

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, July 9, 2014 at 6:30 PM

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

There were about 13 people in the audience.

Also participating: Andy Hodgdon, Mary Layton, Steve Leinoff, Suzanne Lupien, Jim Masland, John McKenna, Harry Roberts, Irv Thomae, Fran Walz, Stan Williams.

Ashley opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). After discussion, 12 a) and 12 b) were switched, afterwards the Selectboard, by consensus, approved the Agenda.
2. Public Comments. Ashley briefly reviewed the rules and indicated people would have two minutes to speak. Ashley also reminded people to wait for the item on the agenda. Lupien read a statement that is attached to the minutes. Roberts asked that the Town continue to be vigilant regarding wild parsnip.
3. Town Manager's Report (Discussion). The Listers had 31 grievances this year. The Grand List was lodged on June 24th. A tax sale was conducted on June 18th and the winning bid was \$10,000. CodeRED has been implemented in Norwich. Our consultant is developing information for a response to ANR's letter to the Town regarding the dam replacement for the pool. Work is continuing on revisions to the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan. Questions were asked about: the tax sale, Bridge 41, North Coast Services, CodeRED and the Vital Communities Smart Commute survey.
4. Finance – Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). After one question, Flanders **moved** (2nd Goulet) to approve Check Warrant Report #14-30 for General Fund in the amount of \$71,515.87 and for Communications Construction Fund in the amount of \$10,156 for the period from 6/26/14 to 6/30/14. **Motion passed.** After one question, Flanders **moved** (2nd Moran) to approve Check Warrant Report #15-02 for General Fund in the amount of \$2,033.50 for the period from 7/9/14 to 7/9/14. **Motion passed.**
5. Appointment with Irv Thomae Re: ECFiber Update (Discussion Item). Thomae said the Town of Norwich is one of 24 owners of ECFiber. There are 750 subscribers so far, 150 in Norwich. State assistance has consisted of \$250,000 in grants. ECFiber offers serious speed both in and out which is important for business. Cook said she is impressed with their work so far and thanked them. Masland pointed out that ECFiber is mainly financed by its investors and more are needed.
6. Set FY15 Municipal Tax Rate (Discussion/Action Item). Fulton said the Selectboard had a memo from him with a proposed tax rate calculation for FY15. The estimated change in fund balance is less than the one used for the Town Report estimations due to the difficult winter for the Department of Public Works. A lot of the increase in the tax rate is due to the voter appropriated increase of \$100,000 for the Norwich Public Library and the debt service for the communications systems improvements. Fulton's recommended tax rate would maintain an Undesignated Fund balance of 14.5%. A chart in his memo shows historic and proposed Town tax rates and historic and actual school tax rates. At the bottom of Fulton's tax rate calculation sheet is a table showing other possible tax rates that would maintain an Undesignated Fund balance from 10% to 20%. Ashley suggested taking more out of the Undesignated Fund and lowering the balance to 14%. Flanders said he does not want people to vote for monies to be spent and not pay for it. Moran indicated he agreed with Flanders and suggested maintaining the fund at 16%. Cook disagreed and believes the money in the

Undesignated Fund should go back to the people. After some further discussion, Flanders **moved** (2nd Moran) to set the Town tax rate at \$0.5209, the Local Agreement rate at \$0.0051 for a total Town tax rate of \$0.5260. **Motion failed 2 to 3** (yes – Flanders and Moran; no – Ashley, Cook and Goulet). Afterwards, Ashley **moved** (2nd Flanders) to set the Town tax rate at \$0.5180, the Local Agreement rate at \$0.0051 for a total Town tax rate of \$0.5231. **Motion passed 3 to 2** (yes – Ashley, Flanders and Moran; no – Cook and Goulet).

7. FY15 Paving (Discussion/Action Item). Fulton reviewed his memo to the Selectboard saying that the table on the bottom of page 1 shows the proposed paving for FY15. The FY15 budget includes \$275,000 in the Paving Reserve Fund and \$60,000 under Contracted Services – Paving in the Public Works Department Highway budget. Cook initiated a fairly lengthy discussion regarding how much paving to do. Cook indicated she preferred to save some of the Paving Reserve Fund monies. Moran briefly reviewed the MARCON Report and their recommendations. Fulton concluded with the comment that the Selectboard made the paving decisions during budget discussions. Afterwards, Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to authorize the expenditure of \$275,000 from the Paving Reserve Fund. **Motion passed 4 to 1** (yes – Ashley, Flanders, Goulet and Moran; no –Cook).

8. Replacement of Truck #5 (Discussion/Action Item). Fulton said the truck has been evaluated based on the new policy and meets the requirements for replacement. It went out to bid and two proposals were received. Details are in Fulton's memo to the Selectboard. Fulton concurs with Hodgdon's recommendations also provided for the Board. Roberts questioned why the Town went out to bid and asked that all submitters be notified as to the decision. Cook **moved** (2nd Flanders) to authorize the expenditure of approximately \$127,663 from the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund to purchase a Freightliner 108SD from Freightliner of New Hampshire and a body and plow from Tenco New England. **Motion passed 4 to 1** (yes – Ashley, Cook, Flanders and Goulet; no –Moran).

9. Replacement of SCBA Air Tanks (Discussion/Action Item). Fulton said that VLCT PACIF awarded the Town a 50% grant to fund replacement of three SCBA air tanks. There were two quotes received. Leinoff, when asked, indicated that although they are two different vendors the product is the same. Cook **moved** (2nd Goulet) to authorize the Town Manager to spend \$2,142 from the Fire Equipment Reserve Fund to replace three SCBA air tanks. **Motion passed.**

10. Penalties for Late Filed Homestead Declarations (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Ashley reviewed the history briefly. Fulton said the decision now is at the discretion of the Selectboard. If the Board does nothing the penalty applied for FY15 taxes will be 8%. So far this year 33 less Homestead Declarations have been filed than last year. There was some discussion of how people are reminded to file their Homestead Declarations. Ashley said he was comfortable with what the Town has done in the past.

11. Review Results of Town Survey (Discussion). Ashley said there are two documents in the packet: final survey results and a summary of responses from which two names were redacted per Ashley's request. Cook briefly reviewed how she and Flanders entered the paper copies into Survey Monkey. Flanders thanked Cook, the Town Clerk and the library for their efforts. Flanders has put together a summary of the stats and his analysis that he will share with the Selectboard. Moran said the survey received a pretty decent response, that it is a data rich document and will take a while to go through. Moran would like to discuss on a future agenda and would prefer the Selectboard not put statements out on the Norwich Listserv. Cook suggested a roundtable discussion. Layton said she took the survey online and wondered what is wrong with functional. She would like to hear a range of solutions for the facilities and not just the Cadillac version. There was some discussion regarding people not living in Norwich taking the survey. Fulton said there were 39 pages in the summary of responses and he would like to provide answers to some of the questions asked.

12. Facilities Planning. b) CFP&BC Question Re: Planning Horizon for Facilities Planning (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Cook said the planning horizon in the charge is 5 and 25 years. Ashley said we need to know where we are going and to set parameters. Moran responded that he would like to take as long as it takes, do one at a time, high quality and long lasting. Ashley then asked "what can all five of us agree on"? Tentatively the Selectboard agreed on long-term and a phased approach. Goulet suggested focusing on the Police Station at the present site. Ashley summed up that, although there is strong support for replacing the Police Station, there is no consensus by the Selectboard on what to do.

a) CFP&BC Recommendation Re: ABC Dairy (Discussion/Possible Action Item). After some discussion of price and the site being a legitimate choice, Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to authorize the Town Manager to get a sense of the price for the property and, if appropriate, do environmental studies. **Motion failed 2 to 3** (yes – Ashley and Flanders; no –Cook, Goulet and Moran).

13. 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) #13 a). Email from Ann Marie Smith Re: Main Street Paving Project. Flanders **moved** (2nd Goulet) to receive an email from Ann Marie Smith Re: Main Street Paving Project. **Motion passed.**

14. Selectboard

- a) Approval of the Minutes of the 5/28/14 and 6/18/14 Meetings. After a brief discussion wherein Ashley asked Cook to get her changes in writing to the Board, it was agreed to table approval of these minutes until the August 27th meeting.
- b) Review of Next Agendas (Discussion/Possible Action Item). Huntley Meadow dog rules, public input on FY16 budget, budget guidelines, facilities studies and the revised Appropriation Policy will be items on the agenda for the August 27th meeting. The Selectboard then discussed having a special meeting for a roundtable discussion of the survey results on August 26th. Ashley will send an email to the Board as a follow up.

Goulet **moved** (2nd Cook) to adjourn. **Motion passed.** Meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on August 27, 2014.

By Nancy Kramer
Assistant to the Town Manager

Christopher Ashley
Selectboard Chair

Next Regular Meeting – August 27, 2014 at 6:30 PM

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"July 9-14

To the Norwich Selectboard and Town Manager,

Here is my brief, deeply considered position on the approach you are taking, evident in your questionnaire, your plan to pave Main Street, and the swirl of extravagant goals for a new fire facility.

I remind you of the original definition of the Selectboard purpose (yet again) 'To protect town resources, and rarely to take the initiative in any sort of enterprise.' This definition sums up the function, the necessity, and the obligation of a democratic governing body.

My understanding of this clear, original directive is that it remains valid, and requires no changes whatsoever. It stands. Year by year this board has veered away from protecting the town, the townspeople, by relentless and unceasing expenditures which achieve the precise opposite of protection, a steady trend of endangerment and disintegration of the town, pushing one high priced action after another on the population and driving numbers of our community with modest means away.

It strikes me as a fundamental misunderstanding: Plans laid to 'improve' and 'refine' having a direct result of abandoning town government's obligation to the community.

I urge you to reflect on this trend, to back away from lavish spending on optimum solutions and to recollect that fairness to your citizens is very likely to be the most modest possible action. The tendency to 'go for the best' is clearly the most unfair.

Your responsibilities are to your townspeople, the folks who are here NOW. Curb your voraciousness for material refinement and focus please on the people you serve.

Last but not least, your questionnaire accomplishes nothing related to the common good. Asking people what they would like is pointless. It is your job to determine what our town can bear. A productive inquiry directed to the townsfolk would include facts of the effect high spending has had on the population and what effect more spending would have on us.

Thank you.

Sue Lupien"