

DRAFT
TOWN OF NORWICH, VERMONT AND
NORWICH TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
MINUTES OF INFORMATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING, MARCH 6, 2017

Moderator Thayer called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

The legal voters of the Town of Norwich, Vermont and the Norwich Town School District are hereby notified and warned to meet in Tracy Memorial Hall, Norwich, Vermont at 7:00 pm on Monday, March 6, 2017, to transact business not requiring a vote by Australian ballot. Voting for Town Officers and for all articles on the Warning will be by Australian ballot. The polls will be open Tuesday, March 7, 2017 from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm.

Moderator reminded people of the rules for the meeting and asked the public to take a voice vote as to allow people to speak for two or three minutes. Upon the voice vote it was decided that people would be able to speak for town minutes..

This meeting is called to determine if the Town will:

Article 1. *Elect a Moderator of the Town and School District meeting for one year.* No discussion.

Article 2. *Elect Town and School District Officers for terms starting in 2017.* No discussion.

Article 3. *Hear and act on the reports of the Officers of the Town and Town School District.* No discussion.

Article 4. *To authorize the Board of School Directors to borrow money by issuance of bonds or notes not in excess of anticipated revenues for the next fiscal year in accordance with the provisions of 16 VSA § 562(9).* No discussion.

Article 5. *Shall the voters of the Norwich Town School District determine and fix the salaries of the School Board members in the sum of \$500 each per year in accordance with the provisions of 16 VSA § 562(5)?* No discussion.

Article 6. *Shall the voters of the Norwich Town School District approve the School Board to expend \$5,570,871, which is the amount the School Board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$18,799 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 5.9% higher than spending for the current year.* Tom Candon began by introducing board members James Mackall, Kelly Hersey and Neil Odell. Candon thanked Superintendent Bass for his years of service. He will be leaving in June of this year.

Odell spoke to this year's budget noting that they had hoped for a regular budget presentation. The board, as with boards around the State, was surprised with the radical education plans that the Governor presented in his address asking the school boards to level fund there budget from last year. The General Assembly declined the Governor's call to

level fund this fiscal year budget with last year. However, the board does recognize that high property taxes are a problem and school boards are working on this.

Odell then presented a power point presentation showing the budget for this year. Most of the expenses for the school are the cost of teachers. Special Education is also a large expense that varies from year to year. It has been found that early education intervention is a benefit in the long run for Marion Cross School children with disabilities.

Shifting staff to student ratios of student to staff from 4.67:1 percent to 5:1 percent can save about seventy four million dollars state wide. Our current student to staff ration is 5.4:1 and next year will be 5.3:1.

Some of the reductions this year included reopening the SAU budget to decrease the assessment to Norwich. No additional monies are being asked for the reserve fund, a decrease in one full time classroom teacher, cuts to student text books, library management system, carpet replacement and administrative books and software. This has shown savings.

Teacher contract negotiations have begun and are currently at an impasse. This year the negotiations have been made in public rather than executive session. The initial Board proposal included salary increases of \$500.00 year one, \$1,000.00 year two and \$1500.00 for year three. Health care would be \$5,275.00 for a single plan, \$9,906 for a two person plan, \$8,155 for a parent/child plan and \$14,611 for a family plan. The estimated cost for this proposal is \$56,000.

The teachers proposal called for, a twelve percent increase in salary over the next three years, 98% of the premium to be paid for any plan and the board to fund HRA covering all medical expenses. The estimated cost for their proposal over the next three years would amount to \$682,000.

As stated above they are at an impasse and are scheduling a mediated fact-finding process. They hope to reach a contract before October 15, 2017 in order to meet the health care enrollment period.

The School budget as proposed is \$5,573,371 which is up \$114,524 or two point one percent. There is a decrease in one full time teacher, increases are Special Education up to \$90,000, Transportation is up \$37,000, Guidance is up \$19,000 and PreK is up \$23,000.

Odell then showed the slides pertaining to the expenditures and revenues of the schools and a slide showing revenues/appropriations and Net Assessment. Next were presentations showing the formula used for the tax rates, and the spending per equalized student.

Odell noted that the Marion Cross School ranks # 4 in the state of Vermont per SchoolDigger.com and is the #6 rated school in the nation per TheBestSchools.com. We have place in the top 10 in VT SBAC sores for grades 4 through 6.

Community collaborations include the Norwich Historical Society, Montshire Museum, Dan & Whits, Local banks, Geisel School of Medicine, parental involvement and WISE.

There was no general discussion regarding this article.

Article 7. *Transact any other business that may legally come before the annual meeting of the Norwich Town School District.* Irv Thomae spoke here giving an update on EC Fiber. Sixteen hundred hook-ups have been made and they are looking to expand Thetford, Strafford and on Starlake Lane in Norwich. EC Fiber will expand in areas that show the most interest. So if you are interest please sign up on their website.

Representative Masland and Brigham spoke on what is taking place in the legislature. Masland reported that there is a deficit of thirty-five million which they believe they can trim back to twelve to 18 million which the state will need to make up. This could be difficult as the Governor has said that he will veto any bill that would raise taxes. Some of the ways would be to collect money that is owed to the state that has not been collected, making sure that taxes are paid on purchases that are made out of state through the purchase and use tax and to reinforce that third party credit card companies that should be filing 1099 forms with the state. He believes that this would bring another three million dollars to the state.

Also, efforts to clean up Lake Champlain would cost the state approximately fifty million dollars over the next twenty years. We may be able to do state bonding but in the meantime we need to come up with about twenty million dollars. They are afraid that Federal Money could disappear with the new administration in Washington DC.

Briglin reported that he is on the health care committee saying that they are prepared to move into the post affordable health system. The committee is also trying to deal with the current mental health care crisis in the state and if the committee has jurisdiction over mental health care.

Article 8. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich approve a gross spending General Town Budget of \$4,462,378 plus state and federal grants and gifts consistent with budgeted programs for the period July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018?* Linda Cook began by thanking Phil Dechert for his time as acting Town Manager while we search for and interim Town Manager and thanked Dave Ormiston as our interim Town Manager. A search committee was formed to assist the Selectboard in the process of hiring a new Town Manager. They were able to review fifty-five applications and narrow it down to 10 possible candidates. Tonight they are able to announce that Herb Durfee will take the position of Town Manager on May 1, 2017.

This year the town voted for a one million four hundred and ten thousand dollar public safety building. The town received FEMA funds to help with the concrete and clean up where the Norwich Pool used to be and funds to pay for a front end loader and the addition of a building at the Public Works Department.

Mary Layton began taking us through the budget process with a power point presentation which will be attached. The power point takes us from the process which began in August to the finalized budget. This year it was noted that forty seven percent of the budget is allocated towards wages which include a two percent grade and step schedule and a one point one percent COLA based increase. Health insurance is seven percent of our budget and this year we will be facing an eight percent increase in premiums.

Layton then showed a slide showing the increases and decreases in the budget to be voted upon. Overall the total increases to the budget are a two point one two percent increase.

From \$4,726,851 last year to \$4,827,139 this year which includes the outside appropriations.

The additional slides took us through graphs showing the town expenditure history, health insurance costs, public works expenditures, solid waste revenues/expenditures, police expenditures, fire expenditures and the recreations department.

Layton presented a slide showing non property tax revenues from fiscal year 2015 to estimated 2018 revenues. Also in this presentation were a revenue budget summary, projected tax rate summary and actual and projected town tax rates. There was no general discussion regarding this article.

Article 9. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich approve the borrowing of up to \$70,000 to be used for contingency funding, if needed, for the Norwich Public Safety Building Project?* Mary Layton spoke to this saying when the bond vote was voted upon the board had made a mathematical error. Layton said that the architect is frugal this money would be used to make up the difference. Layton apologized on behalf of the board for the error. There was no general discussion regarding this article.

Article 10. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$13,120 to Advance Transit to be used to help cover operating costs and providing matching funds for grants, such amount being reasonably necessary for the support of providing public transportation services?* Van Chesnut the Executive Director for Advance Transit (AT) noting that they are asking for a two percent increase this year as last year they did not ask for an increase. Ridership has gone up five years in a row and AT now has a app that you can get on your phone which show you in real time information as to where the buses are and when you can expect your bus to arrive.

Article 11. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$3,000 to Good Beginnings to be used for those operating expenses that are reasonably necessary for the support of programs?* No discussion.

Article 12. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$1,693 to the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation to be used to offer support for new, growing and relocating businesses?* Bob Haines spoke to this article explaining that they are a small non-profit which help 30 towns in the district teaching workforce education and training for small businesses.

Article 13. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$500 to the Green Mountain RSVP & Volunteer Center of Windsor County to develop opportunities for people age 55 and older to positively impact the quality of life in the community through volunteer services?* No discussion.

Article 14. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$2,500 to Headrest to be used for the operation of a crisis 24/7 hotline?* No discussion.

Article 15. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$1,500 to the Norwich American Legion, to be used for the Legion's Memorial Day observance?* Linda Cook explained that the money appropriated to this would help with the cost of the Memorial Day Parade and not to be confused with the firework request from the Norwich Lions Club.

Article 16. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$15,000 to the Cemetery Commission under 18 VSA § 5361 to supplement the interest from the Perpetual Care Trust Fund for maintenance of the Town Cemeteries?* Bob Parker spoke to his article explaining that the Cemetery Commission takes care of the Town cemeteries. Although we showed a nine thousand dollar surplus, this was used shortly after the fiscal year ended with the repairs to the wall/fence at Fairview Cemetery, paving in Hillside Cemetery and placing headstones back upright that moved with the frost from the winters.

Article 17. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$4,348 to The Child Care Center of Norwich to be used for income sensitive scholarships to Norwich children?* No discussion.

Article 18. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$8,000 to the Norwich Historical Society and Community Center to support those programs that support the celebration of historic events?* Sarah Rooker the new Directors spoke for this article. Rooker reported that the sixth grade has been over to the Historical Society at least once a week while school has been in session. They have been learning history, communication and leadership skills while they have been there.

The community room is a host to approximately thirty clubs in the area and many events. Their strategic plan includes digitizing their collections. She thanked the town for its past support.

Article 19. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$3,000 to the Norwich Lions Club to be used to underwrite the fireworks for the Norwich Fair in celebration of the 256th year of the Town's Charter?* Henry Scheier spoke thanking the town for their past support. Scheier explained since moving the Fair from Rt. 5 south back to the Green, the Lions Club has lost the income from parking which, in the past funded the fireworks display. The Lions wanted to continue to assist various organizations and agreed that they could no longer put the funds aside for the firework display. This funding allows the Club to continue with the tradition of the Fair for the firework display on the Saturday night of the annual Fair.

Article 20. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$272,950 to the Norwich Public Library Association, to be used for the operating expenses of the Library?* Lucinda Walker spoke to this article saying that every year she gives a report on what the Library has done and realized that everything she says is in the Town Report. This year the Library created a banner showing the events that are to take place just in this month alone. Walker noted that we will see some changes to the outside of the building but not to worry as this is being done without Town money.

They would like to make sure that if something is not working to please let them know. Walker thanked the town and the volunteers who gave over two thousand six hundred hours of their time last year to help run the Library.

Article 21. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$3,750 to SEVCA (Southeastern Vermont Community Action) to be used for emergency needs, referral to and assistance with accessing needed services, financial counseling and food and nutrition education?* No discussion.

Article 22. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$6,000 to The Family Place to be used for general program support, such amount being reasonably necessary for the support of programs such as direct service through early intervention, child care payment assistance, healthy baby visits, reach up, welcome baby, parent education, playgroups and other services? No discussion.*

Article 23. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$2,000 to the Upper Valley Trails Alliance to be used for trail planning and work? Peter Griggs spoke to this article thanking the town for past support. The Trails Alliance puts a tremendous amount of work to keep our trails in shape.*

Article 24. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$15,600 to the Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice of VT and NH to help support the home health, maternal and child health and hospice care provided in patients' homes and in community settings? Cathy Cullen spoke to this article thanking the Town for past support. The Visiting Nurses assisted sixty residents this last year and have over fifty thousand dollars in charitable care.*

Article 25. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$5,300 to the White River Council on Aging to be used for home delivered meals, transport and social services? Warren Thayer recused himself as Moderator for a moment to explain that the Council does a lot of work and has many volunteers which help fund the Meals on Wheels program and other services to the residents of the Town.*

Article 26. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$1,000 to Windsor County Partners to be used for mentoring youth? Nancy Dean spoke to this article saying that since 1974 they have been matching children with adult friends. Dean thanks the town for past support.*

Article 27. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$2,500 to WISE (Women's Information Service) to be used to support WISE's crisis intervention and support services and prevention education? Lisa Christy spoke saying that WISE supports family members in this town and has also supported the three schools with services.*

Article 28. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich appropriate \$3,000 to Youth-In-Action to be used for operating expenses that support our community service efforts? Beth Cobb speaking for the article thanked the town for past support. The appropriation from this article benefits Norwich citizens in that YIA helps with the Norwich Road Race, face painting for the Halloween Celebration as well as being able to ask for help from students with certain tasks/jobs around the home. Approximately one third of the high school students are from Norwich.*

Article 29. *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich require that taxes be paid in U.S. funds in two installments? The first installment will be due and accepted at the Town of Norwich Finance Office on or before 4:30 pm August 18, 2017 and the balance will be due at the same location on or before 4:30 pm February 16, 2018. An official United States Post Office postmark/cancellation (not a postage machine date) will determine the payment date for all mailed payments. Interest on overdue taxes will be charged at 1% per month for the first three months and 1½% per month thereafter. All delinquent taxes will be subject to an*

8% collection fee in accordance with Vermont Statutes after February 16, 2018. No Discussion.

Article 30. *Transact any other business that may legally come before the annual Norwich Town Meeting.* Steve Flanders gave his thanks to Christopher Ashley for his years of service and to Dave Ormiston for the job he has done for the town as interim Town Manager.

Peter Griggs also thank Christopher Ashley for his years of service.

Cheryl Lindberg thanked Dan Goulet for his service on the Selectboard.

A motion made by Goulet seconded by Ashley to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie J Munday,
Norwich Town Clerk

****PLEASE NOTE THAT THE POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS ARE ATTACHED TO THE MINUTES FROM THE 2017 ANNUAL TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT AND TOWN MEETING WHICH TOOK PLACE ON MARCH 6, 2017.****