

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, January 11, 2017 at 6:30 pm

Members present: Linda Cook, Chair; Christopher Ashley; Dan Goulet; Mary Layton, Vice-Chair; Stephen Flanders; Dave Ormiston, Interim Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

There were about 8 people in the audience.

Also participating: Jim Gold, Stuart Richards, Claudette Brochu, Lily Trajman, Abby Friedman (Vermont League of Cities and Towns), John Carroll, and Demo Sofronas

Cook opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). Selectboard agreed to proceed with the agenda as drafted.
2. Public Comments (Discussion Item). **Jim Gold** thanked Christopher Ashley for his service to the town. Gold suggested to the Board that they consider addressing the issue of town workers smoking in town vehicles. **Stuart Richards** asked the Board to level-fund the budget because Norwich is becoming unaffordable for some people. **Claudette Brochu** also thanked Christopher Ashley for his service, and stated that the Board should level-fund the budget.
3. Women's Club alcohol policy waiver request (Discussion/Action Item). **Lily Trajman** appeared on behalf of the Women's Club and explained the waiver request was in connection with the club's Spring Gala event. Ashley told Trajman that the club's request contained all of the necessary information sought by the Board. Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to waive the Town ordinance regulating the possession and consumption of alcohol so that the Norwich Women's Club may serve alcohol in Tracy Hall on the evening of March 17, 2017 during its Spring Gala. **Motion passed unanimously.**
4. Town Manager Search – executive session may be needed (Discussion/Action Item)
 - a. Update (Discussion/Action Item). **Abby Friedman** said that she was prepared to give her report on the Town Manager applicants to the Board in executive session. Ashley **moved** (2nd Flanders) to find that discussing the application materials and status of applicants for the position of Town Manager in public session would violate the applicants' rights to confidentiality. **Motion passed unanimously.** Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to enter executive session to discuss applicants for the position of Town Manager, pursuant to Title 1 VSA §313(a)(3) of the Vermont Statutes, and to invite Abby Friedman of VLCT into the executive session. **Motion passed unanimously.**

The Selectboard moved into executive session at 6:42 pm.

Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to enter public session. **Motion passed unanimously.** The Selectboard moved into public session at 7:35 pm.

b. Town Manager Evaluation Process (Discussion/Action Item). The Selectboard discussed the question of how often evaluation of the Town Manager (TM) should happen. The Board reached consensus that the TM should receive some form of evaluation twice a year. The Selectboard then discussed what would happen if the Board fails to complete an evaluation at

least once a year – would the TM receive a step increase, or no? Flanders also suggested that if any problems arise with performance, they should be addressed right away. Ashley said that if the Board does not complete a timely evaluation and the TM does not get a step increase, then the Board might be vulnerable to liability. Ashley said that would be an effective incentive for the Board to complete evaluations. Goulet pointed out that the Selectboard must do the evaluation; it is the Board's duty to complete the evaluation.

John Carroll, who had submitted a proposed form for the Selectboard to use for evaluations, was asked to provide his input. Carroll said that it is true the Selectboard has the duty to complete an evaluation. Part of Carroll's proposal is a set of scoring sheets which are compiled without Board discussion and the scores averaged. The other piece of Carroll's evaluation proposal is that each Board member would answer the questions of what has the TM done well, and what needs improvement. These forms will allow the Board to complete its evaluation(s) in an expeditious manner.

c. Draft Provisions of Town Manager Contract (Discussion/Action Item). The Board agreed to move this agenda item to later – Item 9, just before 9(a).

5. Public Hearing on Proposed FY18 Budget (Discussion/Action Item). **Claudette Brochu** said that she has commented previously and now it's up to the Selectboard to decide. Brochu stated that she thinks there is room for changes and reductions in the budget. **Demo Sofronas** said that he has seen about ten years of budget discussions, and he has seen a lot worse years than this one. Sofronas asked what will the per taxpayer increase amount to. Ormiston answered that there would be an increase of \$13 per \$100,000 valuation. Sofronas said that the Board has worked very hard to come up with the best possible budget.

6. The Board discussed what to do with the money that was set aside for purchasing a frontloader for the Public Works Department, now that the FEMA money has been approved for the purchase of that frontloader. After discussion, Cook **moved** (2nd Layton) to take the funds from the frontloader designated fund and apply them toward lowering the town tax rate. Ashley pointed out that some of the designated fund must be spent on the frontloader as a condition of the FEMA grant. **Motion failed 4 to 1** (no – Ashley, Goulet, Layton, Flanders; yes – Cook). Flanders then **moved** (2nd Layton) to reduce the appropriation proposed for the highway equipment fund by \$100,000 and apply \$50,000 to the town garage designated fund and \$50,000 to the highway bridges fund in the FY18 budget. **Motion passed 4 to 1** (yes – Ashley, Goulet, Layton, Flanders; no – Cook).

The Selectboard then discussed whether to use tower bond leftover money to pay down the tower debt. Flanders **moved** (2nd Goulet) to reduce the line item for debt service on the tower bond to \$32,661. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to recommend that the Town Meeting approve a gross spending General Town Budget of \$4,462,378. **Motion passed 3 to 2** (yes – Ashley, Layton, Flanders; no – Cook, Goulet)

7. Interim Town Manager Report (Discussion Item). The contract with Jay White, architect for the Public Safety Building project, will be signed; it has been sent to White for his signature. Mary Andes, with the Vermont Department of Public Safety, suggests that the Town ask for an extension for the completion of the FEMA alternative projects past November 1, 2017. The Department of Public Works has hired a temporary worker to cover for an employee who will be out on leave. Interim financing bids went out to banks and Merchants Bank submitted the best rate. The Town will obtain a line of credit for use in case the Town has a cash flow issue with

multiple projects occurring.

8. Correspondence – various items (Discussion/Action Item). Flanders told the Board that his correspondence was erroneously included in the packet. Flanders's email was merely discussion about agenda setting, and therefore not properly considered correspondence.

Flanders **moved** (2nd Ashley) to receive correspondence from National School Choice Week regarding a requested proclamation; State of Vermont Department of Taxes regarding the 2016 Equalization Study results; Claudette Brochu regarding budget questions, with answers from Interim Town Manager; and John Farrell regarding construction on Turnpike Road. **Motion passed unanimously.**

The Selectboard instructed Ormiston to verify that the building permit questioned by John Farrell was properly granted.

9. Selectboard

a. Finance – Board to sign accounts payable/warrants (Discussion/Action Item). Ashley **moved** (2nd Flanders) to approve Check Warrant Report #17-17 for General Fund in the amount of \$18,199.48. **Motion passed unanimously.**

b. Approval of the Minutes of the 12/7/2016 Selectboard meeting (Action Item). Ashley **moved** (2nd Flanders) to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2016 Selectboard meeting with revisions put forward. **Motion passed (yes- 4; no- Cook).**

c. Review of Next Agendas (Discussion/Possible Action Item). The board agreed to hold a special meeting on January 18, 2017 for the purpose of discussing the Town Manager contract.

For the January 25, 2017 meeting, agenda items will include:

1. VLCT Special Meeting to change bylaws
2. Town Manager evaluation process
3. Pool Committee presentation
4. Approve Town Meeting warning

At this point, Goulet **moved** (2nd Flanders) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.** Meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.

by Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager

Approved by the Selectboard on January 25, 2017

Linda Cook, Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – Special Meeting on January 18, 2017 at 6:30 PM

PLEASE NOTE THAT CATV RECORDS ALL REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE NORWICH SELECTBOARD.