

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, November 29, 2017 at 5:30 pm

Members present: Mary Layton, Chair; Linda Cook; Stephen Flanders; John Langhus (via teleconference); John Pepper; Herb Durfee, Town Manager; Jonathan Bynum, Scribe.

There were about 22 people in the audience.

Also participating: Claudette Brochu, Kris Clement, Phil Dechert, Andy Hodgdon, Bill Krajeski, Steve Leinoff, Cheryl Lindberg, Charlotte Metcalf, Bonnie Munday, Jill Niles, Stuart Richards, Doug Robinson, Roberta Robinson, Pam Smith and Brie Swenson.

Layton opened the meeting at 5:35 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). Cook suggested postponing discussion of item 10 (a) Approval of Minutes and moving item 10 (b) Review of Next Agenda to after item (8) Correspondence. This was agreed by consensus.

2. Public Comments (Discussion Item). Pam Smith stated that the Town Personnel Policies do not address disciplinary actions for violations of State statute or Town ordinance. Charlotte Metcalf read from a document she submitted to the Selectboard commending the professionalism of the Contract Assessors and asking the Selectboard to attempt to persuade them to stay on. Stuart Richards thanked the Town Manager for a recent letter on the Open Meeting Law. He spoke to the importance of this law, and said that he thinks the Town Manager has taken the right course.

3. Department Heads FYE 2019 Budget Presentations (Discussion Item). Durfee distributed an updated draft budget that shows a proposed expenditure budget increase of 1.23% for Town expenditures and 1.13% for overall expenditures. The Selectboard expressed appreciation for the Department Heads, who had been requested to provide suggestions for a 10% cut. Pepper said that we should beware of letting past expenditures justify future ones. Flanders said that given the step-and-grade system, such a modest increase in a labor-heavy budget was commendable. Stuart Richards asked that the Selectboard attempt to level-fund the budget.

- Town Administration. Durfee answered questions about Professional Services, the differing percentage increase in wages, and the printing of the Town Report. Pam Smith submitted to the Selectboard a list of Department Head salaries, and questioned the fairness of the compensation of the Town Clerk relative to her importance.
- Statutory Meetings and Town Clerk. Bonnie Munday answered questions about pollworkers' wages, record restoration and office furniture. Pepper said we should look out for emerging technologies that may make digitization of records more efficient.
- Finance. Roberta Robinson answered questions about the independent audit and dues/meetings/education.
- Assessor. Cheryl Lindberg answered questions about the break-out of reappraisal expenses versus regular annual Grand List maintenance expenses. Cook asked questions about whether the Town is keeping the same assessing software, mileage and the proposed purchase of a new computer.
- Planning. Phil Dechert answered questions about salary and planning services, an expense he hopes to offset with State grants.
- Recreation. Jill Niles answered questions about workers' compensation insurance and net spending, which is low because Recreation is largely self-funding. She submitted to the Selectboard a document comparing the staffing and spending of the respective recreation departments in Norwich and four comparable towns.
- Police. Durfee walked the Selectboard through the shared costs of the new Public Safety Facility, which necessitate some structural changes to the budget, and answered a question on cruiser maintenance. Doug Robinson answered a question on staffing.
- Fire. Steve Leinoff answered questions on firefighter wage and retention/recruitment, and

addressed Flanders' questions on water usage. Flanders said that the fact that the Town pays the Fire District both for hydrant rental and also for water by means of a meter at the new facility should be looked at. Cheryl Lindberg said that the Fire District has incurred the expense of fixing water line breaks that are related to hydrant usage. There was further discussion of EMS tools and equipment, ambulance services, and possibly allowing for EMS mileage payments.

- Emergency Management. Langhus asked whether solar arrays with batteries had been considered as an alternative to diesel generators.
- Department of Public Works. Cook suggested a couple of areas where cuts could be made based on recent actuals. There was discussion of whether maintenance of Fire District sidewalks that may soon be taken over by the Town is included in this budget, and how replacement of these would fit into the future paving plan. Andy Hodgdon answered questions about Construction & Demolition Waste disposal, recycling, and composting of food waste.

Durfee said that there was no likelihood of FEMA reimbursement being available anytime soon. Lindberg asked how Act 60 revenues are accounted for. Clement urged the Selectboard to remember the likely increase in the school budget. Pepper questioned whether the potential for increasing revenues had been explored.

4. Contract Assessor & Lister Update (Discussion/Action Item). Bill Krajewski said that an agreement had been reached with the Listers, and that he would serve out his contract until 30 June 2018. Layton welcomed the news that the parties are cooperating.

5. Board to Sign Accounts Payable Warrants (Discussion/Action Item).

a) Public Safety Building Office Equipment. Cook asked whether the purchase orders for the office furniture were within the budgeted amount. Durfee said that they were. Flanders **moved** (2nd Pepper) to authorize Purchase Order #504346 in the amount of \$27,397.82 for the purchase of office furniture for the Public Safety Facility; and Purchase Order #504347 in the amount of \$5,171.74 for the purchase of office furniture for the Public Safety Facility. **Motion passed unanimously.**

6. Town Manager's Report (Discussion/Action Item). Durfee gave a brief FEMA update. VOSHA has reduced the Town's penalty for the trench collapse to \$16,800. There is an ongoing Union grievance. Langhus volunteered to assist Durfee in preparing a master service contract, which will be bid out annually in future. There was discussion of the contractor's degree of responsibility for the accident. The consensus view of the Selectboard was to move on from this question of liability. Claudette Brochu noted the significant washout at around 400 Upper Turnpike, and said it would become very dangerous if plowed in. Durfee said he would talk to Hodgdon about this, but that in general repair work on the roads was proceeding as quickly as possible.

7. Town Manager Evaluation Timeframe (Discussion/Action Item). After discussion, it was agreed to make this an agenda item for the meeting of January 10th.

8. Correspondence (Discussion/Action Item). Flanders **moved** (2nd Pepper) to receive correspondence from the Trails Committee regarding a proposed trail; from Nancy Dean regarding Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission; From Will Smith regarding road striping; from Claudette Brochu regarding the proposed Town Budget; from Marcia Calloway regarding a TRORC map; from Cheryl Lindberg regarding the 9-30-2017 Quarterly Investment Report; and from Pam Smith regarding Selectboard conduct. There was a question about whether Selectboard approval was needed for the proposed trail. Brie Swenson of the Conservation Commission said that the trail is already built and is entirely on private land, and that there is no Town liability attached. **Motion passed unanimously.**

10. Selectboard

b) Review of Next Agendas (Discussion/Action Item). The Selectboard agreed on the following items for the agenda of the Special Selectboard meeting of December 6, 2017:

Appropriations
Town Plan

Additions/Subtractions to Budget
Negotiated Agreement (Executive Session Possible)
Approval of Minutes

9. Negotiated Agreement (Discussion/Action Item). Flanders **moved** (2nd Pepper) to find that premature public knowledge would clearly place the public body at a substantial disadvantage. **Motion passed unanimously.** Flanders **moved** (2nd Pepper) to enter executive session to discuss the negotiated agreement, pursuant to 1 VSA §313(a)(1)(B). **Motion passed unanimously.** The Selectboard moved into executive session at 8.52 pm.

Flanders **moved** (2nd Pepper) to enter public session. **Motion passed unanimously.** The Selectboard moved into public session at 9:34 pm. Flanders moved (2nd Pepper) to amend his earlier motion to include the invitation of the Town Manager to join the Selectboard in executive session. **Motion passed unanimously.**

At 9:35 pm, Cook **moved** (2nd Pepper) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.

By Jonathan Bynum
Scribe

Approved by the Selectboard on 12/13/2017

Mary Layton
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – December 6, 2017 at 6:30 PM

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