

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, January 9, 2013 at 6:30 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 32 people in the audience.

Also participating: Liz Blum, Carey Callaghan, Linda Danilek, James Dwinell, Joe Helble, Nancy Hoggson, Cheryl Lindberg, Bonnie Munday, Rosamond Orford, Rick Otto, Demo Sofronas, Nate Stearns, Robert Sydney, Irv Thomae, Jim Tobin.

Ashley opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). By consensus, the Selectboard approved the Agenda. Ashley spoke briefly about the rules for public comments asking that they be kept to two minutes each.
2. Public Comments. Otto said the petitioned ballot for the bond vote on the tower has the same wording as the bond article voted on in August and he read the article. Ashley said he will ask the Selectboard what they want to do in response to Alexander's email when they discuss the next agenda under 10. c). There were other comments regarding public opposition to VTel owning the tower and allowing townspeople to have a voice on this decision. Munday informed petitioners that they would need 310 signatures due to the article asking for a bond vote which requires signatures of 10% of the registered voters in Norwich.
3. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). There is no pending litigation all litigation has been settled or withdrawn. Insurance settlements from VLCT PACIF on the cruisers have been received. All FEMA/AOT projects as a result of Tropical Storm Irene have been completed except the Pool. Proposals were received from two vendors for the radio communications project. We have received notification that we have been awarded a HSGP grant in the amount of \$92,370 for the materials for a two location simulcast system for the Norwich police. The Windsor County tax rate has increased by \$20,000. Eleanor van Aalst, a Marion Cross School student, had her picture selected for January on the Vermont Division of Fire Safety 2013 Fire Safety calendar. Questions were asked regarding tower costs and the purchase of a new Fire Chief vehicle.
4. Finance – Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). Cook spoke about the need to generate more funds for citizen assistance due to the volume of requests. Childs **moved** (2nd Flanders) to approve Check Warrant Report #13-22 for General Fund in the amount of \$68,510.62 and for Citizen Assistance Fund in the amount of \$380.14 for the period from 12/27/12 to 1/9/13. **Motion passed.** Flanders **moved** (2nd Childs) to approve Accounts Payable Warrant #13-19 dated January 9, 2013 in the amount of \$17,875. **Motion passed.** Flanders **moved** (2nd Childs) to approve Accounts Payable Warrant #13-21 dated January 4, 2013 in the amount of \$7,560.94. **Motion passed.**
5. **7:00 pm** – Public Hearing on FY14 Budget (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Flanders **moved** (2nd Childs) to open the public hearing on the FY14 budget. **Motion passed.** Fulton said that the Board has been provided with two new documents: target recision levels, which came from Flanders, and a sampling of regional towns equalized FY12 tax rates. Fulton believes the budget he submitted to the Selectboard in November was within the bounds asked for by the Board. Increases in the budget submitted were due to: wage and salary increases, proportional

benefits for permanent part-time employees and health insurance. Fulton reviewed the changes in the current proposed budget which included the Assistant Town Clerk at full time, an increase in the Town Clerk's salary, an increase in records restoration, an increase in citizen assistance, part-time benefits for the Planning Assistant and an addition error in the highway budget. These changes total to \$87,537. The tax rate increase over FY13 would amount to 10.65%.

Stearns, speaking as Chair of the Finance Committee, said that 4 of the 5 Committee members voted to not support the budget due to concerns over the level of service, disappointment that cuts were filled with new expenses, unease over the equalization raises and the projected tax rate increase of over 10%.

Hogson spoke about the importance of having a comprehensive conservation plan in place before any preservation work is done on the Town's records. Munday asked that she be included in any discussions.

Other items discussed by townspeople were: employee raises and the Selectboard and Town Manager working together.

Childs read a statement regarding his dissent of the action of the Selectboard at their December 12, 2012 meeting to include in the FY14 budget monies to fund the Assistant Town Clerk position at 40 hours a week. He believes that no sufficient justification was provided for this action. He agrees with the Town Manager position of 20 hours per week. Childs also publicly commended Fulton for his original budget. Childs will support the public hearing budget, but urges his Board members "to more fully consider consequences of budget actions in the future".

Flanders **moved** (2nd Childs) to close the public hearing on the FY14 budget. **Motion passed.**

Ashley asked the Selectboard how they wished to proceed, Childs **moved** (2nd Ashley) to recommend that Town Meeting approve a gross spending General Town Budget of \$4,133,211. **Motion failed 2 to 3** (yes – Childs and Ashley; no – Flanders, Cook and Moran). Items discussed by the Board were: the itemized changes on Page 2 of Fulton's public hearing memo to the Selectboard, tax rate changes, offsetting the proposed changes with cutbacks, the Condrey report, having the records restoration as a separate article and eliminating unused line items in the Public Works budget. Afterwards, Flanders **moved** to do a revision to the budget with a target of \$113,000. Motion failed due to lack of a second. After considerable discussion, the Board asked the Town Manager to make the following changes to the public hearing version of the FY14 budget: change Assistant Town Clerk from 40 to 20 hours, reduce records restoration to \$13,000 and change the top three salary increases from grade 21 step A to grade 20 step B; with a goal of no more than a 4% increase over the FY13 budget.

At this point, the Board agreed that a special meeting would be needed for January 16th at which the final budget and the petition for the bond article would be agenda items.

6. Strategic Planning (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Flanders said we need to identify groups that would be interested in the ideas for Norwich generated from the public workshop held on November 27th and invite these groups to weigh in on the ideas. There was some discussion of who should be contacted and how.

7. Outside Audit Report (Discussion/Action Item). Fulton's memo to the Selectboard summarizes the critical issues in the audit prepared by A.M. Peisch & Company. It was a clean audit and all issues from the last management letter have been resolved. After very little discussion, Childs **moved** (2nd Flanders) to receive the Management Letter and Audits conducted by A.M. Peisch & Company for Fiscal Year 2012 with special thanks to the Town Manager and Finance Department. **Motion passed.**

8. Planning for Selectboard Appointed Committees to Come to a Selectboard Meeting (Discussion/Action Item). It was discussed that the Planning Commission would be coming to the Selectboard with Norwich Subdivision Regulations changes in the next few months. Cook asked that the Capital Facilities Committee be added to the list. The Board would like background on what each committee does, an update on goals and time frame for doing and any difficulties they are having. After some discussion, the Board agreed to have the Chair invite the Historic Preservation Commission and the Capital Facilities Committee to their first meeting in February and the Finance and Energy Committees to their second meeting in February.

9. 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) #9 a), c) and d). Email from Rosamond Orford Re: Norwich Pay Raises for Some, Letters from State of Vermont Re: Root School and Beaver Meadow School Proposed Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and Email from Nancy Hoggson Re: Kofile Preservation Proposal for Town Records. Flanders **moved** (2nd Moran) to receive an email from Rosamond Orford re: Norwich pay raises for some, letters from State of Vermont re: Root School and Beaver Meadow School proposed nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and an email from Nancy Hoggson re: Kofile preservation proposal for Town records. **Motion passed.** There was some discussion regarding Hoggson's recommendations. Fulton said that the Financial Management Policies require that a Request for Proposals be developed and he recommended that an outside consultant be retained to assist with the development of the RFP and it needs to be bid out.

b) Nonresident –

1) #9 b). Letter from TRORC Re: Suggestions for Updating Town Documents to Improve Water Quality & Decrease Flood Risk. Flanders **moved** (2nd Moran) to receive a letter from TRORC re: suggestions for updating Town documents to improve water quality & decrease flood risk and refer to the Town Manager for appropriate action. **Motion passed.** The Planning Commission will be reviewing TRORC's observations and recommendations. Any changes to the Town Plan or Zoning Regulations will come before the Selectboard.

12. Selectboard

a) Approval of the Minutes of the 11/28/12, 12/5/12 and 12/12/12 Meetings. After some discussion and one change, Childs **moved** (2nd Flanders) to approve the minutes of the November 28, 2012, as amended, December 5, 2012 and December 12, 2012 Selectboard meetings. **Motion passed.**

- b) Setting Town Manager's Salary for FY14 (Discussion/Action Item). Moran recommended a zero percent increase based on his comments at the time of Fulton's hire that if the Board was going to give him the huge hike in compensation over and above the previous Town Manager he felt no raises would be warranted in the near future. After very little discussion, Flanders **moved** (2nd Childs) to set the Town Manager's salary at \$97,280, a 2.04% increase. **Motion passed 3 to 2** (yes – Ashley, Childs and Flanders; no - Cook and Moran). Fulton said that amount was unacceptable to him due to it not being on the scale. Flanders said it represented a COLA increase. Ashley said the Board was trying to be consistent with what others were getting and considerate of the voters.
- c) Review of Next Agenda (Discussion/Possible Action Item). The revised FY14 budget and the tower bond petition will be on the special meeting agenda for January 16th.

Cook **moved** (2nd Moran) to adjourn. **Motion passed**. Meeting adjourned at 10:14 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on February 13, 2013.

By Nancy Kramer
Assistant to the Town Manager

Christopher Ashley
Selectboard Chair

Next Regular Meeting – January 23, 2013 at 6:30 PM

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