

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, March 11, 2009 at 5:30 PM

Members present: Sarah Nunan, Chair; Ed Childs; Suzanne Lupien; Sharon Racusin (by phone); Lynn McGrew; Pete Webster, Town Manager; Nancy Kramer, Assistant to the Town Manager.

There were about 26 people in the audience.

Also participating: Betty Barba, Martin Butler, Margaret Cheney, Phil Dechert, Neil Fulton, Linda Gray, Scooter Hardy, Nancy Hoggson, Dennis Kaufman, Steve Leinoff, Cheryl Lindberg, Jim Masland, Phil Phillips, Demo Sofronas, Doug Tuthill, Dan Weintraub, Chuck Wise, John Wood.

Nunan opened the meeting at 5:30 pm.

1. 5:30 pm - Litigation (Executive Session May be Required). Pursuant to Title 1 VSA § 313(a)(1), Lupien **moved** (2nd Childs) to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing litigation and labor relations and to invite Pete Webster, and the Listers to join the Session. **Motion passed.** The Selectboard moved into Executive Session at 5:31 pm.

At 6:34 pm the Selectboard moved into public session. No action was taken as a result of the Executive Session.

2. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). McGrew **moved** (2nd Lupien) to approve the Agenda. **Motion passed.**

3. Follow Up from Last Meeting (Discussion/Action Item). Nunan will follow up on the Kelly Griggs lost correspondence. The April 1st Selectboard meeting was moved to April 7th due to a scheduling conflict.

4. Public Comments (Discussion). Hardy spoke about the ad in the Valley News regarding the posting of Town roads saying he feels it is a large, expensive ad that is not required by Statute. Webster will look into and get back to the Board. Hardy also inquired about the extra equipment at the Highway garage and slips in the Finance Office that do not state what the part is for. Webster will also look into this and get back to the Board.

Butler came before the Selectboard to explain his tax delinquency issue. He filed his HS-122 late and therefore was taxed at the lower rate. He indicated that he did not receive his notification of the tax increase from the Finance Office and thus paid the incorrect amount and is being assessed penalties therefore. Butler inquired about mailing return receipt and the Finance Office looking up amount due when people come in to pay their taxes. The Town Manager will ask Roberta Robinson to look into the cost of such a mailing and the number of people who received this notice.

Kaufman again reminded people that the HS-122 (Homestead Declaration and Property Tax Adjustment Claim) needs to be filed annually and is due April 15th. You may file online at www.vermont.gov where there is a link to click on at the bottom of the page. The form should be mailed to: Vermont Department of Taxes, 133 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05633-1401.

5. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). The Town Manager met with Robert Chamberlin, Dechert, Fulton, Hodgdon and Chuck Wise regarding an experimental lane closure. A preliminary computer simulation model will be shared with the Board at the March 25th meeting. The bandstand has been dismantled with the roof being preserved and stored behind Marion Cross School. The bid has been awarded to GR Porter and construction work should begin in early April. Delinquent taxes were up slightly from last year. Webster has discussed the possibility of the Montshire Museum hosting a Norwich Family Day with David Goudy, Director of the Museum. The Selectboard Institute is April 4th in Montpelier.

6. Finance – Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). After Lindberg explained the difference between the dummy warrant the Selectboard had in their packets and the actual warrant, Childs **moved** (2nd Racusin) to approve Check Warrant Report #09-19 for the period from 2/26/2009 to 3/11/2009 in the amount of \$134,945.38; of which \$134,503.42 is General Fund and \$441.96 is Police Station Fund. **Motion passed.**

7. Norwich Open Meeting Policy (Discussion/Action Item). McGrew said this policy is being offered for the purpose of increased transparency in Town government. It is loosely based on suggestions offered by the Secretary of State on her website. McGrew believes there is no such thing as a Town Manager committee unless it is made up of 100% Town employees. Lupien and Nunan are comfortable with the policy. Racusin asked if some language regarding emails should be included. Childs wants a review by all effected Town committees, boards, commissions etc. and possibly by the Town counsel. Dechert said about 20 Town committees etc. would be effected by this policy. Dechert requested the policy be turned over to the Town Manager for staff review.

After some further discussion, the Board will allow time for review by others and take this item up again at their April 22nd meeting.

9. **7:30 pm** – Appointment with Jim Masland and Margaret Cheney Re: Class 1 Proposal and Other Pending Legislation (Discussion). Masland doesn't know how the language for the reclassification got included in the transportation bill. The Selectboard can accept the current bill, ask for amendments or ask for it to be removed. Masland briefly went over the Norwich Class 1 background. Wise said the reclassification considers transferring 2.36 miles of Church Street and River Road from VTrans control (State) to Town control (Class 1). An aerial map of the proposed Class 1 redesignation was shared with those present. Wise reaffirmed Hodgdon's October, 2007 Class 1 memo figures. The third party review done by Bob Chamberlin shows the reclassification as revenue neutral. Fulton feels the Board should put this off until after the VTrans roadway project as there are many unanswered questions. Other items discussed were: plowing and truck concerns, outdated figures and State restrictions on highways.

After some further discussion, Childs **moved** (2nd Nunan) to have the Norwich representatives pull the bill. **Motion passed 4 to 0** (yes – Childs, Lupien, McGrew and Nunan). Racusin abstained.

Also discussed were: educational funding, clean energy assessment districts, prebate checks being sent by the State instead of the Town, education tax rates, organic farming bill HR 875, EC Fiber charge backs to towns (which Masland refuted, saying bill contains no such language nor will it ever have such language) and HS 122 fixes.

10. Municipal Enforcement of the VT Fire Prevention and Building Code (Discussion). All public buildings, excluding single-family dwellings and certain agricultural buildings, require a construction permit and certificate of occupancy from the VT Division of Fire Safety. Statutes permit a municipality to take over enforcing all or part of the State Fire Prevention Code. This would not be new code for Norwich, simply local enforcement of the current code. Leinoff recommends mirroring of State permit fees. Leinoff feels this would improve life safety for the community and provide consistency.

Kaufman urged the Selectboard to not take over this enforcement.

After some further discussion, the Board asked that Leinoff's memo on the topic be put up on the Town website and placed the topic back on pending items. Leinoff will continue to educate townspeople on the topic.

8. Policy Round Table (Discussion/Action Item). Nunan explained that the Board would have a roundtable discussion regarding a policy issue with no public comments during the special meeting. The public is encouraged to provide comments later either in writing or during public comments at a regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting. Childs suggested having them throughout the year not just in the spring, making sure the public knew in advance what agenda items would be and maybe allowing some public comment.

Sofronas and Barba both spoke in favor of the policy.

After some discussion, Racusin **moved** (2nd McGrew) that the Board accept the policy as amended. **Motion passed.**

11. Correspondence (Please go to www.norwich.vt.us, click on Town Offices bullet in left panel, scroll down to Norwich Selectboard section and click on Recent Selectboard Correspondence to view resident correspondence):

a) Nonresident –

1) Memo from TRORC Re: Confirmation of Municipal Planning Efforts. McGrew **moved** (2nd Childs) to receive a memo from TRORC re: confirmation of municipal planning effort. **Motion passed.** Nunan read pertinent portions of the memo.

12. Selectboard

a) Approval of the Minutes of the 2/25/09 Meeting (Action Item). Since there was not a quorum of Selectboard members who were on the Board for the February 25th meeting, the approval of the minutes was put off until the March 25th meeting.

- b) Outreach (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Racusin discussed her thoughts saying maybe this could be called "listening posts". There was discussion regarding the process of one member getting the feedback to the whole Board. The suggestion was made that the Selectboard could start by one member attending other board, committee, etc. meetings. Racusin will work on the wording and bring back to the Board.

McGrew **moved** (2nd Childs) to adjourn. **Motion passed.** Meeting adjourned at 9:13 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on March 25, 2009.

By Nancy Kramer
Assistant to the Town Manager

Sarah Nunan
Selectboard Chair

Next Regular Meeting – March 25, 2009 at 6:30 PM

Pending Items:

- 1) Vehicle Acquisition and Replacement Policy/NORCAP Report/Strategic Planning (3/25/09)
- 2) Strategic Planning Committee Organization (3/25/09)
- 3) Municipal Enforcement of the VT Fire Prevention and Building Code
- 4) Class 1 Road Designation
- 5) Norwich Open Meeting Policy
- 6) Town Report FY09
- 7) Listening Posts

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