicek has been working to fine tune the budget and the latest draft will be available tomorrow. Discussion can take further place on the budget in January.
- 4) Finance
 - a) Orders on the General Fund – Hoggson **moved** to approve the Payroll Warrant for the period ending 12/7/02 in the amount of \$23,330.52 with corresponding taxes to be paid in the amount of \$8,461.36, Accounts Payable Warrant #198 in the amount of \$60,857.30 and the Capital Account Warrant in the amount of \$47,999.00 (second Blum). **Motion passed.**
- 5) Regional Planning Commission
 - a) Discussion with Commissioner Brown of the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs concerning the process for changing regional planning commissions – Hoffman said he appreciates Brown coming to visit the Board to discuss the process of changing regional planning commissions. Brown clarified that he has not received the required letter from Hartford stating that they would like to change and while it is

Hoggson’s revisions made 2/7/03

possible for towns to move from one RPC to another it has only happened once in the last ten years as far as he knows and that was when Hartford left UVLS and moved to Two Rivers. Commissioner Brown reviewed the State's policy that would need to be followed before any change would be approved by the Secretary. The policy was distributed to the Selectboard and reviewed in detail by Brown. The first step in the process is for the Commissioner to meet with the officials of the town for an information session and then with both of the regional planning commissions affected by this move. Because UVLS is objecting to Hartford's request, Hartford will have to conduct a study to determine if the statutory criteria that the State follows will be met if this switch is made. If Norwich decides to move as well, Norwich will also have to conduct a similar study. The town and the two RPC's must mutually agree on an individual or organization to conduct the study. The cost of this study is borne by the municipality requesting the switch. Within 30 days following receipt of the study, the Secretary will meet with representatives of the municipality and the RPC to hear any comments they may have on the study's findings. The final determination will be made by the Secretary after this meeting, and that decision is irrevocable. The study would need to clearly show that there is a geographical reason why the move is a good one. Blum asked how many towns in Vermont belong to regional planning commissions in other states. Brown said there are only three – Hartford, Norwich, and Hartland. Hoffman said that the Board has had no formal discussions on this topic or taken any actions. Hoggson asked if Thetford had had to do this study when they left UVLS several years ago Brown said no because, UVLS did not oppose their leaving therefore there was no need for the survey process. Kaufman asked why Norwich would need to leave if Hartford does and he also asked how much it would cost and further asked why this subject was brought up now. Kaufman further mentioned that the only time that he had previously heard of this issue was during the last campaign in March, when Hoggson raised the issue of Norwich being a member of UVLS vs. Two Rivers. Hoffman said it was his understanding from Hartford that we would need to leave if Hartford left because the State would not want to fund an RPC with only 2 Vermont towns, especially because those two towns (Norwich and Hartland) did not share any common borders making planning issues more difficult. Brown said he could not comment on the cost of the survey, but that the organization/consultant chosen would have to be approved by both RPC's. Norwich would probably want to send out an RFP as is usually done with consultants. Scheier asked where in the process does the public get a chance to speak. Brown said the process requires at least one public meeting. May asked if Hartford and Hartland both left would Norwich have to move as well. Brown said he was unsure of what the State would do if only Norwich was left in UVLS. It would require thought as to whether or not Norwich would be able to access services as the only VT town in an RPC with 27 NH towns. Mathias said he had met with Tara Bamford so that he had a better understanding of the role of UVLS and what they do for Norwich. He also met with Peter Gregory from Two Rivers, and said he feels he would lean toward Upper Valley based on the information he was given if all things were equal. He said, however; all things do not seem equal as there are two concerns which may influence that decision. The first is based on the concern that Vermont allocates more money through the regional planning commissions per town than New Hampshire does and Norwich might thus receive more services from Two Rivers. Mathias also said he heard a rumor that UVLS opposed a business moving into Hartford and was behind

Hartford's problems with UVLS. Hoggson said she believed they did not oppose the bank (Mascoma Savings) moving into Hartford, but that a traffic study was done by UVLS laying out concerns about traffic. The concerns raised by UVLS were then forwarded to the Act 250 Board, which came as a surprise to the Hartford Selectboard because they had not been made aware of these concerns first by UVLS. Hoffman said he received an e-mail from Ed Childs, Chair of the Planning Commission about the possibility of Norwich moving to Two Rivers, and he explained to Childs that we are not ready to discuss any actual move at this point, and this meeting is informational only. Kaufman asked again why is the Selectboard discussing this now, and said he doesn't believe a move is wise at this time. Jim Masland said he suggested that if we do decide to move it should be with agreement with the Planning Commission. When he was on the Thetford Selectboard, he was their representative to UVLS and attended their meetings regularly for some years. He began attending Two Rivers meetings serving as an alternate to the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation. Because of this and a state-planning group that he was part of he became familiar with most of the state regional plans and was able to compare them. He was very impressed with the quality of the work done by Two Rivers and the expertise of their staff. He said they provide excellent technical service to their towns. He felt the move to Two Rivers was a logical one for Thetford because the traffic coming through Thetford was from the Two Rivers region and the water that flows through Thetford comes from the Two Rivers area, and the regional collaborations that would benefit Thetford were more likely to be with VT towns than NH towns. He said he believed that working with the other Vermont towns made more sense to Thetford. Moffatt said maybe each commission should provide an overview of what benefits they would be able to provide for Norwich. Adele Fulton asked if there was an opportunity for other municipalities to comment on the possibility of change if it affects their town. She also asked if there is an appeal process. Brown said no there is no appeal process, and the decision of the Secretary is a final decision. The public will be able to make comments and share any concerns at the public meeting that is required to be held. May asked how many towns have switched. Brown said Thetford is the only one in the last ten years. Peg Elmer, Director of Planning at DHCA, said Hartland also switched from Two Rivers to UVLS some years ago.

- 6) Budget Discussion – Hoffman said there will be no line-by-line discussion tonight. This discussion is to collect questions so we can get answers before the two public meetings in January. Fulton gave thanks to Pavlicek for the excellent job he has done to keep a stable tax rate and control costs. Hoffman said he appreciated the work Pavlicek has done to reduce administrative costs while still protecting the services necessary to the town. Hoffman asked to discuss the non-profits who have requested allocations from Norwich for the coming year. He said in the past we have always requested a petition but feels it may be a burden on the non-profits. Fulton said he agrees that they are great groups but feels they should be asked to submit a petition. Blum proposed that since the Land Management Committee falls under the Fire District that the Town Manager find a way to put it in the budget. Hoffman asked if the Land Management Committee could come talk to the Board to answer questions like what does their total budget look like, do they get revenues from the fire district etc. Fulton **moved** to concur with the Town Manager's recommendation for the remaining non-profits and ask the Town Manager to convey that we require a petition for any non-profit that is requesting more money than Norwich's agreed-upon COLA or for new requests. (second Blum).

Motion passed.

7) Selectboard

a) Appointments

- i) Public Transportation Committee – Fulton **moved** to appoint Ed Janeway, Robert Chamberlin and John Lawe to the Pubic Transportation Committee (second Blum).

Motion passed.

- ii) DRB Study Committee – It was noted that Andy Friedland is the third representative to the Conservation Commission on this committee.

- b) Liaisons for Committees and Commissions – Hoggson said she believes that some town committees should still have liaisons. Hoffman said getting the minutes of each committee is extremely important. Blum said she believes the schedule of meetings should be made available so they can attend meetings if they desire. Fulton said he agreed.

- c) Legal Bills – 1) Desmeules, Olmstead and Ostler for professional services related to the Melendy Property in the amount of \$896.10

- 2) Spink and Miller for professional services related to the VELCO appeal in the amount of \$888.74.

- d) Selectboard Reports and Communications – Fulton said this was expressed in the packet he forwarded to all Board members. If needed he said this could be discussed at a future meeting.

- e) Handling of Requests to Appear before Selectboard – same as in (d) above

- f) Open Meeting Act Procedures- same as in (d) above

- g) Correspondence

- i) CATV letter – Fulton **moved** to receive the letter from Terry Boone and convey the town's appreciation of his long term of service and advertise for the position (second Blum). **Motion passed.**

- h) Minutes of Selectboard Meeting

- i) November 26, 2002 – Fulton **moved** to approve the minutes with changes (second Hoggson). **Motion passed.**

Fulton **moved** to adjourn at 8:20pm (second Blum). **Motion passed.**

Next Regular Meeting – January 14, 2003 at 6:30 PM

Approved by the Selectboard on February 11, 2003

By, Kristina Moses
Selectboard Secretary

Douglas W. Hoffman
Selectboard Chair