

## Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, November 13, 2013 at 6:00 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 6 people in the audience.

Also participating: Phil Dechert, Steve Leinoff, Cheryl Lindberg, Bonnie Munday.

Flanders opened the meeting at 6:00 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). By consensus, the Selectboard approved the Agenda.

2. Public Comments. None.

3. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). The repair of the roof truss in Tracy Hall is complete and the gym is back in full use. The new server was installed over the weekend and users are about 97% functional. Darlene Cook, the Assessing Clerk, has resigned and Jonathan Bynum will be taking over the duties of Assessing Clerk as well as remaining the Finance Assistant. The regional solid waste management planning group is having DSM Environmental Services conduct a study. A copy of the tasks is attached to this report. Questions were asked about Bynum's duties and the dry hydrants that are out of service. Bynum will continue providing support for Hodgdon. Leinoff said that they are working on solutions for the dry hydrants. Cook questioned Public Works employees being used to cut wood that is being offered to nonresidents. She advised Norwich residents in need of wood to get their requests in. After some further discussion, Flanders said a discussion of the Town wood yard would be a future agenda item.

4. Finance – Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). Childs **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Ashley) to approve Check Warrant Report #14-11 for General Fund in the amount of \$153,726.32, for Highway Garage Fund in the amount of \$1,090.61, for Police Station Fund in the amount of \$1,090.61, for Town Reappraisal Fund in the amount of \$7,600, for Fire Station Fund in the amount of \$1,090.61, for Long Term Facility Study Fund in the amount of \$913.17, for Communications Construction Fund in the amount of \$91,404, for Tracy Hall Fund in the amount of \$3,173.75, for Town Clerk Equipment Fund in the amount of \$73.06 and for General Administration Fund in the amount of \$8,814 for the period from 10/24/13 to 11/13/13. **Motion passed.**

5. Budget Overview (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Flanders said that Fulton will give a general budget overview. If a Selectboard member would like more detail about a particular Department they should ask during this presentation. Fulton reviewed the budget schedule which is to have an overview tonight, to present all Departments' budgets November 20<sup>th</sup>, to review on November 26<sup>th</sup>, to have the Outside Agencies on December 4<sup>th</sup>, the Public Hearing on December 11<sup>th</sup> and to adopt the budget on January 8<sup>th</sup>. The budget shows the Department request and Fulton's recommendation based on maintaining the current level of services as a guideline. Fulton reviewed a slide entitled Fast Budget Facts showing FY14 and proposed FY15 Expenditures, Property Taxes and the Tax Rate, with and without the bond, based on no increase in the outside agency appropriations. Delta and percentages were also shown. Cook asked if this chart could be printed out and put in the Selectboard mailboxes. Fulton said he would have Kramer do that. Questions were asked regarding the bond breakout and agency appropriation requests. The projected tax rate, including the bond, for FY15 was shown as \$0.5051 which is a

2.70% increase over FY14. The key changes in the budget are: the Tracy Hall budget has been moved to Public Works, the DRB budget has been moved to Planning, no Class 1 Town highways, the Sidewalk reserve fund including costs of major repairs to Town-owned sidewalks, a reserve fund set up for replacement of Town-owned generators and the Chart of Accounts for Public Works being revised and simplified. Fulton then briefly reviewed the status of major projects: the tower, Town Pool, Safe Routes to School Sidewalk project and the reclassification of Church and Main Streets/Route 10A to Class 1 Town Highway. Health insurance accounts for approximately 7% of the operating budget. Navigators for VT Health Connect assisted 15 of the 20 eligible employees in setting up accounts today. The proposed FY15 budget uses the actual exchange costs for the first six months of FY15 and assumes a 6% increase for the second six months. Wages, salaries and benefits account for approximately 46% of the operating budget. The budget is based on an increase in the grade and step plan of 2.01% using the 5-year average annual increase in the CPI. In addition, the FY15 budget includes steps for non-bargaining unit employees on their anniversary date of hire based on a satisfactory performance review. Fulton then reviewed a table that showed historic and proposed appropriations for the major Reserve Funds. Questions were asked about the Tracy Hall Reserve Fund and a \$5,000 difference from the memo in the budget binder. Fulton then went over a table of non-reoccurring expenses in the proposed FY15 budget which are for debt service. The table showed the current and future payments due for principle and interest on the Town's debt. Fulton then reviewed historic and projected non-property tax revenues. For purposes of calculating a projected tax rate, the FY15 Grand List was estimated to increase \$3,000,000 from the FY14 Grand List and the estimated payment from a reduction in the Undesignated Fund balance is \$153,000 leaving an Undesignated Fund balance of 16% of the budget. Afterwards Fulton went over the historic and projected amount to be raised from property taxes to support Town expenditures. Finally, Fulton reviewed the Summary of Expenditures for the proposed FY15 budget saying that the increase is modest in most departments.

Flanders then asked the Selectboard members their thoughts on the proposed budget. Moran commented that the appropriation request from the Norwich Public Library would increase the tax rate if approved by the voters. Moran would like to see a slight reduction in the overall budget. Childs is content with the budget as presented. Ashley questioned Transfer Station projected revenues due to more use of private haulers. He also asked about the cost of living increase. Cook said she had no comments at this time. Flanders said that considering the Board gave Fulton no clear instructions on the budget he is favorably impressed and asked that any questions be directed to Fulton. Cook hopes that the Selectboard will keep the process open and not have one-on-one discussions with Fulton.

6. Update on Options for Fire, Police and Public Works Facilities (Discussion). Fulton said the Capital Facilities Committee is in the process of sorting through the options. There is a consensus among Committee members that the Fire and Police facilities should remain on the current site or the ABC Dairy site. Cook asked if Bread Loaf had done pros and cons of the new options like it did for the first six and was told they have not. Cook said it was hard for her to limit options without all the information including costs. Cook also pointed out that additional senior housing on the site would not benefit Norwich residents directly. It is a HUD program and, as such, open to all. Cook would rather see the site used for something that benefits Norwich residents. Ashley asked if the options given to the Committee and the Selectboard were public documents. Fulton responded that they have not been put up on the Town website. Ashley is also interested in hearing what the Planning Commission via their Affordable Housing subcommittee has to say. Flanders said he was not sure that the case has been made for new structures for Fire and Public Works. Other items discussed were: square footage of buildings, perceived differences in items

discussed at Selectboard meetings and Capital Facilities Committee meetings, getting opinions of members of the community and the meeting time of the Committee.

7. Communication on Listserv (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Flanders said that he feels there is a need to respond appropriately. Moran believes that it can only go out on the Norwich Listserv if it is a unanimous vote of the Selectboard. Munday pointed out to Selectboard members that they are Board members 24/7 and cannot say they are just a citizen when responding. The Selectboard reviewed written input from Ashley, Cook and Flanders, but did not agree on a policy or procedure. There was further discussion regarding misstatements on the Listserv and wanting to get the facts out. The Selectboard decided to table the topic for now.

8. Follow-Up on Discussions with School Board on Finance Committee (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Flanders said the Subcommittee has reviewed the charge for the Norwich Finance Committee (NFC) and the Memorandum of Understanding. The Subcommittee feels it is close to a viable approach; however, the issue of a conflict of interest and whether a person should recuse themselves is still unresolved. The Selectboard discussed: how many members would be appointed from the School Board versus the Selectboard, spouses versus family members, budgets likely to pass, budgetary indicators and resident versus nonresident. A majority vote of both the Selectboard and School Board is needed for appointment to the NFC. Spouses was changed to family members by consensus of the Board.

9. Correspondence (Please go to [www.norwich.vt.us](http://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) Resident –

1) #9 a) and c). Email from Watt Alexander Re: Selectboard and Town Manager and Email from Cheryl Lindberg Re: Norwich Finance Committee Considerations. Ashley **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Moran) to receive emails from Watt Alexander re: Selectboard and Town Manager and Cheryl Lindberg re: Norwich Finance Committee Considerations. **Motion passed.** Ashley wanted to make it clear that he authored the comments Alexander referred to in his email not Flanders.

b) Nonresident –

2) #9 b). Letter from State of Vermont Re: Reappraisal Evaluation – 2013 Equalization Study. After some discussion, Cook **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Ashley) to receive a letter from State of Vermont re: Reappraisal Evaluation – 2013 Equalization Study and to discuss as an agenda item at a future Selectboard meeting. **Motion passed.**

10. Selectboard

- a) Approval of the Minutes of the 9/25/13 and 10/9/13 Meetings. After some discussion, Ashley **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Childs) to approve the minutes of the September 25, 2013, as amended, and October 9, 2013, as amended, Selectboard meetings. **Motion passed.**
- b) Selectboard Resource Manual (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Cook has changes that she will get to the Board for a future meeting.
- c) Review of Next Agendas (Discussion/Possible Action Item). The letter from the State of Vermont regarding the reappraisal evaluation and the Town wood lot will be future agenda items.
- d) Litigation and Personnel – Town Manager (Executive Session may be Required). Pursuant to Title 1 VSA § 313(a)(1)(3), Ashley **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Childs) to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing litigation and to invite the Town Manager to attend that Session and for the purpose of the annual performance review of the Town Manager. **Motion passed.** The Selectboard moved into Executive Session at 8:13 pm.

At 9:10 pm the Selectboard moved into public session. No action was taken as a result of the Executive Session.

Cook **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Ashley) to adjourn. **Motion passed.** Meeting adjourned at 9:12 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on December 11, 2013.

By Nancy Kramer  
Assistant to the Town Manager

Stephen N. Flanders  
Selectboard Chair

Next Regular Meeting – November 20, 2013 at 5:00 PM

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