

Minutes of the Special Selectboard Meeting of  
Wednesday, December 19, 2018 at 6:30 pm

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

There were about 12 people in the audience.

Also participating: Watt Alexander, Doug Robinson, Roger Arnold, David Hubbard, Doug Robinson, Alex Northern, Matt Swett, Rod Francis, Jill Kearney Niles, Kris Clement, Dennis Kaufman, and Cheryl Lindberg.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to move items 4 to later in the agenda to just before 8.
2. Langhus **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Layton) to enter executive session under 1 VSA §§ 313(a)(3) in order to discuss personnel issues. **Motion approved unanimously.** The Selectboard moved into executive session at 6:32 pm.

Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Brochu) to enter public session. **Motion approved unanimously.** The Selectboard moved into public session at 6:48 pm.

Langhus **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Brochu) moved to approve a customary step pay increase for the Town Manager to grade 24, step B effective March 6, 2018 including retroactive pay, according to the Finance Director's calculations. **Motion approved unanimously.**

3. Auditor's Report. Bonnie Batchelder, of Batchelder Associates, contracted auditor for the Town of Norwich spoke in summary about the audit performed by her firm. Batchelder said that the audit went very well and she thanked Durfee and Finance Director Robinson for their assistance in the process. Batchelder said there were no major issues. She said that the negative undesignated fund balance is due largely to FEMA not having disbursed reimbursements yet. Selectboard members asked some clarifying questions about the audit, particularly designated funds and the undesignated fund. After some discussion, Langhus **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Layton) to receive the auditor's report, as prepared and presented by Bonnie Batchelder. **Motion approved unanimously.**

4. Community Firewood (moved to later in the meeting)

5. Public Comment. Cook said that the SB should respond to the Finance Committee's letter, which includes three questions. SB members agreed to address the committee's questions during their budget discussion in this meeting. Watt Alexander spoke about the town's employment of Story Kitchen for publicity about town activities and whether it is appropriate to spend town money to inform citizens. Alexander said that it is common and appropriate for towns to put forward information to constituents and prospective citizens. He also said that, given limited resources, it is understandable that the town would decline to renew Story Kitchen's services. Doug Robinson, Police Chief, said that he will be retiring effective April 12, 2019. He said that it has been an honor to serve the town of Norwich for the last 17 years, and this was not an easy decision. Those present gave the chief a round of applause. Pepper read from his written statement regarding Story Kitchen, saying that he hopes the town can in the future develop a more comprehensive communication plan by the town. Pepper said he appreciates Story Kitchen's work in its writing. Langhus said that he feels that the

article in Valley News was unfairly negative toward Story Kitchen writers, personally. Roger Arnold said that he supports efforts to find out from a broad range of citizens what kind of engagement/communications they want from and with the town. Cook said she would like to be sure that we reach as many people in the community as possible. Cook mentioned Eagle Scouts and Police Cadets as doing positive work in the community; she would like to hear about more such groups.

4. Community Firewood (Shed) Policy. Cook said that the current policy is outdated, with some clerical errors that need updating. The firewood is available to anyone in need, and sometimes the firewood has gone to a wider area than just Norwich. Cook would like to know how much wood has gone to whom, and to where. Langhus asked about the genesis of the community wood supply. David Hubbard said that a former tree warden about 10-15 years ago felt that felled trees that could be used for firewood should be put to good use. The program has grown over the years and is supported by volunteer labor. Cook asked if there is currently any more dry wood available. Hubbard said there are 1.5 - 2 cords of wood remaining at present. This is less wood than normal at this point in the season. Cook expressed concern about how much wood is going outside of Norwich. Cook wants to have the ability to help all the town residents who need it. Hubbard said that he needs volunteers to prepare the wood. Brochu asked if the Town Service Officer should be involved in the firewood supply. SB members thanked Hubbard for coming to the meeting.

6. FYE 2020 Continued Budget Development. Pepper said that the SB has been looking at the budget especially with an eye toward designated funds and the undesignated fund. Doug Robinson, Police Chief, answered SB members' questions about the police department budget. Alex Northern, Fire Chief, and Matt Swett, Assistant Chief, answered SB members' questions about the fire department budget. Rod Francis, Planning & Zoning Director, answered SB members' questions about the planning department budget. Jill Kearney Niles, Recreation Director, answered questions about the recreation department budget. SB members asked in particular about the Huntley Meadow picnic pavilion roof replacement. Niles agreed with SB members that alternative roofing materials, such as standing seam metal, should be considered – not necessarily using cedar shakes – in order to minimize costs. Relative to all departments, SB members centered their questions on issues around capital expenditures and contributions to designated funds.

7. Board of Listers Vacancy. Kris Clement, Dennis Kaufman, and Cheryl Lindberg, members of the Board of Listers, spoke to the SB members about their budget proposal. Lindberg handed to SB members a document about their budget, which will be included in the next SB meeting packet. Kaufman said that he has tendered his resignation from the Board of Listers, as of January 1, 2019. Langhus **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Layton) to accept, with regrets, the resignation of Dennis Kaufman as lister as of January 1, 2019. **Motion passed unanimously.**

6. FYE 2020 Budget (cont'd). Cook said that the Trails Committee submitted a recent letter asking for funds to work on two projects. The costs are unknown at this time. The SB next decided to discuss designated funds. Langhus asked if the cost overruns for the Police/Fire building and the DPW garage were the reason for the negative balances on their related designated funds. Durfee said yes, that was the reason. Layton asked about paving grants and how they work and how they are awarded. Pepper asked about the paving fund and whether it is being funded at an appropriate level, or if we can cut back. Durfee said that there is a larger balance in the paving fund right now, because the town had to defer some paving work during the past paving season. Langhus suggested the SB consider holding off for one year and not contributing to the paving fund for FY2020.

8. Consent Agenda. Langhus moved (2<sup>nd</sup> Layton) to approve the consent agenda. **Motion**

**passed 4 to 1 (no- Cook).** Cook afterward clarified that she is in support of the consent agenda, following clarification that the consent agenda included

9. Future Meeting Agenda Items. SB members agreed to the following as agenda items for the next meeting:

Women's Club Alcohol Waiver Request  
FY2020 Budget

At 10:15 pm, Langhus **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Layton) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on January 23, 2019

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John Pepper  
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – January 9, 2018 – Meeting at 6:30 PM

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