

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Monday, July 15, 2013 at 6:30 PM

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

There were 2 people in the audience.

Also participating: Cheryl Lindberg, Roberta Robinson.

Flanders opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). Moran requested that the Board defer action on the Investment Policy until further review has occurred. Afterwards, by consensus, the Selectboard approved the Agenda.
2. Public Comments. Lindberg asked for a review of the Town's Sexual Harassment Policy looking at general harassment with a possible section on bullying. Cook thanked all those who participated in, volunteered for and/or donated to the Five Church Rummage Sale. Flanders thanked Selectboard members for agreeing to move the meeting to tonight so that all members could be present.
3. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). As of the close of business today there have been 25 tax appeals to the BCA lodged with the Town Clerk. Fulton received a call from a Verizon representative interested in renting space on the tower. Fulton told them that this cannot happen for 10 years. The Norwich Energy Committee is investigating possibilities for a solar project on Route 5 including a LLC agreement that Fulton is not certain the Selectboard has the authority to do. Fulton will be on vacation from July 26th through August 9th. Work will start after the Fair on the Town Green. This project is being funded by donations and over \$5,000 has been received so far. The consensus of the Recreation Council is that Patchen's Point should remain under State control due to costs exceeding the benefits. Work is scheduled to start Friday on the Main Street storm sewer extension. The final application for the Certificate of Public Good is scheduled to be filed this week. This will begin the 90-day review period by the Public Service Board. The VMBB bond sale was scheduled for July 9th with a closing date of July 30th. Bond interest rates have increased in the last few weeks. The Public Works repeater has been installed and is operational. The Police equipment should be delivered this week and operational by the end of July. There have been a number of internal meetings of ANR officials to discuss the Norwich Pool Dam. They are going to meet with the Department of Environmental Conservation in the hopes of working out a solution. Cook asked if something could be put out on the Listserv regarding the Main Street sewage work. Fulton said he would ask Hodgdon to draft a message. Questions were also asked about improvements in communications for public safety personnel and if funds would be available to repair the Pool site.

At this point Cook disclosed for the record that she is a beneficiary of the Leonard H. Cook expenditures on the General Fund Warrant 14-03.

4. Review of Recalculated CLA (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Due to Property Valuation and Review's (PVR) recalculation of the CLA based on 32 VSA §5406(c), the CLA dropped to 97.16%. This was due to the current use value increasing after the Town-wide reappraisal. Fulton has discussed the recalculated CLA with the Director of PVR and he said the recalculated CLA is based on the process defined in the Statute. In a "normal" year the CLA is determined based on

an analysis of three years of sales data and comparing sales with the assessed value of those properties. Last year's CLA based on this approach was 99.73%. There was some discussion regarding the current use value and Lindberg said the Listers did not review or approve the land tables used.

5. Set FY14 Municipal Tax Rate (Discussion/Action Item). Fulton provided a chart on Page 2 of his memo showing historic Town and school tax rates. Fulton is recommending a tax rate of \$0.4861 which represents an increase of 3.67% over the FY13 tax rate and maintains an Undesignated Fund balance of 15% based on the estimated June 30, 2013 balance of \$886,002. The estimated tax rate used in the Town Report was \$0.4834. Fulton reviewed the numbers used in his Draft FY14 Property Tax Rates saying the table in the box at the bottom provides a breakdown of optional payments from the Undesignated Fund Balance by percentage. Lindberg, speaking as Chair of the Finance Committee, said the Committee had voted 3 to 1 to support the tax rate proposed by Fulton. The Board discussed the projected balance leftover from the FY13 budget, the tower bond and what budget that would affect and capital facilities improvements and what budget that would affect. Moran suggested cutting back a little on Undesignated Fund use and going with 16% in order to increase the emergency fund. After discussion, Moran **moved** (2nd Childs) to set the Town tax rate at \$0.4867, the Local Agreement rate at \$0.0051 for a total Town tax rate of \$0.4918. **Motion passed 4 to 1** (yes – Ashley, Childs, Flanders and Moran; no - Cook).

6. Late Filed Homestead Exemptions (Discussion/Possible Action Item). At their September 27, 2011 Selectboard meeting the Board established a policy to apply the 8% penalty for late filing of the homestead declaration but not the 3% penalty for this tax billing cycle and apply both the 8% and 3% penalty in future tax billing cycles. The law has changed again and beginning January 1, 2013 homestead declarations must be filed annually by the due date for filing of Vermont income tax returns. Approximately 100 less taxpayers have filed so far. There are concerns that these taxpayers may be unaware that they were once again required to file annually. Robinson said that the penalties assessed so far amount to approximately \$7,300 and it affects 11 parcels. After some discussion of which taxpayers might be involved, in accordance with 32 VSA §5401(g), Childs **moved** (2nd Ashley) to waive the 8% penalty for late filing of homestead declarations for this tax billing cycle and apply the 8% penalty in future tax billing cycles. **Motion passed 4 to 1** (yes – Ashley, Childs, Flanders and Moran; no - Cook).

7. Revised Investment Policy (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Fulton said this is a draft document and that feedback from the Selectboard is welcomed. The Policy in effect now was written in 1999. Fulton and Robinson have used the VLCT template which tightens up such items as: conflicts of interest, collateralization and reporting requirements. The sweep account the Town has with Mascoma Bank is not federally insured. Fulton and Moran will be meeting with the Treasurer to review the revised Policy. Moran has been thinking about this Policy for 5 years and is committed to improving it. Lindberg reviewed what Mascoma does to ensure the preservation of the capital in the overall portfolio. Other items discussed were: reporting requirements and return on investment. Flanders asked Board members to get any feedback on the document to Fulton.

8. Response to Selectboard Correspondence (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Ashley said that in his time as Chair he never received any complaints regarding the automatic response to correspondence. He feels it is important to encourage people to do business at Selectboard meetings. Cook and Moran believe that the Board has not established a set way to respond. Flanders mentioned his earlier white paper on the subject that he distributed to the Selectboard.

Cook asked if he would resend that document to her. Childs and Flanders both expressed the opinion that Board members are free to comment as individuals to the Valley News Forum, the Listserv and/or to constituents as long as it is made clear that it is their opinion only and not the Selectboard as a whole. Fulton reminded the Board that any written communication is a public document.

9. Selectboard Priorities and Calendar for 2013-14 (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Flanders said that this is a working document and that changes were made to address concerns from the last Selectboard meeting. By consensus, the Board agreed to accept the document as is for now.

10. Correspondence (Please go to www.norwich.vt.us, click on Boards & Committees from the blue banner, click on Selectboard and click on Recent Selectboard Correspondence in the middle section to view resident correspondence):

a) Nonresident –

1) #10 a) and b). Letters from Vermont Division for Historic Preservation Re: Root School and Beaver Meadow School Formal Listings in the National Register of Historic Places. Childs **moved** (2nd Ashley) to receive letters from Vermont Division for Historic Preservation re: Root School and Beaver Meadow School formal listings in the National Register of Historic Places. **Motion passed.** A letter will be sent from the Chair of the Selectboard, on behalf of the Board, thanking the Historic Preservation Commission.

11. Selectboard

a) Approval of the Minutes of the 6/12/13 Meeting. Childs **moved** (2nd Ashley) to approve the minutes of the June 12, 2013 Selectboard meeting. **Motion passed.**

b) Review of Next Agendas (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Public input on the FY15 budget, Selectboard budget guidelines, capital facilities program review, lessons learned and strategic planning will be items on the August 28th agenda.

Fulton said that tax bills were being printed tonight for mailing tomorrow.

Ashley **moved** (2nd Childs) to adjourn. **Motion passed.** Meeting adjourned at 8:24 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on August 28, 2013.

By Nancy Kramer
Assistant to the Town Manager

Stephen N. Flanders
Selectboard Chair

Next Regular Meeting – August 28, 2013 at 6:30 PM

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