

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, February 27, 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 47 people in the audience.

Also participating: Watt Alexander, Alan Berolzheimer, Liz Blum, Ames Byrd, Joshua Durst, Matt Fiskin, Mary Fowler, Robert Gere, Linda Gray, Nichole Hastings, Joseph Helble, Antoinette Jacobson, Nelson Kasfir, Steve Leinoff, Cheryl Lindberg, Norm Miller, Kathy Parsonnet, Stuart Richards, Harry Roberts, Doug Robinson, Alan Schned, Nate Stearns, Richard Stucker, Jonathan Teller-Elsberg, Irv Thomae, Jim Tobin, Geoffrey Vitt, Jay Whitehair.

Ashley opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). After discussion and public comment, Flanders **moved** (2nd Childs) to approve the agenda with the following changes: item #7 be revised to be a discussion only item with the understanding that further discussion/action on this item will be scheduled for the March 13, 2013 Selectboard meeting and items #8 and #9 be rescheduled for the March 13, 2013 Selectboard meeting. **Motion passed 3 to 2** (yes – Ashley, Childs and Flanders; no - Cook and Moran).
2. Public Comments. Ashley again reviewed the rules and said he would indicate when two minutes are up and reminded people present that if it was an agenda item to wait for comment until the item came up. There were no other public comments.
3. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). The Police Department has received their three replacement vehicles and they are being outfitted. The Fire Chief will pick up his vehicle tomorrow. Fulton attended the latest scoping meeting on the relicensing of the Wilder Dam where it was discussed that a request for a study would be prepared by New Hampshire and Vermont on the impacts of peaking and ponding on erosion and TRORC is preparing a study request dealing with recreation and river access.
4. Finance – Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). After a couple of questions from Cook, Childs **moved** (2nd Moran) to approve Check Warrant Report #13-27 for General Fund in the amount of \$3,052,974.56, for Fire Apparatus Fund in the amount of \$25,472.24 and for Police Cruiser Fund in the amount of \$72,146.72 for the period from 2/14/13 to 2/27/13. **Motion passed.**
5. Meeting with Norwich Energy Committee (NEC) (Discussion). Berolzheimer, speaking as Chair of the NEC, said the NEC is adopting a Town-level goal of 90% renewables by 2050 to support the State's Comprehensive Energy Plan and they have developed a two page draft of their plan which was provided to the Selectboard. The NEC is also working on the Home Energy Challenge goal of weatherizing 3%, 44 in Norwich, of homes. Gray reviewed the pledge to take action to improve the energy efficiency of your home by December 31, 2013 which is being partially funded by Efficiency Vermont. Gray also said the NEC is now working with a private developer on a solar installation with power purchased by the Town/School. Staff level meetings have been held and possible sites are being investigated. Flanders said he was pleased to see an active Committee doing real stuff and encouraged them to be involved with the strategic planning process of the Board. Questions were asked about the charging station at Dan & Whit's

and the type of power needed. It was agreed that keeping the community informed of developments was important.

6. Meeting with Norwich Finance Committee (NFC) (Discussion). Stearns, speaking as Chair of the NFC, said that only five out of seven seats are filled on the NFC and they are concerned about membership. Stearns also spoke about the Committee struggling with the purpose and that the charge is not working. The NFC would like the Selectboard to revisit the charge and make it stronger. Stearns suggested that maybe the NFC could be combined with the Capital Facilities Committee. Fowler spoke about the pressure to restrain spending due to 15% of the Town being below the medium income. Lindberg said she would like the Town Treasurer to remain on the NFC. There followed some discussion of keeping the Town Treasurer on the Committee. Cook suggested recruiting people for the NFC. The Board thanked the NFC for their work.

7. Approval of Communications Site Lease Agreement (Ground Lease) with VTel for Tower (Discussion). Fulton said the FCC in 1991 published a Notice of Inquiry seeking comments on narrowbanding. In 2004 the final deadline was adopted requiring the change to narrowband to take place by January 1, 2013. Starting in 1997, the Town started buying all new mobiles and portable radios that were narrowband capable. As a result of propagation studies done in 2011, fire dispatch was moved to Hanover. Since the switch to narrowband fire, police and public works personal have been logging area communication problems. The lack of coverage in some areas is clearly affecting service to the Town. Dispatch services for the Town come from Hartford for police and Hanover for fire. Neither Hanover or Hartford had an interest in seeking a waiver to narrowbanding. Fulton gave an example of a Department Head meeting call out where one pager went off and the other did not. Fulton said the value of a ground lease is hard to determine due to the capitalization rate being difficult to predict and income varying considerably. The proposed system is for a simulcast system. Hanover and Norwich received proposals for upgrading fire, police and public works communications systems on December 7, 2012. Hanover and Norwich will share the cost. Items discussed were: costs, timeframe, VTel's use of tower being for broadband and grants. Moran made a statement that he will no longer support the VTel proposition and is changing his vote to not work with VTel.

Fulton then reviewed the terms and conditions of the Agreement with VTel. VTel leases a 100' x 100' area for a total lease period of 60 years. VTel builds the tower, provides space for Norwich at no cost and maintains the tower. VTel is responsible for obtaining all permits required. VTel provides backup power for Norwich, builds a pad, allows Norwich to use their ice bridge and cable tray and builds a nonexclusive access to the tower compound. If VTel decides to discontinue use of the tower for LTE service then it is removed or transferred to Norwich at no cost to Norwich. The agreement has been reviewed by Jeremy Farkas of Murphy Sullivan Kronk. The indemnification provisions have also been reviewed by Frank Olmsted and insurance provisions by VLCT PACIF. Public comments included: concerns over the tone of the debate and with delays and costs, discussion of the timeline, details of the contract and next steps. Ashley expressed unhappiness over the length of the lease, Norwich use being limited to communications and the first right of refusal being with VTel. Ashley also indicated dismay with the delay in building the tower since it is needed. Ashley pointed out that Fulton has been doing the will of a majority of the Board. He feels next steps would include determining how much more the tower will cost, a Special Town Meeting to increase the bonding authority and rebidding the project. Other items discussion were: using Reserve Funds, loss of grant monies, VTel being in business to make money and doing whatever gets the tower built soonest. Cook asked that the Selectboard let the people decide. Cook also said she had a problem with the numbers and dates changing and believes the agreement is not cautious enough.

8. Approval of Lease-Purchase Agreement to Fund Norwich Portion of Radio Communications Project (Discussion/Action Item). Postponed.

9. Approval of Burlington Communications Service Center Purchase Order for Communications Systems Upgrades (Discussion/Action Item). Postponed.

10. 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) #10 a). Email from Claudette Brochu Re: Meeting Minutes. Flanders **moved** (2nd Childs) to receive an email from Claudette Brochu re: meeting minutes. **Motion passed.**

11. Selectboard

- a) Approval of the Minutes of the 1/16/13, 1/23/13 and 1/25/13 Meetings. After reaching agreement by consensus to delay voting on the January 25, 2013 minutes, Cook **moved** (2nd Childs) to approve the minutes of the January 16, 2013 and January 23, 2013 Selectboard meetings. **Motion passed.**
- b) Review of Next Agenda (Discussion/Possible Action Item). After changing the meeting time to 5:00 pm, Fulton reviewed the items that would be on the agenda. Ashley repeated his belief that the Selectboard is best served by rotating the Chair on an annual basis.

Cook **moved** (2nd Moran) to adjourn. **Motion passed.** Meeting adjourned at 9:13 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on March 27, 2013.

By Nancy Kramer
Assistant to the Town Manager

Christopher Ashley
Selectboard Chair

Special Selectboard Meeting – March 6, 2013 at 5:00 PM

Next Regular Meeting – March 13, 2013 at 6:30 PM

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