

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, March 14, 2018 at 6:30 pm

Members present: John Pepper, Chair; Claudette Brochu, Vice Chair; Linda Cook; John Langhus (via videoconference); Mary Layton; Phil Dechert, Acting Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

There were about 40 people in the audience.

Also participating: Cheryl Lindberg, Dennis Kaufman, Charlotte Metcalf, Doug Robinson, Jennifer Frank, Jay Mead, Anne Foley, Kate Barlow, Jeanie McIntyre, Chris Gray, Andy Sherer, Nancy Phillips, Miriam Horowitz, Gabe Zoerheidt, Betty Barba, Jenny Barba, Carolyn Frye, and Milton Frye.

John Pepper opened the meeting at 6:34 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda (Action Item). Selectboard members agreed to add an item for "Town Manager Report" with possible executive session, and also to move agenda item 12a regarding accounts payable to earlier in the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes: 2/28/2018 Selectboard Meeting (Action Item). Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to approve the minutes of the February 28, 2018 Selectboard meeting. **Motion passed unanimously.**

12 a. Selectboard to Sign Accounts Payable/Warrants (Action Item). Pepper **moved** (2nd Layton) to approve check warrant #18-19 for Public Safety Facility Fund in the amount of \$15,292.49; for Highway Garage Fund in the amount of \$32,657.45; and for General Fund in the amount of \$1,131,238.09. **Motion passed unanimously.**

3. Correspondence (Action Item). After brief discussion, Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to receive correspondence from Cheryl Lindberg, Town Treasurer, regarding the quarterly investment report; Stuart Richards regarding affordable housing; from Jay Mead regarding the Norwich Farm; from Kate Barlow regarding the Norwich Farm; from Jay Whitehair regarding the Norwich Fire Department; and from Chris Moore regarding the Norwich Fire Department. **Motion passed unanimously.**

4. Public Comment (Discussion Item). Doug Robinson, Norwich Police Chief, introduced a new department officer, Sergeant Jennifer Frank. Frank addressed the meeting, saying that she is very interested in community events and asked that people contact her so that she can become involved.

5. Norwich Farm & Creamery (Discussion/Action Item). Pepper opened the discussion by saying that the Selectboard is not in a position to take any action, other than to provide a public forum for discussion and to hear what everyone has to say. Jay Mead, Anne Foley, and Kate Barlow each spoke in support of dairy operations continuing at Norwich Farm. Jeanie McIntyre, of the Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) spoke and gave a synopsis of events to date regarding the Norwich Farm property. The UVLT hopes that this property can continue as a viable agricultural business. Chris Gray, owner of the Norwich Farm dairy operation, spoke about his background in the dairy business and the history of his involvement in Norwich Farm. Gray said he wants to work things out so that Norwich Farm can continue farming/dairy operations and remain a working landscape. Andy Sheier said the elements for Norwich Farm's success are in place and it would be a shame for the farm not to continue. Charlotte Metcalf raised the question of whether the farm property would be taxable if it changes to private ownership, and was told that yes, it will be subject to property tax. Miriam Horowitz spoke in support of the Norwich Farm continuing dairy operations. Gabe Zoerheidt,

Executive Director for Willing Hands, said that Willing Hands wants to work together as part of the community to make the situation successful. Betty Barba and Jenny Barba spoke in support of Norwich Farm. Jeanie McIntyre and Kate Barlow said they would each work to facilitate further communication among interested parties. Pepper urged all parties to get together soon to try to work things out together, and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

6. Climate Change & Sustainability Press Release (Discussion/Action Item). Langhus said there was an error in the press release and suggested edits. Layton said the Selectboard didn't need to vote on the press release because it wasn't the Selectboard's press release. Dechert said that the Town Manager's office could send out the press release, with edits discussed. Selectboard members agreed with this approach.

7. Review and Adopt Vision & Guiding Principles (Discussion/Action Item). Pepper read aloud the Selectboard Vision. Layton said she thinks it still works and should continue to apply to the Board's work. Pepper read aloud the guiding principles. Brochu said Selectboard members should hold members of the public and fellow Selectboard members accountable to the principles. Langhus said it might be hard to hold members of the public accountable, but easier to hold Selectboard members to the principles. Pepper said tonight's discussion about Norwich Farm was a good example of respectful dialogue. Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to adopt the Selectboard Vision & Guiding Principles. **Motion passed unanimously.**

8. Selectboard Goals for the Year (Discussion/Action Item). Layton said the list in the Selectboard packet was a rough document to spur discussion. Layton would like to look at budgeted funds. Selectboard members agreed that the Town Plan is the biggest item looming for action by the Selectboard. Brochu suggested a method to identify the group's goals. Selectboard members agreed that Brochu will put together a solid proposal for the process of selecting goals and submit that for inclusion in the March 28th packet.

9. Finance Committee (Discussion/Action Item). Pepper said the Selectboard could consider changing the Finance Committee charge. Layton asked if the required skill set – as currently configured – is reasonable. Cook suggested the Selectboard communicate with the School Board to discuss the committee. After further discussion, Selectboard members agreed that Langhus will work with Cheryl Lindberg to draft a new Finance Committee charge and communicate with the School Board.

10. Posting of Open Positions – w/Update from Brochu (Discussion/Action Item). Brochu reported that it would cost \$360 to mail postcards to all Norwich taxpayers/property owners. To mail to all postal addresses would be \$747. Another option is to put a sandwich board at the dump advertising open positions. After some discussion, Selectboard members agreed they would put a large poster on a sandwich board, to be posted at the town dump and possibly other locations.

11. Selectboard Calendar of Meetings (Discussion/Action Item). Pepper said that a number of conflicts exist with moving the Selectboard meetings to Thursdays and, under the circumstances, the Selectboard should stick with Wednesdays. This would be with the understanding that sometimes Laghus and/or Pepper will need to attend meetings electronically. Pepper said that the Selectboard is committed to sticking with Wednesdays. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to rescind the action taken by the Selectboard on March 7, 2018 which shifted Selectboard meetings and return to the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, except as amended by Selectboard vote. **Motion passed unanimously.**

12. b. Review of Next Agendas (Discussion/Action Item). Selectboard members agreed to the following agenda items for their next meeting:

- Selectboard Goals for the Year
- Public Safety Building Project Financial Update
- Applicants for Open Positions
- Liquor Licenses
- Finance Committee Project Update
- Treasurer Quarterly Report
- Town Manager Report
- Financial / Budget Report

c. Town Manager Report (Discussion Item). Dechert said the Public Safety Building is very nearly done and three events have been held there already. Dechert has put together a 6-member Fire Chief hiring review panel with 3 Norwich Fire Department people, plus the fire chiefs from Hanover and Lebanon, and the Thetford Assistant Chief. Dechert is estimating that it could be a month before a new chief is hired, but that depends on what happens with the review process. Dechert is starting to work on the position ad for Planning Director, as well. Pepper asked Dechert to provide a building project financial update for the 3/28/2018 Selectboard meeting, if possible.

Pepper **moved** (2nd Brochu) to enter executive session to discuss the Town Manager's status per 1 VSA §313(a)(3). **Motion passed unanimously.**

The Selectboard entered executive session at 9:30 pm.

Pepper moved (2nd Layton) to enter public session. **Motion passed unanimously (4 to 0; Langhus not present).** The Selectboard entered public session at 9:52 pm.

At 9:52 pm, Cook **moved** (2nd Layton) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously (4 to 0; Langhus not present).**

Meeting adjourned at 9:52 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on March 28, 2018

John Pepper
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – March 28, 2018 at 6:30 PM

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