

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, December 8, 2010 at 6:30 PM

Members present: Roger Blake, Chair; Ed Childs; Sharon Racusin; Pete Webster, Town Manager; Nancy Kramer, Assistant to the Town Manager. Absent: Uwe Bagnato and Suzanne Lupien.

There were about 13 people in the audience.

Also participating: Linda Cook, Phil Dechert, Martha Drake, Scooter Hardy, Andy Hodgdon, Nancy Hoggson, Dennis Kaufman, Cheryl Lindberg, Norman Miller, Chief Robinson, Roberta Robinson, Allen Rowell.

Blake opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). By consensus, the Selectboard approved the Agenda.
2. Follow Up From Last Meeting – Martha Drake, Senior Action Council (Discussion). Drake was present and spoke briefly about the Council. Drake was thanked by the Board for coming. Kaufman reminded everyone that the mandatory pre-proposal conference for contractors wishing to present a proposal to do the Town-wide reappraisal is Thursday, December 9th at 10:00 am.
3. Public Comments. Dechert said the Planning Commission Public Hearing on the new Town Plan is Thursday, December 9th at 7:00 pm. The Town Plan will eventually be coming before the Selectboard and they will need to have a public hearing also. Dechert read an email from Paul Gillies stating that, after his review of the Norwich Town Plan, it was the best one he has read. Hardy asked why the graffiti on the bridge has not been painted over, questioned the new guardrails on Route 132 and wanted to know why the summer help at Public Works is still around. Hardy believes the Public Works budget is inflated and suggested a financial consultant be used. Rowell wanted to know when the grader decision will come before the Board and was told in February.
4. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). The Fire Department has received their roof permit from the State and work will begin as soon as possible on the new roof. The new guardrails on Route 132 were put in to stop illegal dumping. The continuing traffic issues with the signalized timing on the Route 5 South traffic signal appear to have been resolved thanks to the efforts of Bob Chamberlin. Hodgdon has received a grant from VLCT PACIF for a hydraulic lift gate. Chuck Rataj will be returning soon from Afghanistan and Webster would like to recognize his service to our country.
5. Finance – Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). Childs **moved** (2nd Racusin) to approve Check Warrant Report #11-12 for the period from 11/24/10 to 12/8/10 in the amount of \$273,657.31; all of which is General Fund. **Motion passed.**

6. 4th Budget Work Session (Discussion/Action Item). The latest draft of the FY12 level services expenditure budget is showing a 4.34% increase. Webster said actual municipal expenditures have gone up very little over the years and the municipal tax rate has gone down. Webster also spoke about costs being driven by healthcare and said he will be taking a serious look at leaving the VLCT Health Trust next year due to their aging population and the associated costs. Webster would like to see nonunion and union employees advance at the same rate. Changes in this budget are in bold and represent an increase in the GUVSWD assessment fee and the health insurance line item for the Police Department. The Undesignated Fund balance is healthy and Webster hopes to keep the municipal tax rate flat by using this fund.

Town Administration level services budget is currently showing a 6.52% increase. Other than healthcare and the 4% suggested raise for Kramer, the professional services line item accounts for the increase.

Public Works – The Public Works level services budget is up 6.62%. Part of this increase is a \$35,000 match for a possible \$175,000 bridge grant. Hodgdon has gone over his equipment replacement plan and has cut \$25,000 from his Designated Fund – Equipment line item which will be reflected in the next budget draft. Hardy spoke about cutting labor at the Highway Department, the Bowen Hill guardrail needing repair, taking a year off from paving and purchasing new equipment and tracking the money spent by Public Works. Hardy feels he cannot work with the Town Manager so he has brought this to the Selectboard to consider. After some discussion during which Webster responded that he has repeatedly urged Hardy to meet with him and Hodgdon to discuss his concerns, Miller offered to work with Webster and Hardy to resolve the problem. Blake thanked Hardy for coming before the Board and encouraged him to stay involved. Lindberg asked for and received the compensation review report. Lindberg again asked the Selectboard to consider cutting HSA contributions and adding into the budget her event fee for attending the New England States Government Financial Officers Association annual meeting. Racusin indicated she was fine with the Public Works' budget.

Also discussed were: the lack of attendance at the joint Norwich School Board/Norwich Selectboard meeting, more public information being distributed and the lack of unity in Norwich.

Lister – Racusin believes the hourly pay for the Listers is high in comparison to other towns and said she would like to reduce their hourly wage. Kaufman said the Listers have had no increase in three years and he has devoted thirteen years to this office and feels they are doing a good job and deserve the same increase as other Town employees are getting. Webster read the comments regarding the Lister salary from the compensation report. Also discussed were: the CLA remaining relatively stable, lawsuits, the Assessor, stipends and the need for more public understanding of what the Listers do.

7. 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) Resident –

- 1) #7 a). Letter of Resignation from Ann Shriver Sargent. Childs **moved** (2nd Racusin) to receive a letter of resignation from Ann Shriver Sargent. **Motion**

passed. A letter of thanks will be sent to Sargent for her services and the open position will be posted.

8. Selectboard

- a) Approval of the Minutes of the 11/17/10 and 11/23/10 Meetings. Racusin **moved** (2nd Childs) to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2010 and November 23, 2010 Selectboard meetings. **Motion passed.**
- b) Review GMEDC's Request for Funds (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Childs reviewed saying their request has not been funded in the past and at some point consideration should be given to including GMEDC under Support Groups. Hoggson spoke about GMEDC being a very dysfunctional organization and questions the Town taking on the additional expense. Hoggson believes things are improving at GMEDC under the guidance of Joan Goldstein. Childs suggested that Webster have a conversation with VLCT to determine how other municipalities handle such requests and to not waste GMEDC's time by revisiting this every year. There was also some discussion regarding the good work GMEDC has done for King Arthur Flour.

Childs **moved** (2nd Racusin) to adjourn. **Motion passed.** Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on January 12, 2011.

By Nancy Kramer
Assistant to the Town Manager

Roger Blake
Selectboard Chair

Special Selectboard Meeting – December 15, 2010 at 6:30 PM

Next Regular Meeting – January 12, 2011 at 6:30 PM

Pending Items:

- 1) Vehicle Acquisition and Replacement Policy/NORCAP Report/Strategic Planning
- 2) Code of Conduct Policy for Town Manager and Selectboard
- 3) Charge for Committee Reviewing Junk Policies
- 4) 250th Celebration Plans
- 5) Town Eating Day Participation
- 6) Town Boundaries

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