

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, June 25, 2014 at 6:15 PM

Members present: Christopher Ashley, Chair; Linda Cook; Steve Flanders; Dan Goulet (by phone); Keith Moran; Neil Fulton, Town Manager; Nancy Kramer, Assistant to the Town Manager.

There were about 17 people in the audience.

Also participating: Ed Childs, Jim Gold, Evan Pierce, Stuart Richards, Harry Roberts, Tom Sterling, Fran Walz.

Ashley opened the meeting at 6:15 pm.

1. Real Estate (Executive Session may be Required). Pursuant to Title 1 VSA § 313(a)(2), Flanders **moved** (2nd Moran) to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing real estate and to invite Neil Fulton to join the Session. **Motion passed.** The Selectboard moved into Executive Session at 6:16 pm.

At 6:29 pm the Selectboard moved into public session.

2. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). The Selectboard, by consensus, approved the Agenda.

3. Public Comments. Ashley said he would allow three minutes per person for public comments. Childs said the annual Norwich Fair sponsored by the Norwich Lions Club will be July 24th through July 27th on the Green in Norwich. Flanders read a statement regarding Norwich firefighters which is attached to these minutes. Cook said the Norwich Five Church Rummage Sale will be accepting donations at Tracy Hall starting July 7th and the sale starts July 11th. Ashley reminded Norwich residents and property owners to take the Town survey by June 30th. Paper copies are available at the Town Clerk's Office.

4. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). Chief Robinson is still filling in for the Town of Thetford while they conduct a search to replace their Police Chief. Received letter from ANR regarding their Town Pool concerns, talked with DuBois & King and the Town may need to hire a fish biologist. Transfer deeds for the two School Houses voted on in March are being prepared. Grand List has been lodged. Roadside mowing has started with wild parsnip areas being mowed first. An incident occurred at Huntley involving a dog bite and the Recreation Council has asked that the Animal Ordinance be reviewed by the Selectboard. The location for the four town meeting on municipal solid waste has been set and Fulton emailed the Board regarding this today.

5. Finance – Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). After some questions and discussion, Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to approve Check Warrant Report #14-29 for General Fund in the amount of \$480,625.64 and for Highway Equipment Fund in the amount of \$15,407.80 for the period from 6/12/14 to 6/25/14. **Motion passed.** Flanders **moved** (2nd Moran) to approve Check Warrant Report #15-01 for General Fund in the amount of \$133,888.98 for the period from 7/1/14 to 7/1/14. **Motion passed.**

6. Joint Meeting with Capital Facilities Planning & Budgeting Committee to Discuss Cost Estimates and Options for Fire, Police and Public Works Facilities (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Capital Facilities Committee members present were: Ed Childs, Tom Gray, Evan Pierce, Harry Roberts, Barry Rotman, Richard Stucker and Tom Sterling. Gray said the Committee is divided on what to do but did vote at the end of their meeting Friday to recommend seeking a

contingency agreement with the owner of ABC Dairy to determine the cost and to check the site for septic capacity and possible environmental contamination. Pierce explained that the site could be contaminated and therefore the Capital Facilities Committee felt it was time to vet the site before detailed drawings were done and to know up front what the Town can purchase the site for. Fulton briefly reviewed his option suggested at the end of the Capital Facilities Committee meeting. Gray said the Committee did not discuss much. Stucker said the Capital Facilities Committee has looked at other options and needs to know if the ABC Dairy site is on or off the table for consideration. Cook said she does not want any further discussion at this point and that she is not ready to make a decision. Cook is also concerned about the costs. Flanders said he feels strongly that the Town needs a new Police Station and would like to see things priced out for the DPW. Sterling said he is not comfortable with Bread Loaf numbers for the Police Station. Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) that the Town Manager ask Bread Loaf to extract the cost of expanding the current Public Works building as shown in Option #2 at no additional cost to the Town. **Motion failed 2 to 3** (yes – Ashley and Flanders; no – Cook, Goulet and Moran). After the vote, Pierce asked the Selectboard to let the Capital Facilities Committee know if they want the Committee to think short-term or long-term.

7. Main Street Paving Project (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Flanders suggested that the Town stay with what is paved now. Goulet concurred suggesting letting a committee look at options for the future. Moran stated that he also was in favor of paving existing only. Ashley said he felt strongly that the Selectboard should go with the initial proposal from Public Works and submitted a statement that is attached to the minutes. Flanders **moved** (2nd Goulet) to authorize the Town Manager to cold plane and repave within the limits of the existing curbs and pavement on Main Street from Church Street to the north terminus of Hazen Street and possibly further north if funds allow. **Motion passed 4 to 1** (yes – Cook, Flanders, Goulet and Moran; no – Ashley).

8. Ad Hoc Committee to Identify Options for Main Street (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Flanders said he put the charge for the Ad Hoc Committee together after the two public forums. Moran said he felt the public did not want a Committee formed at this time and Cook agreed that the timing is not good now. After some further discussion, formation of this Committee was put off.

9. Long-Range Strategic Planning - Next Steps for Quality of Community (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Changes were discussed regarding membership, the Committee disbanding upon delivery of its final report and adding process after Plan in item #6. Afterwards, Flanders **moved** (2nd Moran) to approve the charge with the changes discussed at tonight's meeting and to post with a deadline for applications of September 17th. **Motion passed.**

10. Open Meeting Law Changes (Discussion). Changes in the law were reviewed by Fulton. These include: designating specific posting locations, posting minutes on the Town website five days after the meeting, agendas posted 48 hours before the meeting, clarification of reasons for Executive Sessions and changes to the agenda being the first item of business. No penalties will be applied until 2015.

a) Designating Agenda Posting Locations (Discussion/Action Item). Flanders **moved** (2nd Moran) to designate the Town Sign Board and the Norwich Post Office as the public places to post agendas for Selectboard meetings other than the bulletin board near the Town Clerk's Office. **Motion passed.**

11. 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) Resident –

- 1) #11 a), b) and c). Memo from Norwich Historic Preservation Commission Re: Main Street Paving Project, Email from Stan Williams Re: Main Street Paving Project and Email from Sarah McGinley-Smith Re: Speed on Main Street. Flanders **moved** (2nd Moran) to receive a memo from Norwich Historic Preservation Commission re: Main Street Paving Project, an email from Stan Williams re: Main Street Paving Project and an email from Sarah McGinley-Smith re: speed on Main Street. **Motion passed.**

12. Selectboard

- a) Approval of the Minutes of the 5/14/14 and 6/4/14 Meetings. Flanders **moved** (2nd Moran) to approve the minutes of the May 14, 2014 and June 4, 2014 Selectboard meetings. **Motion passed.**
- b) Review of Next Agendas (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Setting the tax rate, reviewing results of Town Survey, contingency agreement regarding ABC Dairy, discussion of priorities for Capital Facilities Committee and facilities study, truck #5 replacement and approval of paving. The Selectboard also discussed the setting of times on agenda items and agreed by consensus that they liked the times as a guideline.

Cook **moved** (2nd Flanders) to adjourn. **Motion passed.** Meeting adjourned at 8:39 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on August 27, 2014.

By Nancy Kramer
Assistant to the Town Manager

Christopher Ashley
Selectboard Chair

Next Regular Meeting – July 9, 2014 at 6:30 PM

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I've noted with dismay a hint of disrespect in response to when non-resident [Norwich](#) firefighters offer their perspective about matters pertaining to the Norwich Fire Department at public forums. The implication has been that if they are not residents and do not pay Norwich taxes, they shouldn't be offering opinions on something that might affect Norwich taxes.

Norwich has a volunteer fire department, whose members are paid for call-outs and [some](#) training sessions. Norwich firefighters reside both in Norwich and in adjoining communities. Some firefighters in adjoining communities live closer to the fire station than do some that live in Norwich. All of our firefighters dedicate their time and put their health, safety and lives at risk on our behalf; they are called out at any time of day or night and dedicate what would otherwise be free time to keeping us safe. This is true whether they are Norwich residents or not. If we were not able to retain our current volunteers or attract new recruits, we would have to resort to a full-time paid staff. This would cost many \$100,000s annually.

So, please listen attentively and appreciatively when you hear members of our fire department describe what would help them do their job better and, consequently, motivate them to serve our community. Then, make your own determination about whether what you heard is worth the cost on your tax bill, while keeping in mind what it would cost if we lost the enthusiasm and dedication of our [volunteer](#) firefighters.

Sincerely, Steve F.

(Please note that I made some small changes and additions as I read this at the Selectboard meeting on June 25, 2014.)

Arguments for adding curbs and extending pavement to parking lanes:
defines roadway and prevents the shoulder creep currently occurring
easier to maintain

defines parking, it creates more available spaces as the need for parking increases due to increases in Advance Transit's ridership
promotes bicycle use- see south Main Street
within current budgeted dollars

Arguments against more pavement and curbs:
Storm water run off increases

Safety: vehicle speed, pedestrian safety, bicyclist safety, some citizens have trouble negotiating curbs
Historical character/Look of Main Street

Some thoughts I have had as I listened to this conversation unfold over several weeks:

The Norwich Town Plan, based on broad public input over several years and formally approved by the SB after several public hearings clearly articulates the goal of increasing and supporting public transportation in the Upper Valley. This means that we need to plan for bus stops and parking. Currently AT has stops on Main Street and Huntley Meadow; if we are going to be successful with these public transit goals, additional parking is vital. The Town Plan also strongly promotes bicycle use, as opposes to motor vehicle use; Main Street south of Church Street has bike lanes; I believe that the northern half of Main Street should also be bike friendly. The Town Plan also calls for not widening existing roads; I could not find any language in it regarding pavement and parking spaces.

Main Street from the south edge of town to Church Street has a design that was created as a result of a multi year public process with significant public input; the initial proposal for the rest of Main Street was very similar to this design. I am puzzled about the concerns being raised; perhaps they existed previously but did not surface, perhaps circumstances have changed, perhaps change is difficult.

Safety. I have spent time watching the traffic on Main Street, including the sidewalk as school let out. Frankly I am very glad that our younger citizens use the sidewalk for riding their bikes, but in my opinion it cannot be the "official" policy of Norwich that a 5 foot side walk is open for both bike and foot traffic. The possibility of an accident is a real danger, especially if the bike and or foot traffic increases.

I have noticed that the north bound traffic flows in long caravans of vehicles in the afternoons, I assume due to the string of stop lights in Hanover and Rt 10A. As these strings move through town, traffic slows/stops as cars turn into businesses on both sides of the road, and then again as cars turn west onto Beaver Meadow Road. It seems to me that there is a natural tendency for the north bound traffic to speed up as they approach the library/Hazen Street and the stop and go flow abates. I do not think this is due to the perceived width of the road. In the morning a similar process occurs, to a lesser degree, as the backed up traffic clears the crosswalk and stop sign at the Church Street/Main Street intersection. People speed up when they think the flow is going to pick up.

I think that the lack of definition to the side of Main Street between Beaver Meadow and Hazen Street (north intersection) makes it hard to pick up people crossing as you are driving. There are no crosswalks in this stretch, I assume due to the lack of a defined edge to the roadway. Adding crosswalks might increase safety, but I think curbs are needed to do this.

The traffic flow pattern at Dan and Whits makes it very confusing for pedestrians, bicyclist and drivers alike. On a positive note, the cross walk at Koch Road is very easily noticed, and there is a curb there. The cross walks down near the school are also obvious with those bump out constructions.

I have not heard the concern about less able people and curbs before, except I notice that at cross walks the curbs are reduced to the road level, and there are similar reductions in the curbs at designated handicapped parking spaces. It would be good to know if this is a concern that has been addressed in other locations, as there are certainly millions of miles of curbs in America.

Not being a storm water engineer, all I can say is that if the design for the southern section of Main Street was approved by the local public process, the town's DPW, and the State of Vermont's AOT, I assume that storm water issues were addressed; I am not at all clear why a similar design on the north section of Main Street would create new or different storm water issues. If we successfully, as a nation, reduce our carbon footprint, the number and intensity of storm water events ought to be diminished.

The look of Main Street, both the historical perspective and in terms of general aesthetics is an individual judgement. A sense of our historical past, including the look of our town is important, yet so is progress and infrastructure. I noted that by my unofficial odometer, in the length of Main Street between the crosswalk south of town, and Turnpike Road, there are .3 miles of dual curbing with all paving and no gravel, .3 miles of no curbs and gravel parking, and .2 miles of a single curb with gravel or ditches on the opposite side. Some might argue that the change to curbs is already half completed, others would argue that we need to protect the remaining historical look to Main Street.

I have seen photos of Main Street before it was paved and before there were sidewalks; in my opinion, the paving and sidewalks were improvements that resulted in a better quality of life in Norwich. We currently have curbs, at least on 1 side if not both sides of Main Street for most of its length; adding curbs only affects it from Beaver Meadow to the northern Hazen Street intersection. If curbs would allow quality earthen strips that would support grass, this might, in some peoples' opinions, be an aesthetically improvement. If friendly bicycle street design and parking to support public transportation would reduce the amount of green house gases produced and slow climate change, then I believe we owe it to our children and grandchildren to move towards a better future.

There be ways to improve the project as initially proposed, but I generally support it and would vote to proceed with it.

Proposals from the informal committee:

Reduce 1 lane of parking, use that width to construct a 2 way bike path that is separated from the street.

This is an interesting suggestion. I have 2 initial questions: Does the loss of parking spaces have an impact on future AT ridership and if so, is this an acceptable trade off ? What is the cost compared to the initial proposal?

Add 3 feet to the sidewalk, making it 8 feet wide for both pedestrians and bicyclists to share.

Again, very interesting, but have the property owners been queried about the loss of 3 feet of their yards as the land is returned to the Town for right of way needs? What is the cost of this option compared to the initial proposal.

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Christopher Ashley