

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, November 14, 2012 at 6:00 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 6 people in the audience.

Also participating: Jake Blum, Phil Dechert, Peter Griggs, Andy Hodgdon, Steve Leinoff, Cheryl Lindberg, Doug Robinson, Roberta Robinson, Matt Swett.

Ashley opened the meeting at 6:00 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). By consensus, the Selectboard approved the Agenda.
2. Public Comments. Childs requested a moment of silence out of respect for Virginia Close. Cook asked that Robert Nye be recognized also. Ashley briefly described Close's work for the Town followed by the moment of silence. Ashley then thanked Cook for running the October 24th meeting in his absence.
3. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). The Emergency Management Committee opened up the Emergency Operations Center at the Police Station response to hurricane Sandy which constituted a real life exercise, all went well. The paving of a portion of Beaver Meadow Road with grant funds has been completed. The debris removal projects on Bloody and Charles Brown Brooks have been completed.
4. Finance – Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). Cook asked to separate the vote on the General Fund from the rest of the Warrants. Cook questioned the Tree Warden expenditures on the General Fund Warrant since Blum is no longer a Norwich resident. Fulton said he approved the expenditures in his capacity as Town Manager who is responsible for the maintenance of parks. Cook would like the Selectboard to appoint a new Tree Warden. After some further discussion, Childs **moved** (2nd Moran) to approve Check Warrant Report #13-15 for Town Reappraisal Fund in the amount of \$7,488, for Communications Study Fund in the amount of \$690 and for Recreation Scholarships in the amount of \$200 for the period from 11/1/12 to 11/15/12. **Motion passed.** Childs **moved** (2nd Moran) to approve Check Warrant Report #13-15 for General Fund in the amount of \$415,469.48 for the period from 11/1/12 to 11/15/12. **Motion passed 4 to 1** (yes – Ashley, Childs, Flanders and Moran; no - Cook). Childs **moved** (2nd Moran) to approve Accounts Payable Warrant #13-13 dated November 2, 2012 in the amount of \$6,694.51. **Motion passed.**
5. 1st Budget Work Session with Department Heads (Discussion/Action Item). Following the template from last year, Fulton is using a PowerPoint presentation for the budget meetings in November. Fulton thanked Department Heads, Kramer and Roberta Robinson for their help with the budget binders. Future budget meetings include November 28th, outside agencies on December 5th and the Public Hearing on January 9th. The FY14 budget begins July 1, 2013. Budget goals are to maintain the current level of services and minimize any increase in expenditures. The proposed FY14 budget is up 0.95% from the adopted FY13 budget. Fulton used the April 2012 Grand List and is proposing a 2.05% increase in the tax rate. Fulton expects the Grand List to increase when the Town-wide reappraisal is finished. Key budget changes are: highway gas tax revenue based on Church Street and Main Street/US Route 5/Route 10A becoming a Class 1 Town Highway before or in FY14, an increase in the Assistant Town Clerk hours from 8 hours per week to 20 hours per week, providing proportional partial benefits to regular part-time employees who work more than an average of 20 hours per week and 1040 hours per year, implementing a Grade and Step plan for non-bargaining unit employees and modifying the sidewalk reserve fund to include costs of major repairs of the Town-

owned and maintained sidewalks. Fulton then reviewed the status of major projects. Communications systems upgrade: VTel is preparing information to apply for a Certificate of Public Good, all mobile and portable radios have been changed to narrowband, all Fire Department pagers have been changed to narrowband, Hartford dispatch has changed to narrowband, Hanover dispatch has reduced transmitter deviation for fire, bids for the systems upgrades are due December 7th and a contract is expected to be awarded in February. All departments are experiencing a noticeable reduction in radio coverage. Fire, Police and Public Works facilities: code and regulatory deficiencies study has been completed and it is expected that a request for proposals to develop a 5 and 20 year program for the three departments and developing and ranking alternatives for meeting the needs of the three departments will go out in January. Norwich Pool: proceeding with alternative #3 labyrinth weir and articulated concrete blocks, need ANR permit for the dam and the fish passage will be as required by ANR and a goal of bids in January if we receive a permit. Safe Routes to School: plans are at the 25% point, there will be a public forum in December and right of way issues may delay construction. Main and Church Streets changing to a Class 1 Town highway: surveying is complete. Fulton then discussed the major budget issues. Grade and step plan: bargaining unit employees have a grade and step plan, Condrey & Associates have evaluated each position using a 10 factor system and recommended grades for each position, for non-bargaining unit employees the C scale plus 2% was used. Health insurance costs: used 11% increase in premiums. Fuel Costs: affects all departments and the assumption was made that they would be about the same as what we are paying now. Paving will be discussed under Public Works. Fulton then went over the projected tax rate reviewing revenues, expenditures and undesignated fund balance. Wages, salaries and benefits represent 46% of the budget. Fulton also showed comparisons of the Consumer Price Index and Employment Cost Index over one year and five years. Questions were asked regarding health insurance costs for employees and the benefits for part-time employees.

Public Works, Buildings and Grounds and Solid Waste mission and goals were included on the PowerPoint slides and in the budget binder.

Public Works - This Department's budget represents 46% of the FY14 budget. Public Works has 8 full-time employees and 4 part-time employees. The Public Works Department total budget increase over FY13 is 0.70%. Wages account for 34% of the Department's budget. Monies spent on paving for FY13 and budgeted for FY14 average \$413,759 including the \$175,000 grant. Estimates for paving Willey Hill and Hawk Pine are \$55,500 and \$58,320, respectively. There followed a discussion regarding the cost of maintaining gravel versus paved roads. Afterwards, members of the Board questioned equipment replacement costs. In particular, equipment not on the equipment replacement plan consisting of: a 1985 K2500 GM Pickup, a 1981 L900 Ford Louisville, a 1997 2500 GMC, a 1989 Ford and a 1996 L8000 Ford Louisville. Cook questioned several line items in the Public Works budget that had monies budgeted but not spent in prior years. At this point, Moran questioned the use of the Undesignated Fund to lower the tax rate saying that some people referred to this as a slush fund. Ashley pointed out that the Selectboard makes this decision when they set the tax rate in July. Fulton said that calling it a slush fund is an inaccurate statement. The Town cannot spend more than what is in the budget and Town Meeting sets the limit. Fulton closely monitors end of year spending by Department Heads. Also discussed was administrative help for Hodgdon. Follow-up items are: estimate of maintenance costs for vehicles not on the replacement list and paving versus gravel costs for Willey Hill and Hawk Pine.

Solid Waste – There is an increase of 1.02% from the FY13 budget. There are no substantive changes in the Solid Waste budget. Items discussed: revenues and costs being reduced, new rules that will require trash pickup companies to do both trash and recycle, revenues versus expenditures, coupon and sticker prices and policies and actual budget expenditures coming in under budget.

Buildings & Grounds – There is an increase of 5.57% over the FY13 budget which represents mainly replacement and personnel costs. There are no substantive changes in the Buildings & Grounds budget.

Tree Warden – There is no increase in the FY14 budget. There followed a discussion regarding the Tree Warden position. Cook pointed out that Blum, who is no longer a resident of Norwich, cannot be the Tree Warden. Fulton repeated that he is approving the invoices and that Blum is volunteering his time and suggested the Selectboard wait until March to appoint a new Tree Warden. Blum pointed out that Hodgdon should be recognized for his services.

Public Works Reserve Funds – The fleet has been analyzed and replacement years have been changed. Highway Bridges has been added as a new fund. Sidewalks have been inventoried, replacement costs have been done and annualized. A proposal for the Town to take over the Fire District sidewalks has been sent to the Fire District.

If the Public Works budget was increased Willey Hill and Hawk Pine would be paved. If the budget was decreased paving would be reduced as well as Transfer Station hours.

Police Department mission and goals were included on the PowerPoint slides and in the budget binder. Chief Robinson also did a zero-based budget built from the bottom up which he felt was a useful learning experience.

Police Department – Has 5 full-time employees and 4 part-time employees. The FY14 budget is an increase of 1.37% over FY13. Wages represent 78% of the Police budget. This budget represents 13% of the total budget. Decreasing the number of marked vehicles was looked at and decided against. If the budget was increased Robinson would add an Investigative Officer and convert Police Station computers to MDCs. If the budget was decreased crossing guards would be eliminated, overtime for call-backs and training would be reduced. The Selectboard discussed call-backs, adding an Investigative Officer and reducing overtime. There were no follow-up items for this Department.

Fire Department mission and goals were included on the PowerPoint slides and in the budget binder.

Fire Department – This budget represents 7% of the FY14 budget. The FY14 budget is an increase of 1.41% over FY13. Wages represent 46% of the Department's budget. The Department has one 30-hour per week employee and 40 part-time employees. The reserve funds (Apparatus, Equipment and Station) were briefly reviewed. If the Fire Department budget was increased Chief Leinoff recommends funding "I am Responding", additional paid training for members, an allowance for a slight increase in calls and increasing the designated Fire Station Fund. If decreased Leinoff would defer repairs to the building, have no increase in wages, reduce training opportunities and defer equipment purchases. The Selectboard further discussed the "I am Responding" and how it works and Swett spoke in favor of implementing. Three Board members supported the program. Other items discussed: where members meet to respond to a call, ambulance costs, wage increase, EMTs using their personal vehicles, radio maintenance cost increases and gear for new members. There were no follow-up items for this Department.

Emergency Management – This budget has been reduced by 15.1%. This decrease is due to a reduction of the amount being allocated to the Communications Designated Fund. If the budget was increased Leinoff would increase funding for the Communications System and set up a new designated fund for replacement of the generators. If the budget was decreased he would reduce funding for the Communications System. There was some discussion regarding the generators and replacing them in the future with propane fueled generators. There were no follow-up items.

6. 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) #6 a) and b). Email from Watt Alexander Re: Tower and Letter from David Bucci Re: Tax Penalty. Flanders moved (2nd Childs) to receive an email from Watt Alexander re: tower and a letter from David Bucci re: tax penalty. Motion passed. Fulton said he and Roberta Robinson have advised Bucci of his rights and the Selectboard has no authority to act on this and thus does not have to respond. Fulton will send a follow-up letter. Flanders said he was disappointed in Alexander's email and that Alexander is misguided in his opinions. Childs and Ashley have personally responded to the email.

7. Selectboard

- a) Approval of the Minutes of the 10/24/12 Meeting. Childs **moved** (2nd Flanders) to approve the minutes of the October 24, 2012 Selectboard meeting. **Motion passed**. Ashley abstained from voting.
- b) Review of Next Agenda (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Cook wanted everyone to know that there will be a Public Forum on Strategic Planning on September 27th at 7:00 pm in the Tracy Hall multipurpose room. Fulton said that Department Heads are documenting narrow banding impacts and he will include this information in his Town Manager Reports. The 2nd Budget Work Session with Department Heads will be on the agenda for November 28th. The Board asked that a discussion of the Tree Warden be added to the agenda.
- c) Personnel (Executive Session may be Required). Pursuant to Title 1 VSA § 313(a)(3), Flanders **moved** (2nd Childs) to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel. **Motion passed**. The Selectboard moved into Executive Session at 9:27 pm.

At 9:39 pm the Selectboard moved into public session. No action was taken as a result of the Executive Session.

Childs **moved** (2nd Moran) to adjourn. **Motion passed**. Meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on December 12, 2012.

By Nancy Kramer
Assistant to the Town Manager

Christopher Ashley
Selectboard Chair

Next Regular Meeting – November 28, 2012 at 6:00 PM

Pending Items:

None

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