

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, November 15, 2017 at 6:30 pm

Members present: Mary Layton, Chair; Linda Cook; Stephen Flanders; John Pepper; Herb Durfee, Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager. Absent: John Langhus

There were about 12 people in the audience.

Also participating: Pam Smith, Will Smith, Frank Manasek, Colin Calloway, Corlan Johnson, Marcia Calloway, Claudette Brochu, Maggie Pepper, Elaine Waterman and Jim Wilson.

Layton opened the meeting at 6:35 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). Selectboard agreed to proceed with the agenda as written.
2. Public Comments (Discussion Item). Pam Smith read aloud from a hardcopy of comments she had previously posted online. Pam distributed copies of the document to Selectboard members, and the document will be included in the 11-29-2017 Selectboard meeting correspondence. She expressed concern about behavior and comments made by Selectboard members at the 11-8-2017 Selectboard meeting. Mary Layton apologized to everyone for what happened at the last Selectboard meeting. Will Smith said that he objected to John Langhus's tone and behavior at the 11-8-2017 meeting. Frank Manasek said that people should be able to disagree while remaining civil and should feel free to be dissidents. John Pepper spoke about the importance of respectful dialogue and also apologized for last week's meeting. Colin Calloway expressed concern about tone and said that underlying dismissive attitudes by some individuals need to be addressed in order to create a respectful environment.
3. Codification of Ordinances (Discussion/Action Item). Layton asked if the new Elm Street stop sign needs to be addressed separately before codification happens; Herb Durfee said that no separate action would be required. Layton said she agrees with Steve Flanders's approach in completing the codification and then addressing any larger issues, such as topics 1 – 3 in Flanders memo to Cook [in Selectboard meeting packet]. Cook said that she objects to some of this approach, and is particularly concerned about the new stop sign on Elm Street and other stop signs on sloped roads. Cook said that the Selectboard should have been consulted before the new stop sign was placed. Corlan Johnson said that she had asked for a stop sign to be placed at Elm Street because of the lack of sightlines at the intersection. Pepper said that he knows that corner very well and agrees that the intersection is dangerous. Pepper also said that future new signs need to go before the Selectboard. Marcia Calloway said that the stop sign is on a bad corner and there is a danger of slipping in bad weather. Cook also objected to the new lower speed limit on Route 132 put into place without having done a traffic study. Flanders said that a Selectboard can adjust speed limits without a speed study. Cook said that she is agreeable to addressing the dog ordinance issue and her other objections at a later time, after passing codification. Marcia Calloway asked if any changes were made to land use sections in the proposed codification. Flanders said that no changes were made, to his knowledge. Flanders **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Pepper) to adopt the Norwich Ordinances, as codified and with revisions put forward, pursuant to 24 VSA §1971 et seq. **Motion passed 3 to 1 (no- Cook).**
4. a. Possible Acquisition of Fire District Sidewalks (Discussion/Action Item). Flanders said

that the Norwich Fire District (FDist) has not spent anything since 2010 for upkeep to the sidewalks. At present, there are no major changes yet to the condition of the sidewalks, and Flanders estimates that \$4,000 per year should be sufficient to maintain the sidewalk reserve. Flanders thinks that the town as a whole should pay to keep up the sidewalks, as they are used by all of the people in the town, not only Fire District residents. Will Smith suggested that crosswalks be painted green to heighten their visibility. Corlan Johnson agreed that all town residents should contribute to the maintenance of the sidewalks. Claudette Brochu wanted to know: why did the Town go to the FDist to ask about acquiring the sidewalks; why doesn't the FDist have the money to maintain the sidewalks; and can the Town force the FDist to maintain the sidewalks? Pepper said that he thinks the Town should fix this issue by taking over the sidewalk maintenance. Brochu said she doesn't want another expense added to the townspeople at large. Cook discussed the history of town sidewalks, and said that she thinks it is wrong for the FDist not to maintain its sidewalks. Cook thinks that the FDist should bring the sidewalks up to good condition before the Town takes them over. Cook wants to sit down with the FDist to work out a plan to go forward, and does not support acquiring the sidewalks before that is done. Pam Smith asked if this is something that the Selectboard will decide or will the issue go to a town wide vote. Layton said that it could be done either way. Maggie Pepper said that she wants the Selectboard to put pedestrians before cars, and wants people to be able to walk safely. She feels that good sidewalks are important to build a strong community. Cook wants to have better information about maintenance costs before voting on this question. Layton thinks that the Town should go forward with taking over sidewalks and maintaining them. Elaine Waterman said that the FDist sidewalk issue is not new, and the people within the FDist pay a special Village tax to maintain the water system. This Village tax is already higher than the town tax rate, and the FDist could not raise any more money from its residents to cover sidewalk maintenance. Flanders **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Pepper) to authorize the Town Manager to enter into an agreement to acquire the Fire District sidewalks, "as is." **Motion passed 3 to 1 (no- Cook).**

b. Safe Routes to School (Discussion/Action Item). Durfee gave a brief update, saying that, per Selectboard instruction, he had not taken any further steps to spend money on this matter. Also, a volunteer arborist has stated that he concurs with the Chippers (arborist) recommendations for how to work as safely as possible around the elm tree. Jim Wilson said that the elm tree is not the only issue with the project, and the neighbors met recently and agreed that pedestrian safety is paramount. They propose having a narrower sidewalk and would like to control the traffic speed coming into town with more signs or blinking lights, with perhaps a crosswalk just before the elm tree. Wilson hopes that the neighbors could collaborate with VTrans to come up with solutions. Elaine Waterman said that the neighbors propose having a 15 mph speed limit in that area, and said that the neighbors are concerned about losing significant portions of their front yards. Layton suggested that the Town Manager talk to VTrans about the neighbors' ideas for slowing traffic.

5. Review of Next Agendas. The Selectboard agreed to start the November 29, 2017 meeting at 5:30 pm, and agreed on the following items for the agenda:

- Department Heads Budget Presentations
- Assessor/Listers Update
- Negotiated Agreement (executive session possible)
- Dog Ordinance Appeal
- Town Manager Evaluation Timeframe

At 8:32 pm, Flanders **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Pepper) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm.

by Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager

Approved by the Selectboard on December 6, 2017

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Mary Layton, Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting –November 29, 2017 at **5:30 PM** (Note time change)

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