

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, January 10, 2018 at 6:30 pm

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

There were about 44 people in the audience.

Also participating: Demo Sofronas, Gary DeGasta, Warren Thayer, Charlotte Metcalf, Corlan Johnson, Jonathan Vincent, Stuart Richards, Linda Cook, Roberta Robinson, Cheryl Lindberg, Dennis Kaufman, Bonnie Munday, Pam Smith, Will Smith, John Carroll, Doug Robinson, Wade Willis, Rick Kenney, Richard Wright, Patricia Derrick, April Andrews, Peter Andrews, Marcia Calloway, Colin Calloway, and Frank Manasek.

Mary Layton opened the meeting at 6:36 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). Layton announced that the town's auditor was not able to attend this meeting, and therefore would not be making a presentation this evening. The Selectboard agreed to proceed with the agenda as drafted.
2. Public Comments (Discussion Item). Demo Sofronas, Gary DeGasta, and Warren Thayer presented a check for \$1,800 from the Norwich Lions Club to the Town of Norwich to contribute to the cost of a flagpole in front of the new Public Safety Building. Charlotte Metcalf asked about the process for getting answers to questions about the Town Plan. Layton said she is hoping to convene a special Selectboard meeting to discuss just the Town Plan and address questions at that time. Corlan Johnson spoke in favor of having paid assessors, and said that the BCA provides for public input into the assessment process. Jonathan Vincent said that close inspection of properties is very important for accuracy, the listers do a large amount of work, and the Board of Listers should not be abolished. Cheryl Lindberg clarified whether or not there was going to be a budget hearing subsequent to the discussion and the SB voting the budget that night. Lindberg also spoke to clarify with the SB the Board of Listers view on changing the cycle of the next reappraisal. The Board of Listers believe the current 3-year cycle contracted to be finished in 2019 should be completed because we have spent money for 2 years of work and the data collected in 2017 and 2018 won't be as valuable to the next town-wide reappraisal if delayed for an additional 5 years. Discussion continued on this topic, mentioning the CLA and COD would be measures used to determine if the next re-appraisal is in 3 more years or 5 more years. Stuart Richards expressed concern about the proposed Town Plan, saying that he feels it is pro-development and pro-growth.
3. Town Auditor Presentation (Discussion Item). Layton reiterated that the auditor would not be joining the meeting. Cook said that she is concerned that the audit won't be completed in time to set the budget. Langhus asked if the yearly audits have usually shown errors, and was told that no, there have been only minor items.
4. FYE 2019 Budget (Discussion/Action Item). Flanders said the Selectboard members did not seem to be in agreement about cutting DPW overtime and sand & gravel. Therefore, Flanders suggested that the Selectboard not cut \$9,000 from those budget lines. Cook wants to restore the listers stipend to \$1,500 each, and therefore add \$3,000 to the proposed budget. Layton agreed, given that the role of the listers is in a transitional stage at present. Flanders **moved** (2nd Langhus) to recommend to the voters a FYE 2019 Town budget of \$4,502,386. Cook moved to

divide the motion, proposing to remove \$9,000 (for DPW overtime and gravel and sand budget line items) from Flanders's proposed amount. **Motion to divide failed 1 to 4 (yes- Cook).** In further discussion on Flanders's motion, Pepper said that he is ready to vote on the budget. Stuart Richards asked about the difference between the FYE19 and the FYE18 budget, and was told that the FYE19 budget is \$45,000 or 1% higher than FYE2018. Dennis Kaufman suggested that the Selectboard add funding to the proposed budget to pay for a town-wide reappraisal every three years. Pam Smith, Will Smith, and Stuart Richards spoke in favor of raising the Town Clerk's wage to grade 21. Jonathan Vincent said that the proposed budget correctly shows \$18,000 as the amount the Fire District is seeking from the Town at present. The Fire District welcomes further discussion with the Town about what is the appropriate payment amount. Flanders's **motion passed 4 to 1 (no- Cook).**

5. Town Meeting Warning (Discussion/Action Item). Durfee said that the intent at this juncture is so introduce a draft of the town meeting warning. The amounts for the school are pending. Durfee summarized for the Selectboard the warning items he had proposed. Bonnie Munday said that, if the article allowing an alternate means of distributing the Town Report passes, the town would look at putting boxes containing copies of the Town Report at the Library and Dan & Whits. Flanders said that he would like to include on the warning an article asking voters whether or not to abolish the Board of Listers, because he feels that it is a question for voters to decide. Cook said she doesn't want to include this question because she doesn't support getting rid of the Board of Listers. Pepper said he doesn't want to put the question to a vote now because the Board of Listers is working with the assessor and we should give that process more time to work out. Bonnie Munday, John Carroll, and Cheryl Lindberg spoke in favor of retaining the Board of Listers and not putting the question to voters at this time. Flanders **moved** (2nd Langhus) to authorize the TM to spend from the Communications Study Designated Fund (current balance = \$28,309) to pay for the purchase and installation of the communications antennae structures at the new public safety building that will house the Norwich Police and Fire Departments. Further moved to include an article on the 2018 March Town Meeting Warning asking voters to authorize spending any remaining funds in the Communications Study Designated Fund for the purpose of reducing the Tower Bond debt service, preferably, the principal amount. Further moved to include an article on the 2018 March Town Meeting Warning asking voters to authorize that the Town provide notice of the Town Report's availability, rather than mailing it to all households; the text of the article would read as follows: *Shall the Town of Norwich provide notice of the availability of the annual Town Report by postcard mailed to all registered voters at least 30 days before the annual Town Meeting, in lieu of mailing or otherwise distributing the report to the voters of the Town of Norwich, pursuant to 24 VSA §1682.* Further moved to include an article on the 2018 March Town Meeting Warning asking voters to authorize borrowing (preferably as short-term as possible), in the form of a line of credit that would serve to help with funding necessary repairs to the Town's roadway and related infrastructure suffering damage from the July 1, 2017 storm. It's anticipated that up to 75% of storm-related expenses would be reimbursed by FEMA and up to 12.5% would be reimbursed by the Vermont Department of Emergency Management; the article would read as follows: *Shall the voters of the Town of Norwich authorize the borrowing of up to [\$AMOUNT] to be used, as needed, for funding Town roadway and related infrastructure repairs caused by the July 1, 2017 storm with anticipated reimbursement up to 75% by FEMA and up to 12.5% by the Vermont Department of Emergency Management.* **Motion passed unanimously.**

6. Board to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Discussion/Action Item). Cook **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve check warrant #18-15 for General Fund in the amount of \$223,116.15; for Highway Garage Fund in the amount of \$17,613.00; and for Public Safety Facility Fund in the

amount of \$114,421.25. **Motion passed unanimously.** Flanders **moved** (2nd Langhus) to authorize the expenditure of \$7,625 from the Fire Equipment Fund; \$3,625 from the Fire Building Fund; and \$525 from the Police Building Fund. **Motion passed unanimously.**

7. Review Draft Policies from Town Manager (Discussion/Action Item). Cook said the proposed policies will be helpful. Durfee said there are two policies and gave a brief overview of the policies (which were included in the meeting packet). The policies will provide a framework for consistency, and are based on VLCT model policies. Doug Robinson said that the Police Department already uses Alice Peck Day for job-related health care. The Selectboard were all in favor of the Town Manager continuing to explore how and whether to put proposed policies into place.

8. Town Manager Report (Discussion Item). a) Illsley Road Update. Durfee said that he is in the process of gathering input from all interested parties before bringing any recommendation to the Selectboard. At this point, there seems to be consensus that there should be a permanent bridge. There are remaining questions about the configuration of the bridge, its placement, etc. Durfee clarified that Illsley Road is a Class IV Road – not a trail. Wade Willis and Richard Wright, members of the Hurricane Riders, said that they want to settle these issues as soon as possible and a lot of people are affected. Rich Kenney said that he will be meeting with Durfee soon regarding these issues. Patricia Derrick said that she lives in the area of Illsley Road, and wouldn't want any reclassification of the road without due notice and hearings. b) Report re: Church St. Cracker Barrel Discussion. Durfee said that almost 20 people attended the cracker barrel, which Durfee hopes will be the first in a series. Some attendees spoke in favor of a sidewalk, some against, and some on the fence. There were many suggestions about traffic calming, speed control, speed bumps, better crossings, flashing lights, making a non-ADA-compliant path, placing signage with flashing lights during school hours, and realigning the road curve. Attendees generally supported some kind of a path; ideas included keeping kids off the road by using existing driveways, adding curbing to delineate the road from a walkway. Durfee said that the state (VTrans) would be willing to give the town an extension, but any further study cost would be paid by the town. April Andrews and Peter Andrews expressed concern about the safety of kids walking to school and said that they had not been included in any of the neighborhood meetings that had occurred recently. Peter Andrews said that it makes sense for the town to proceed with building a sidewalk now, while the town has a grant, because it makes sense to have a sidewalk there. Flanders **moved** (2nd Langhus) to permit the Town Manager to explore all viable options under the current grant structure that are lower impact than the current design. **Motion passed unanimously.** Durfee said that Steve Leinoff, Norwich Fire Chief, has announced his retirement this spring. Durfee is going to conduct interviews in the next few weeks to fill the position vacated by Jonathan Bynum. Durfee is working on getting the minutes posting issues sorted out by advocating for a legislation change. Durfee is also working on hiring a new police officer as a sergeant, rather than a patrol officer level. Current issues being addressed by Durfee are union grievances, pending union negotiations, and VOSHA issues. The Public Safety Building exterior is completed, the interior is being finished, and they are on track for completion. The DPW garage project has been delayed.

At this point in the meeting, Selectboard members agreed that the hour was too late to address all of the remaining agenda items. They agreed to take up agenda item #10 (Correspondence), but defer other agenda items to future meetings. Selectboard members agreed to schedule a special meeting for 5:30 pm on Wednesday, 1/17/2018 to address two agenda items: Town Plan Process and Town Plan Survey.

10. Correspondence (Discussion/Action Item). Langhus **moved** (2nd Flanders) to receive correspondence from Colin Calloway regarding the Town Plan; from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation regarding the proposed Mid-Century Modern Historic District; from Vermont Department of Taxes regarding 2017 equalization study results; from Stuart Richards regarding Conservation Commission minutes and the Town Plan; from Pam Smith regarding the 2017 Town Plan and electronic attendance at Selectboard meetings; from Bonnie Munday regarding restoration of town records; from Stephen Flanders regarding the Town Plan; from Michael Washington regarding a New York Times article; from Frank Manasek regarding the Town Plan; and from Charlotte Metcalf regarding the Town Plan. **Motion passed unanimously.**

At 10:57 pm, Flanders **moved** (2nd Langhus) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:57 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on February 14, 2018

Mary Layton
Selectboard Chair

Next Special Meeting – January 17, 2018 at 5:30 PM

Next Regular Meeting – January 24, 2018 at 6:30 PM

Other upcoming meetings – Jan. 20 and Jan. 23, 2018 Public Hearing on the Town Plan

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