

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, September 12, 2012 at 5:30 PM

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

There were about 38 people in the audience.

Also participating: Watt Alexander, Ames Byrd, Carey Callaghan, Steve Condrey, Phil Dechert, Matt Fisker, Joe Helble, Andy Hodgdon, Craig Layne, Steve Leinoff, Cheryl Lindberg, Karen Jackson, Doug Robinson, Liz Russell.

Ashley opened the meeting at 5:30 pm.

1. **5:30 pm** - Meeting with Steve Condrey to Discuss Results of Classification and Compensation Study (Discussion). Ashley welcomed students from Hanover High School who were present. Fulton said that during FY13 budget discussions he had expressed concerns about the Town's ability to replace key Department Heads at their current salaries. Fulton brought a proposal before the Board in the spring, which they approved, to do a Classification and Compensation Study using Condrey & Associates with a goal of achieving internal and external equity. All Town permanent full and part-time employees filled out an extensive job questionnaire and were interviewed. Fulton reminded the Board that any discussion by the Selectboard related to a specific employee should be done in Executive Session. Fulton then introduced Condrey. Condrey said the Study should be helpful to the Town by enabling them to attract and retain competent employees. The objectives of the Study were to review and upgrade the current position classification and pay plan, produce a recommended pay plan and write job descriptions for all positions. Condrey distributed position questionnaires to every employee, interviewed them, developed new job descriptions for all positions and conducted internal and external analysis. The external salary survey went to the towns of Charlotte, Dorset, Hartford, Hartland, Woodstock, Hanover and the City of Lebanon. Condrey has developed three salary scales for the Town of Norwich. Plan A (100%) at a cost of \$77,441. Plan B (97%) at a cost of \$64,547. Plan C (94%) at a cost of \$51,858. Condrey suggested that funds should also be set aside for merit increases. Condrey told the Board that the Town could not hire employees at the present salaries that would achieve the same quality employees as they have now. Condrey recommends implementing all at once versus incrementally. Condrey also looked at the overall benefit package which they believe is appropriate. Condrey and Associates will be available to assist the Town in implementation. Other items discussed were: COLA increases versus Employment Cost Index, union employees step and grade, employees' expectations and towns chosen to receive the survey. Fulton said the Study will appear again in budget sessions with the Selectboard and specifics will be discussed in Executive Session. Ashley asked that any follow up questions from the Board be directed to Fulton.

2. **6:30 pm** - Approval of Agenda (Action Item). Once again Ashley welcomed members of the class of 2016 who were present. Afterwards, by consensus, the Selectboard approved the Agenda.

3. Public Comments. Cook announced that on Thursday, September 13, 2012 at 7:00 pm in Tracy Hall the Planning Commission will be hosting a meeting evaluating river/stream corridor protection in Norwich. Thursday, September 27, 2012 at 7:00 pm in Tracy Hall the Planning Commission will be having a special meeting to review the proposed amendments to the Norwich Subdivision Regulations.

4. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). Dechert has passed the examination to become a Certified Floodplain Manager. Fulton and Dechert have met with AOT and RSG regarding the Safe Routes to School sidewalk and walked the project area. A public forum on replacement of the Town Pool Dam was held August 20th. The FY12 outside audit has started. The Town has received verbal notice that the Police Department will receive a grant for the equipment for a UHF narrowband digital simulcast system. The Town has also received verbal notice that the Fire Department will receive a grant for some new portables, a vehicle repeater for Car 1 and new UHF digital mobiles for communications with the Police Department. The first stage of paving has been completed. Work on Bridge #41 has been completed except for finishing painting the steel beams. The Town-wide reappraisal is going well. The Fire Department has received a \$1,600 grant for recruitment and retention of Fire Department members.

5. Finance – Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). After some questions about tax refunds on the Warrant and a note that the Norwich School District was receiving \$2,600,000, Childs **moved** (2nd Flanders) to approve Check Warrant Report #13-8 for General Fund in the amount of \$2,738,740.22, for Town Reappraisal Fund in the amount of \$6,278.04 and for DPW Grant Match Fund in the amount of \$92,046 for the period from 8/24/12 to 9/12/12. **Motion passed.** Flanders **moved** (2nd Childs) to approve Accounts Payable Warrant #13-7 dated September 7, 2012 in the amount of \$3,164.23. **Motion passed.**

6. Errors and Omissions (Discussion/Action Item). Lindberg explained that one parcel was added that should not have been and thus should be removed and the parcel should be included in 04-072.000. Afterwards, Flanders **moved** (2nd Moran) to remove parcel 04-071.100 from the Grand List as detailed in the memo from the Norwich Board of Listers to the Norwich Selectboard dated August 21, 2012. **Motion passed.** Flanders **moved** (2nd Moran) to change the Grand List value for parcel 04-072.000 to \$826,200 as detailed in the memo from the Norwich Board of Listers to the Norwich Selectboard dated August 21, 2012. **Motion passed.**

Lindberg said the parcel had two building lots that were merged by deed and the additional lot was not removed from the Grand List. Also, an error was found in the total acreage. Afterwards, Flanders **moved** (2nd Childs) to change the Grand List value for parcel 06-006.000 to \$553,200 as detailed in the memo from the Norwich Board of Listers to the Norwich Selectboard dated August 21, 2012. **Motion passed 4 to 1** (yes – Ashley, Childs, Flanders and Moran; no - Cook).

Lindberg said the owner provided a 1975 deed that showed the land area at 1.84 acres and the SIGMA system had it at 2.06 acres. Lindberg also said she had been convinced of an error in addition and agreed with the change. After some discussion, Childs **moved** (2nd Cook) to table making a recommendation on parcel 15-077.000 until the Selectboard received more information on the acreage involved. **Motion passed 4 to 1** (yes –Childs, Cook, Flanders and Moran; no - Ashley).

7. Communications System Upgrade (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Ashley said that he would like Fulton to present the information contained in his two memos to the Board first, then he will ask for Selectboard comment and then go to public comments. Fulton said a Letter of Intent has been signed with VTel and the permit package is being prepared by VTel and should be submitted to the Public Service Board in September. Fire/EMS mobiles, portables and pagers are narrowband capable and are being reprogrammed to narrowband which should be complete by the end of September. For police the Hurricane Hill transmitter is now operating on narrowband digital. All the police mobile and portable units are now narrowband digital. All mobile and portable units for Public Works are now narrowband capable and are scheduled to be

reprogrammed before November 15th. The total local cost for the project has dropped from a December estimate of \$762,511 to \$85,000 because of grants and VTel building the tower. The options are to do nothing which would leave the Police and Public Works Departments with seriously deficient systems, have a new bond vote, a lease-purchase which Fulton recommends be for five years or less or include the cost as part of the FY14 budget which would mean the monies would not be available until July 1, 2013. Fulton believes the Town has found a cost effective solution and that it is highly unlikely that another site as effective could be found. In his second memo Fulton reviewed the costs both with and without VTel and with alternative lower towers and a new study. After some questions, Cook reviewed the coverage issues by Department with the current system. Ashley made it clear that coverage was changing to narrowband no matter what and then opened the meeting up to public comments asking that they be kept to two minutes if possible. Byrd read excerpts from an article talking about public pushback against cell towers saying he would like to see Norwich follow suit. Others present spoke about the December 31st deadline, going back to the first tower proposal, the letter signed by 124 people, concerns about VTel and lack of public input. Robinson spoke about examples of when communication was lacking in his Department and that police rely on communications especially at night. Leinoff said the propagation studies were scientific, that the Town has partnered with others to achieve 95% coverage and that a restudy would probably come up with the same answer. Hodgdon spoke about the fire in the CAT grader and the lack of ability to report the fire saying it was lucky the fire went out. Ashley mentioned that a petition for a Special Town Meeting would only be valid if it was within the power of Town Meeting to make the decision and that the 3-2 vote by the Selectboard to go forward with VTel still stood. Ashley also said the bond vote has left the Town with no other option than VTel if the tower is to be built in the near future. Ashley does not see any other option. Childs said he is not a fan of VTel but their option is a good one for Norwich and he supports going forward with that proposal. Moran said he has no intention of changing his vote. He is sympathetic to the abutters but points out that this option provides no cost to the Town for the land or tower and services will be provided to all in Town. He believes the health risks have not been proven, that aesthetically towers are everywhere, that safety and health come first and that Fulton has put the best plan together. Flanders explained that he had challenged the Town Manager early in the summer on most aspects of the plan that are now being questioned by the public and all his questions were answered satisfactorily. Flanders believes the Town Manager and Selectboard have exercised due diligence in weighing the public good against those concerns.

8. Proposal from ABC Dairy (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Fulton said that Clem is asking the Town to reconsider their decision, made in the fall of 2011, to not purchase the property at 198 Church Street. For background information, Fulton has included correspondence from 2011, memos from the Fire and Police Chief's on the suitability of the use of the property and preliminary plans from 2011. Fulton is more sympathetic to this offer now than in the past due to the deficiencies at the current sites. Fulton believes the time frame Clem is asking for is unrealistic and that the earliest the Town could bring this to a vote would be Town Meeting 2014. Cook suggested that if there was a way to open the door for negotiations without a letter of intent that she was for it as this is a great opportunity. After some discussion, it was agreed by consensus that Fulton would contact Clem and let him know that the earliest the Town would consider purchasing the property would be 2014.

9. Approval of \$175,000 Purchase Order to Blaktop, Inc. for Paving Project on Beaver Meadow Road (Discussion/Action Item). Ashley said that this is for the paving project on Beaver Meadow Road which will be funded by the VT AOT paving grant received this fall with a 10% match. Hodgdon is proposing to do the paving this fall as Blaktop will not guarantee their bid price of \$73.30/ton for the spring of next year. Childs **moved** (2nd Flanders) to approve PO # 7141134 in the amount of \$175,000 to Blaktop, Inc. for a paving project on Beaver Meadow Road. **Motion passed**

10. Strategic Planning (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Flanders offered a draft Strategic Plan as a focal point for discussion which emphasized four categories: climate change mitigation and adaptation, municipal infrastructure and assets, civic landscape and infrastructure and social infrastructure and amenities and had seven different topics within those. The draft included analyses of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and suggested that knowledgeable committees and organizations could be drawn on for advice. Flanders recommended further discussion on what should be included in the Strategic Plan that would include input from a public forum. Cook had reviewed the draft plan and felt that it was somewhat redundant and long; she also felt there were other substantive issues. After discussion, members were asked to get any comments on the draft, as presented, to Fulton by September 17. Additionally, Flanders offered to provide a simplified summary of the Strategic Plan for discussion in a future public forum. Fulton offered to devise a process for the Selectboard to rank items for the September 25th meeting, if it should wish.

11. Review of the Town Manager Evaluation Process (Discussion/Possible Action Item). After some discussion, the Board asked for a 5:30 pm Executive Session to be added to the September 25th meeting. Selectboard members will bring their individual recommendations, commendations or concerns for discussion in Executive Session. Kramer will check on the availability of the conference room for the Executive Session.

At this point, Fiske asked the Town to opt out of smart meters on Town property. He believes there is no need for them and views them as nuisances. He would like to see the Town brought back to a safer and healthier place. Ashley responded that he should take this matter up with the Town Manager.

12. 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) #12 a), b), c), d) and e). Email from Blake Lamothe Re: Rail Passenger Service, Email from Terry Boone Re: Informed Decisions, Letter from Norwich Conservation Commission Re: Norwich Pool, Letter from Donald Kreis Re: The Proposed Tower and the FCC and Letter from 124 People Re: Steps for Addressing Emergency Communications Upgrade. Childs moved (2nd Flanders) to receive an email from Blake Lamothe re: rail passenger service, an email from Terry Boone re: informed decisions, a letter from Norwich Conservation Commission (NCC) re: Norwich Pool, a letter from Donald Kreis re: the proposed tower and the FCC and a letter from 124 people re: steps for addressing emergency communications upgrade. **Motion passed**. Layne was present and spoke on behalf of the NCC saying that the Commission wants a natural stream passage that reflects the old character of the Pool. The NCC feels strongly about good stream stewardship.

13. Selectboard

- a) Approval of the Minutes of the 8/15/12 and 8/22/12 Meetings. After some discussion, Childs moved (2nd Moran) to approve the minutes of the August 15, 2012 and August 22, 2012 Selectboard meetings. **Motion passed.**
- b) Select Voting Delegate for VLCT Annual Business Meeting (Action Item). After some discussion, Moran **moved** (2nd Childs) to designate Stephen Flanders as the voting delegate for the VLCT 2012 Annual Business Meeting. **Motion passed**
- c) Review of Next Agenda (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Items on the September 25th agenda will be the Code and Deficiencies Study, Strategic Planning and the Town Manager evaluation. Ashley let the Selectboard know that he will not be present for their October 24th meeting as he will be out of town.

Cook **moved** (2nd Moran) to adjourn. **Motion passed.** Meeting adjourned at 8:51 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on September 25, 2012.

By Nancy Kramer
Assistant to the Town Manager

Christopher Ashley
Selectboard Chair

Next Regular Meeting – September 25, 2012 at 6:30 PM

Pending Items:
None

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