

Minutes of the Special Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, November 28, 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 15 people in the audience.

Also participating: Garrett Palm, Sharon Racusin, Rob Gurwitt, John Farrell, Roberta Robinson, Cheryl Lindberg, Bonnie Munday, Rod Francis, Jill Kearney Niles, Elisabeth Bilar, Maggie Pepper, Doug Robinson, Alex Northern, Joann Erenhouse, Larry Wiggins.

1. Approval of Agenda. Layton asked if there is a conflict for Ernie Ciccotelli if Ciccotelli serves both on the Planning Commission (PC) and on the Development Review Board. Durfee said there is no conflict under Vermont statute. Langhus said that a citizen (Chris Katucki) had raised a question on the listserv about whether it was appropriate for the Selectboard to have made the decision to expand the PC size without having warned that issue as an agenda item. Pepper asked if the Selectboard (SB) should discuss the PC expansion at tonight's meeting. SB members agreed to possibly place that issue on a future agenda.

2. Public Comment. Sharon Racusin said that the sidewalk on the bridge over the railroad tracks should be deiced, because it's very slippery. Racusin also said that the parking lot near the Ledyard Bridge being developed by Dartmouth should be addressed by Norwich. It would be a good place for a Park & Ride lot. She would like Norwich to ask Dartmouth about using some space in the new lot for commuters. Racusin also suggested the next budget (FY2020) include money for a speed cart or a permanent radar sign on Rte. 10A to control speed of traffic there. Rob Gurwitt said that he works for Story Kitchen and hopes that he can speak to the SB to provide readership metrics information regarding their stories on DailyUV when the topic comes before the SB again. John Farrell, the Town Service Officer, said that his fund for helping residents has been depleted to \$300, and asked that the funds be restored to at least \$1,000. Farrell asked if the money listed in the FY2017 town report as "Citizens Assistance" was the same as the money Farrell uses to help citizens; Durfee said yes. Roberta Robinson, Finance Director, said that there is approximately \$3,000 in the Citizens Fund. Farrell said that should be sufficient, and he does not currently see a reason to ask for an increased allocation in the FY2020 budget. Farrell said the 2014 Town Report had a page showing the top payees, but that information was not included in the latest reports. Farrell asked that a list of top payees be included in the next town report (FY2018).

4. FYE 2020 Budget. Durfee said he'd like to have the town's department heads speak to their budgets and answer questions from the SB. Durfee said he has provided the SB with suggestions for possible reductions. Durfee gave quick overview of the budget draft he provided to the SB (in the meeting packet). Durfee said he has included a line item for Story Kitchen, but the SB needs to decide whether to continue with that expenditure. Durfee said that there is a significant increase in the cost of dispatching services for police. There will also be a significant increase in the fire department dispatching cost, which amount was given to Durfee very recently, and will be included in the next budget draft. Some of the larger items in the new budget include: partial cost of a new forestry truck in FY2020; some additional money for DPW mechanic tools; DPW building maintenance needs attention and funds, given the deteriorated state of some of the steel beams; increases for DPW capital maintenance (trucks, heavy equipment, etc.). Durfee said that the department heads will present some highlights from their respective budgets. SB members asked that they hear from department heads in the order items appear in the budget. Under Town Administration (which includes general operations & Tracy Hall), Durfee said there is approximately a 7% increase, due in part to increased expenditures in professional services, including the repayment of funds given the town under the Safe Routes to School grant program for a Church Street sidewalk.

payout (State reimbursement) and Story Kitchen. Langhus said that, because this SB voted to discontinue the sidewalk project – and thereby incur that reimbursement expense – so this SB should make sure it is repaid under the watch of this SB. Brochu asked when the ambulance contract is up for renewal. Durfee said it automatically renews. Langhus asked if it is possible to see an audit of the ambulance provider to see how the money is being spent. Brochu asked if the town pools its purchase of heating fuels and other fuels, or does each department purchase its own. Roberta Robinson, Finance Department director, said that the town uses a consultant to purchase the fuels at bulk. Brochu asked for the balances of the designated funds to be provided to the SB. Cheryl Lindberg asked about adding educational funds for her as Treasurer. Layton said she would like to hear from Rob Gurwitt regarding Story Kitchen. Durfee said that Gurwitt was no longer present, because he had to attend another meeting, but will be happy to come to a future SB meeting. Cook said she is worried about reaching people who don't have computers. Layton said she likes the articles Story Kitchen has been writing, but she would like to have more information about who is looking at it. Pepper said he would like to see the metrics for the DailyUV stories. Garrett Palm said the ambulance charge for FY2020 shows a very large increase, and he would like to know why. Bonnie Munday, Town Clerk, said there is very little change in her department's budget from last year and very little change from prior years. The only way she can see to cut 10% from her budget is to cut personnel or services. Bonnie brought a restored book of service members discharge papers to show the SB an example of the results from the last round of record restoration – which is an expense in the Town Clerk's budget. The last time records were restored, Munday said they restored 9 books for the cost of \$35,000. Brochu asked about NEMRC showing up in the Town Clerk's budget and in other departments, as well. Munday explained that multiple departments use different aspects of NEMRC, and each department pays for its own portion of NEMRC use. Robinson said that her budget proposal is basically level-funded from last year. Robinson pointed out that currently, nobody in the Finance department takes insurance, so when personnel changes happen, that expenditure will change as a result. Layton asked about the copy paper expenditure under General Administration. Robinson said all paper is bought through this fund. Cheryl Lindberg, as Chair of the Board of Listers, talked about the Listers budget. The listers have proposed a slight decrease in their FY2020 budget. Lindberg said she has an eye out for future town wide reappraisal expenses. The listers would like to buy a different software for assessing, and so they want to put the money in the budget for that. They don't know what it will cost. The listers want the reappraisal assistance money provided by the state to go into a separate fund for reappraisal. Durfee said that if that is done, then the assessor will need to be paid with other dollars raised through taxes. Rod Francis, Planning & Zoning Director, reviewed his department's draft FY20 budget. Francis said that there is money in the budget for mapping services, newspaper publication of legal notices, GIS training and workshops for historic preservation, for a net 4.6% increase. Under his exercise looking at a 10% cut, he would have to cut planning assistant time or historic preservation services. Langhus asked if there are still benefits to maintaining TRORC, and Francis said that yes, he uses their GIS services and also transportation consulting. Layton asked for clarification about GIS services, and Francis explained that GIS can allow you to do a variety of things. Jill Kearney Niles, Recreation Director, offered to answer any questions about her budget proposal, which is pretty much level-funded. Kearney Niles announced that she will be retiring as of March 1, 2019. She suggested that the SB authorize an overlap of the new hire with her, so that she can help train the new person. SB members thanked her for her work. Brochu asked about the pavilion roof replacement price quote; Kearney Niles said that the quote she got was for materials only. Garrett Palm asked if there is currently a designated fund that could cover that expense. Kearney Niles said the Rec Facility Improvement Fund does exist. Pepper raised the issue of collection of returnable bottles and cans at the Transfer Station. Cook said that deciding about how things work at the Transfer Station is a management decision for the Town Manager and DPW director. Durfee said that it is environmentally positive to pull things out of the waste stream. Durfee suggested that a local non-profit could take on the collection of returnables, but the town DPW staff cannot be carrying out full redemption center activities. One option is to have a

bin at the Transfer Station where people could put their returnables, and then the returnables could be redeemed and the money used for town expenses or given to a local nonprofit. Langhus said that it is beneficial to the town to take returnables out of the waste stream and gain the money from returnables. Elisabeth Bilar said she doesn't think that town employees should be prohibited from taking money from the returnables. An unknown resident asked how many complaints did the town get before the policy changed about returnables. Durfee said that there weren't many complaints, but the policy was changed in order to avoid acquiring the function of a redemption center and to focus on the core functions of the transfer station. Maggie Pepper said that she thinks that people who bring their returnables to the Transfer Station are intending to be helpful. Cheryl Lindberg said that she had to wait in line while a worker went through a bin to pick out returnables, and also referenced the recently-enacted Ethics Policy and the Fraud Prevention Policy, which are in place to prevent town employees from appropriating assets for personal gain. Lindberg also said that she appreciates Durfee's approach in directing the Transfer Station employees toward core functions. Police Chief Doug Robinson spoke about the public safety building budget. He said that the biggest single increase in that budget is for cleaning, which is a higher need with the newer and larger building. The other expenses are almost the same, with the exception of electricity, which they had to estimate at a higher number. Robinson spoke to the police department budget, and said that the dispatch services charge by Hartford are increasing significantly over last year. Robinson is looking into alternative dispatch services, but they are in preliminary discussions. Currently, the fire and police are separate dispatch services. One increase over last year is \$500 to help fund their new Cadet Program, which has been very successful so far. Alex Northern, Fire Chief, spoke about the Fire Department budget. He said that he tried to strike the best balance possible between services and costs. In order to complete the 10% reduction exercise, the renovation of the remaining old portion of the building could be postponed. For his regular budget, Northern has proposed an essentially level-funded budget. The primary increase is due to increased dispatching fees, which are due to the need to update some aspects of the operations at the Hanover dispatch center. Pepper asked if the dispatch services are 24 hours and at what point does a town decide to provide its own dispatch services. Northern said they are 24 hours, and there is no set formula for when to make that decision. An unknown resident asked if part of the dispatch increased cost was for equipment upgrades. Northern said that yes. Layton asked about ambulance services, and whether there is a point at which it makes sense for Norwich to establish its own ambulance service. Northern said that it would most probably be prohibitively expensive for the town. Brochu asked if Northern knew whether the Hanover ambulance service uses a collection agency to try to collect charges from non-residents. Roberta Robinson said that the charges that are sent to Norwich go to our own collection agency. At this point, SB members agreed to take a break from budget discussions and hear from Senior Solutions, agenda item #5.

5. Joann Erenhouse, Community Relations Director for Senior Solutions. Senior Solutions are a referral service that helps senior citizens and people with disabilities to access services to live in the place of their choice and other services to benefit their lives. They can be reached at their helpline: 800-642-5119. Erenhouse gave an overview of their services. Senior Services received a grant for a multidisciplinary approach to providing services to Senior Citizens. Sgt. Jennifer Frank of the Norwich Police Department participated in training on this grant. They are looking in particular for volunteers in the Norwich area as home visitors. Senior Services are looking for a \$1,200 appropriation from the Town of Norwich. Cook said that Norwich has an Aging in Place group that provides services. Erenhouse asked Cook to have the Norwich group contact Senior Solutions.

3. (Return to FY2020 Budget) Larry Wiggins, the Dept. of Public Works Director, spoke about the DPW budget, and said that his proposed budget includes some reductions and some increases, depending on the department's needs. In the highway division, Wiggins has included additional overtime for staff to evaluate road conditions to dispatch other crew for plowing, and funds for a per diem sidewalk plow operator. Also, he has proposed a reduction in asphalt products, paving.

Wiggins proposes an increase in garage utilities to correspond with enlarged building. For bridges, he has included funds for some bridge repairs. For equipment, he proposes the purchase of a new 550 plow truck with wings to replace existing truck without a wing. Also wants to replace the 1995 wood chipper that has multiple issues. Proposes to replace the 2006 pickup truck with 196,000 miles with multiple mechanical issues, replace the soil compactor – used for culvert work, and replace a mower. At the DPW garage, he proposes possibly replacing the electric generator, and installing A/C in the building where appropriate. At Tracy Hall, the underground fuel tank will need to be replaced; the drinking fountain should be replaced. As far as the equipment and vehicles are concerned, he has not yet calculated the possible trade-in values when replacing them. Langhus said that he appreciated the fact that Wiggins has jumped in feet first into the budget process and has proposed a budget that – once the designated fund items are removed – is nearly level-funded from last year. Kearney Niles said that the Rec Department relies heavily on DPW staff. She expressed support for Wiggins Building & Grounds budget. Kearney Niles also said that Pam Mullen has worked very hard to support the planning department's transition to a new director and has done so without complaint. Pepper said that the 10% reduction exercise was just an exercise, and he is afraid town staff are afraid the SB is looking to cut staff. Brochu asked about how many highway employees we have; there are 5 highway and 2 buildings and grounds employees. Brochu asked about the budget for sand, and other SB members said that in a prior year we used far less, so that meant we didn't need to buy as much last year. Brochu said she had not heard any complaints on the new plowing schedule. Durfee said we heard some after the first storm, but we are working through the operations. DPW is now down an employee, having lost one, and we are in the process of hiring a replacement. The job has been posted. Cook asked what is the procedure for offering input about roads. Durfee said that people can call the DPW directly, at 649-2209, or they can call the Town Manager's office, at 649-1419. Brochu asked about efforts to get internet service at the DPW garage, and Durfee said that we have been working on that but are very frustrated by the lack of progress.

6. Consent Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to approve the consent agenda. **Motion passed unanimously.**

4. Recreation Director Position. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to authorize the Town Manager to hire a new Recreation Department director to start approximately one month before the outgoing director leaves, to allow overlap of personnel for the purpose of on-the-job training? **Motion passed unanimously.**

7. Update on Meeting with TRORC. SB members agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

8. Town Manager Salary. SB members agreed to defer this item until their next meeting.

9. Town Manager Report. SB members agreed to defer this item until their next meeting.

10. Future Meeting Agenda Items. SB members discussed their timeline for budget preparation and agreed they might need an extra meeting before their deadline on January 24, 2019. Durfee said that he will distribute to the SB as soon as possible the last pieces of the budget, so they can discuss it in depth at their December 12th meeting. Langhus asked about designated funds. Durfee said that a future discussion for the SB will be whether they want to set a maximum amounts for the designated funds, rather than continuing to add to the funds, year after year. Langhus said he wants environmental issues to be in the forefront of SB decisions about replacing equipment and vehicles. Brochu said that it still bothers her that there are so many trucks in the DPW fleet. Durfee said they have gotten rid of 2 trucks so far, and they are whittling away to figure out what DPW really needs. Durfee said that Wiggins has done some great things SB members agreed to the following as agenda items for the next meeting:

Town Manager Salary – Authorize Retroactive Step & CPI Adjustment
Increase in Planning Commission Membership
Update from Layton and Langhus re: their meeting with TRORC
Financial Policies Update – Policy #1
Town Wood Supply
SB Goals
Budget – Outside Agencies

At 10:11 pm, Cook **moved** (2nd Layton) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:11 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on December 12, 2018

John Pepper
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – December 12, 2018 – Meeting at 6:30 PM

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