

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, December 14, 2011 at 6:15 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 14 people in the audience.

Also participating: Liz Blum, Ernie Ciccotelli, Phil Dechert, Cheryl Lindberg, Buff McLaughry, Arline Rotman, Nate Stearns, Jonathan Vincent.

Childs opened the meeting at 6:15 pm.

1. 6:15 pm – Real Estate (Executive Session May be Required). Pursuant to Title 1 VSA § 313(a)(2), Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing real estate and to invite Neil Fulton to join the Session. **Motion passed**. The Selectboard moved into Executive Session at 6:16 pm. At 6:35 pm the Selectboard moved into public session. No action was taken as a result of the Executive Session.
2. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). By consensus, the Selectboard approved the Agenda.
3. Public Comments. Blake spoke about the lunch he went to today at the Bugbee Senior Center where the Hanover High School Footnotes provided musical entertainment and a good time was had by all.
4. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). The Communications Public Forum hosted by the Capital Facilities Planning and Budgeting Committee on Monday was fairly well attended and went well. Town expenditures due to Tropical Storm Irene are around \$517,000. Bridges and the dam were inspected by FEMA today. About 90% of the paperwork for FEMA is done. All repairs except guardrails are done. The outside audit was held up waiting for return information on pending litigation but should be finished today. Flanders complimented the Town Manager on his complete and detailed report for the month of November.
5. Finance – Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). Fulton explained that the warrants for the Board's signatures are in the red folder he is passing around. Ashley **moved** (2nd Blake) to approve Check Warrant Report #12-21 for General Fund for the period from 12/14/11 to 12/14/11 in the amount of \$670,308.27. **Motion passed**. Cook **moved** (2nd Flanders) to approve Check Warrant Report #12-21 for Police Special Equipment Fund for the period from 12/14/11 to 12/14/11 in the amount of \$700.27. **Motion passed**. Flanders **moved** (2nd Blake) to approve Accounts Payable Warrant #12-22 dated December 14, 2011 in the amount of \$368.42. **Motion passed**.
6. Norwich Women's Club (NWC) Request for Alcohol Ordinance Waiver (Discussion/Action Item). Rotman said that the NWC will be holding their Spring Gala in Tracy Hall on the evening of March 16, 2012 and is requesting a waiver of the Alcohol Ordinance in order to serve wine and beer. Last year the event went smoothly. Fulton said the updated Alcohol Ordinance adopted by the Selectboard October 26, 2011 requires the waiver in order to serve wine and beer in Tracy Hall. After minimal discussion, Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to approve a waiver in accordance with Section 6 of "An Ordinance to Regulate the Possession and Consumption of Alcohol on Town of Norwich Property" (Ordinance) to allow the possession and consumption of alcohol in accordance with the Ordinance at the Norwich Women's Club Spring Gala held on March 16, 2012 in Tracy Hall. **Motion passed**.
7. Adoption of Town Plan (Discussion/Action Item). Fulton reviewed briefly the process so far and then turned the discussion over to Dechert. Dechert said the December 6, 2011 draft of the Norwich Town Plan has been thoroughly edited and several tables/charts were changed or updated. Ashley and Blake asked questions regarding the census data in the Plan. Fulton commented that household size is important and that number went down for Norwich. Dechert explained that the second motion is necessary for future grants and continuation of the Village Center designation.

Pursuant to Chapter 117 Title 24 VSA § 4385, Flanders **moved** (2nd Blake) to adopt the December 6, 2011 version of the Norwich Town Plan with an effective date of December 14, 2011. **Motion passed.**

Pursuant to 24 VSA § 4350, Ashley **moved** (2nd Flanders) to request Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission to review and approve the Plan and to confirm the Town of Norwich planning process. **Motion passed.**

10. Request to spend \$3,000 from Designated Funds for Act 250 Permit for Communications Tower (Discussion/Action Item). Fulton discussed that the tower is necessary as an important part of the upgrade to the radio communications system for Fire, Police and Public Works Departments. The Town is seeking grants to fund a portion of the cost of building the tower and has been denied grant funds in the past due to lack of an Act 250 permit. Fulton recommends Selectboard authorization of use of these funds to obtain an Act 250 permit. Stearns spoke about having concerns on the aesthetics of a 180 foot tower that will be visible from many places in town and asked that more information be provided to townspeople before a decision was made. Dechert spoke about the Act 250 process and the balloon test in particular saying that all information received must be made public and will be widely available. Blum asked about any tax implications for the Town and Ashley asked about any impact on insurance ratings. Fulton replied that there were no tax implications that he is aware of now and that it would have no impact on insurance ratings which are very good right now for the Town.

Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to authorize the use of up to \$3,000 from the Communications Project Designated Fund for assistance in obtaining an Act 250 permit for a radio communications tower to be located at the Public Works facility on New Boston Road. **Motion passed.**

8. Selectboard 4th Budget Work Session (Discussion/Action Item). Fulton said he would like a recommendation from the Board on the Lister budget first and then their guidance for the FY13 budget to be used for the public hearing January 11th. Fulton put together some background information on the FY13 Lister budget that defines coefficient of dispersion, common level of appraisal and price-related differential and historical values, methods for maintaining the Grand List and budget options. FY14 budget numbers were included in the Lister Budget Options spreadsheet to show future differences in the choices. Vincent said the Listers had a split vote on the FY13 budget. Blum prefers Option 4 from the Lister Review Committee spreadsheet. Vincent and Ciccotelli prefer Notes 1 on the Lister Budget Options spreadsheet. Vincent went over his memo to the Selectboard which concludes that "the Listers want to ensure that the Grand List is properly maintained and that there is adequate staffing to respond to citizens' requests and questions". Blum believes the Listers should work for a stipend, that the office needs to be professional and that economies as well as objectivity can be achieved. Ciccotelli does not believe the Lister position is a public service one. He also believes the amount of work is high and specific, that a lot of labor is involved and does not see that much in savings by going to a stipend. Blake spoke about doing what is best for the Town of Norwich and its employees. Ashley said that, although the stipend might need to increase, he agrees with the Lister Review Committee recommendations but prefers a three year cycle. Cook said there is a definite learning curve for doing the Lister job and it is a tough process especially appraising commercial property. Cook is leaning towards Notes 2. Flanders said that when you look at median costs of the annual cost per parcel Norwich really stands out as high compared to other towns. Flanders also discussed an employee versus a contractor doing the core functions, the assessor model and public response. Childs said the Lister Review Committee Report suggests Norwich pays too much but does not want to interrupt the Town-wide reappraisal process. Fulton suggested changing the Professional Services budgeted line item in Notes 2 to \$73,986 to keep the budget at the base budget number of \$154,132 which will provide the option for either a contractor assessor or an employee. Fulton also said that the Selectboard sets the rate of pay for all elected officials except themselves and that it is their job to select a model for the Town. Lindberg spoke about having been a Lister herself and that she worked on a stipend where the three Listers would sign off on an appraisal and the clerk would enter the data. McLaughry said the Lister Review Committee did look at what is fair for the Town and believed a professional assessor can save money. The Committee is recommending a rolling inventory assessment with periodic appraisals. Their data shows the Town of Norwich's Lister budget is high when compared

with other towns.

After some further discussion, Ashley **moved** (2nd Flanders) to ask the Town Manager to, in consultation with the Listers, implement a Listers Office structure that follows Notes 2 of the memo by the Town Manager on the FY13 Listers budget. **Motion passed.** Fulton thanked the Listers for their input.

Fulton reviewed his budget follow up items saying that the proposed changes represent a 2.13% increase over the FY12 budget. The tax rate impacts while maintaining 14%, 12% or 10% of the Undesignated Fund balance were also discussed. Fulton is looking for Selectboard guidance on what budget to use for the public hearing January 11th. Fulton will have a rough draft of the Town Meeting Warning for the Board meeting on January 11th. Fulton asked the Selectboard for their recommendation on a separate paving article for either \$65,000, \$75,000 or \$150,000 to be placed in a designated fund for paving. Fulton is recommending using \$85,000 for the article on the FEMA match. Fulton's proposed total Town expenditures before other monetary articles for FY13 is \$3,936,364. Cook spoke about not supporting the proposed Town budget due to the need, in her opinion, to look at the school and Town as a whole for tax purposes. Cook believes the school portion is too high and that the Town budget always has funds left over. Cook also does not support a separate article for paving.

After some further discussion, Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to set the budget number at \$3,936,364. **Motion passed 4 to 1** (yes – Childs, Blake, Flanders and Ashley; no - Cook). The Board agreed by consensus that the match for Irene expenses would be set at \$85,000. After discussion of why the article was needed, Flanders **moved** (2nd Blake) that \$75,000 be used for a separate article designating funds for paving. **Motion passed 4 to 1** (yes – Childs, Blake, Flanders and Ashley; no - Cook).

9. Hazard Mitigation Plan (Discussion/Action Item). Fulton said the Town has worked with TRORC to develop a Norwich specific annex to their regional hazard mitigation plan and he recommends that the Selectboard adopt the Plan. The planning process started in 2008 and the Norwich Annex has been approved by FEMA. After some discussion of the process and why the Plan does not include Irene data, Ashley **moved** (2nd Blake) to approve the Certificate of Adoption for the Norwich Hazard Mitigation Plan. **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) Resident –

- 1) #11 a). Email from James Mackall Resigning from Finance Committee. Ashley **moved** (2nd Flanders) to receive an email from James Mackall resigning from the Finance Committee. **Motion passed.** The Board asked that the opening be posted and that a letter be sent thanking Mackall for his services.

12. Selectboard

- a) Approval of the Minutes of the 11/22/11 Meeting. Flanders **moved** (2nd Blake) to approve the minutes of the November 22, 2011 Selectboard meeting. **Motion passed.**
- b) Process for Approval of Accounts Payable (Discussion/Action Item). Fulton reviewed the process and hopes the Board will support his suggested motion. Cook asked that all Selectboard members be informed about any pending warrant so that they may review if they wish to. After some further discussion, Blake **moved** (2nd Flanders) to authorize the Chair or Vice Chair to examine and sign warrants against the Town when approval of the warrant is for expenditures that are within the purchasing authority of the Town Manager and are necessary to be drawn between regular Selectboard meetings or that the time between regular Selectboard meetings exceeds two weeks and that the warrant will be included in the Selectboard packet for the next regular Selectboard meeting. **Motion passed.**

- c) Responding to items posted on the List Serve (Discussion). Ashley feels it is important to educate the public when it involves a rule, law or policy. Flanders and Blake support letting questions come to the Town Manager to answer. Cook pointed out that one member of the Board should not comment for the whole Selectboard. After some further discussion, it was left that if Ashley responded to the List Serve it would be as one person.
- d) Review of Pending Items (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Flanders asked about Selectboard and Town Manager goals for the review process and Fulton asked that this be delayed until after the FY13 budget public hearing.
- e) Review of Next Agenda (Discussion/Possible Action Item). FY13 budget public hearing, the recommendation for the facilities codes and needs assessment study, first draft of Town Meeting Warning, approval of policies for the 2011 Leader Program and updating the January Selectboard meeting schedule will be agenda items for January 11th. The draft FY13 budget for the public hearing will be posted on the Town website by December 21st.

Ashley **moved** (2nd Flanders) to adjourn. **Motion passed.** Meeting adjourned at 9:14 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on January 11, 2012.

By Nancy Kramer
Assistant to the Town Manager

Edwin Childs
Selectboard Chair

Next Regular Meeting – January 11, 2012 at 6:30 PM

Pending Items:

- 1) Public Hearing on FY13 Budget – January 11, 2012
- 2) Update Finance Committee Statement of Purpose
- 3) Strategic Planning
- 4) Town Boundaries

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