

Minutes of the Special Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, December 7, 2011 at 6:30 PM

Members present: Ed Childs, Chair; Roger Blake; Christopher Ashley; Linda Cook; Steve Flanders; Neil Fulton, Interim Town Manager; Nancy Kramer, Assistant to the Town Manager.

There were about 25 people in the audience.

Also participating: Len Brown, Van Chesnut, Michael Cryans, Stephen Geller, Elaine Guenet, Jim Harlow, Russell Hirschler, Nancy Hoggson, Linda Husband, Cheryl Lindberg, Chris Lord, Peter Milliken, Keith Moran, Peggy O'Neil, Ed Piper, Jan Stryker, Wendy Teller-Elsberg, Jay Van Arman, Lucinda Walker, Amanda White.

Childs opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

1. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). The public forum on the Norwich Pool Dam hosted by the Recreation Council went very well and was well attended. The RFP for consulting services related to the repair or replacement of the Norwich Pool Dam and Recreation Area associated with the swimming area should come before the Selectboard in January. A Communications Project public forum is scheduled for December 12th at 7:00 pm in Tracy Hall. The Management Discussion and Analysis is complete and should be coming before the Board to discuss at their first meeting in January. The December revisions to the Town Plan are up on the Town website and will come before the Selectboard for their approval December 14th. The FEMA paperwork on Irene damages is about 60% completed. The Town has met the criteria for 90% reimbursement. If everything remains on schedule, the Town should start to receive reimbursements in March, 2012. The repair work on Blood Brook is finished. The guardrail work related to Irene is not yet complete. Bridge #41 on Turnpike Road up from Tilden Hill has been recently looked at by AOT and has been assessed as in serious condition. Fulton showed the Board a picture he had taken that morning showing erosion of the footing. Fulton said the Town needs to take immediate steps to repair the bridge. This bridge is Hodgdon's #1 project on his bridge list of pending projects. Estimated total cost to replace the structure is \$245,000. FEMA has looked at the bridge damage and may reimburse some of the money. Cook asked if any other bridges on Hodgdon's list needing repairs received further damage from Irene and Fulton said no.

2. Finance – Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). Flanders **moved** (2nd Blake) to approve Check Warrant Report #12-20 for General Fund for the period from 11/24/11 to 12/7/11 in the amount of \$74,049.21. **Motion passed.** Cook **moved** (2nd Flanders) to approve Check Warrant Report #12-20 for Police Special Equipment Fund for the period from 11/24/11 to 12/7/11 in the amount of \$483.52. **Motion passed.**

3. Committee to Review Real Property Assessment Functions Final Report (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Milliken said the Committee conducted 25 interviews, including the Director and District Advisor of Property Valuation & Review as well as current and former Listers and Assessor of Norwich and others around the State of Vermont, to gain a better understanding of how Norwich maintains its Grand List and organizes its Listers Office and how other towns do the same. The Committee recommends a periodic Town-wide reappraisal every four years accomplished by dividing the Town into four quadrants and doing one quadrant each year. Listers are to develop policy and perform statutory duties only and be paid an annual stipend. The Town should hire a contract Assessor or a part-time Assessor. The Clerk's hours should be at least 20 hours per week up to full time. Data in Section 4 of the Report shows that Norwich spends more on its Lister budget than any other towns interviewed. The Committee chose Charlotte as a town

that is similar to Norwich in size and socio-economic makeup. The Committee recommends implementation of their recommendations for FY13 using it as a transition period so as not to negatively impact the Town-wide reappraisal that is currently underway. The benefits of the Committee's recommendations include predictability and stability, keeping the parcel data current and lowering costs. Ashley asked if the Committee had any recommendations on office space or dollar figures for pay. Milliken answered that the Committee did not reach a consensus on pay but would recommend a pay range using Charlotte as a basis. Office space currently used by the Listers seems adequate to the Committee. Flanders thanked the Committee for their work and Committee member present (Lauren Girard Adams, Adele Fulton, Dennis Kaufman and Peter Milliken) were recognized. Fulton and the Listers are working on budget numbers for FY13 that will be provided to the Selectboard in their Friday packets.

Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to receive the Committee to Review Real Property Assessment Functions Final Report with our thanks to Peter Milliken and the Committee. **Motion passed.**

4. Selectboard 3rd Budget Work Session – Outside Agencies (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Representatives from Advance Transit, American Legion Lyman F. Pell Post #8, Cemetery Commission, Child Care Center in Norwich, The Family Place, Green Mountain RSVP, HCRS, Headrest, Norwich Historical Society (NHS), Norwich Public Library (NPL), SEVCA, Upper Valley Trails Alliance (UVTA), VNA & Hospice of VT and NH, White River Council on Aging, Windsor County Partners, WISE and Youth-in-Action (YIA) attended the meeting, explained what they do and in particular what they do for Norwich residents and answered questions. Other items discussed were: the NPL being the de facto community center, Gile Mountain trail grants, real-time bus tracking, flags at half mast in observance of National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day and more land being needed for cemetery plots. All were thanked for coming by the Board. Ashley recused himself from all discussions of The Family Place. Afterwards, Flanders voiced his reservations on whether RSVP, YIA, UVTA and NHS met the requirements of paragraph 2.2 of the Selectboard Appropriation Policy particularly in regard to benefiting Norwich residents. Fulton requested guidance on whether he should proceed with the proposed expenditure requests in preparing the final budget for Board approval. The Selectboard agreed by consensus that he should do so. Fulton said there may be an additional appropriation request coming in by petition from the Norwich Lions Club for \$3,000 for fireworks. Fulton will keep the Selectboard informed on all petitions received. Final decision on including petitions received on the Town Warning resides with the Board.

5. FY13 Budget Follow-Up (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Fulton went over the budget modifications from the November 22nd meeting, the tax rate changes and paving budget and article impacts addressed in his revised budget follow up memo. The Lister budget will be addressed at the December 14th Selectboard meeting. Maintaining the status quo as well as using a stipend for the Listers will be considered. Fulton would like to finalize the FY13 budget to be presented for the January public hearing December 14th. After some further discussion, the Board then took up Town Manager compensation for the FY13 budget. Flanders had prepared spreadsheets showing salary against budget in towns with a population bracketing Norwich. Flanders had also brought an updated electronic version to provide the Selectboard with updates depending on the salary chosen. Childs said that he believes Norwich needs to be at the upper end of the salary range in order to lay ground work for negotiation. Thus, Childs would like to increase the salary line item in the FY13 budget. Ashley concurred that a range of \$85-90,000 seemed right in order to compete with other towns for candidates. The Board then discussed Town Manager search expenses. Fulton, when asked, said he preferred using an assessment center and suggested \$7,500 be budgeted for the search. The Selectboard agreed by consensus

to have Fulton use the trial numbers of \$90,000 for salary and \$7,500 for the search in the next budget draft. Cook asked if the monies for the Town Pool had been included in the budget numbers. Fulton said he has used a figure of \$85,000 as an appropriation for FEMA matching funds which included repairing the pool dam.

At this point, Moran asked that the Selectboard take into account that the first draft of the School budget is showing a 9.74% increase. Fulton reminded the Board that costs for Irene have driven the tax rate up for this budget.

6. Review of Next Agenda (Discussion/Possible Action Item). The Norwich Women's Club request for a waiver of the Alcohol Ordinance, adopting the new Town Plan, adopting the Norwich Hazard Mitigation Plan, Act 250 permit for communications tower and process for approval of accounts payable will be agenda items for the December 14th meeting.

Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to adjourn. **Motion passed.** Meeting adjourned at 9:59 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on January 11, 2012.

By Nancy Kramer
Assistant to the Town Manager

Edwin Childs
Selectboard Chair

Next Regular Meeting – December 14, 2011 at 6:30 PM

Pending Items:

- 1) Update Finance Committee Statement of Purpose
- 2) Strategic Planning
- 3) Town Boundaries

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