

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, August 28, 2019 at 6:30 pm

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

There were about 6 people in the audience.

Also participating: David Hubbard, Karen Horn (VLCT), Cheryl Lindberg, Police Chief Jennifer Frank, Craig Layne, Linda Gray, Nick Clark.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to amend the agenda to add a possible executive session regarding a personnel matter. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to amend the agenda to add an executive session regarding personnel between existing agenda items 8 and 9.

Motion approved unanimously.

2. Public Comment. Durfee said that Brie Swenson was unable to attend the SB meeting, and she had suggested that the SB consider postponing any action on agenda item #6 (re: Conservation Commission Designated Fund) to a later SB meeting, so that the SB can consider a request that the proposed conservation easement include provision for a public dog park. David Hubbard said that he was not aware of the dog park idea before today, and would not want to postpone SB action on the conservation matter. Hubbard doesn't think a dog park is part of the property owner's original intended use for the property to be conserved.

3. VLCT Legislative Preparedness – Karen Horn. Horn said that she has worked on VT legislative issues on behalf of VLCT and its member municipalities for many years. Horn handed out to the SB a VLCT document regarding a self-governance bill that VLCT is advocating for. The bill would allow towns expanded governance powers. Currently, VT is highly restrictive and the state legislature has been very reluctant to cede any of its control. Horn said it will be important to local residents to talk to their legislators in support of expanded local rule.

4. Consent Agenda. Langhus **moved** (2nd Brochu) to approve the consent agenda, with the exception of items c (Accounts Payable) and d (Financial Reports, Year-End). **Motion approved unanimously.** Brochu said that she had asked to pull out items c and d to discuss separately because she is concerned that there was an amendment to the accounts payable after the packet went out to the public. The amendment was to add a school payment. Langhus said this school payment is in line with past practices, but was mistakenly left out of the first version of the accounts payable. Pepper expressed concern about the mistaken omission of ACH payments from the financial reports. Brochu asked if we had supplied the new Finance Director with all necessary training. Cheryl Lindberg suggested that the SB look at July's A/P warrants to make sure they are accurate. Langhus reminded SB members that the A/P warrant is an authorization for spending. Langhus **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve the Accounts Payable warrant as amended and presented to the SB, including the \$2 million school payment. **Motion approved unanimously.** Langhus **moved** (2nd Brochu) that the financial reports presented in the SB packet be received and placed on a future agenda for discussion. **Motion approved unanimously.**

5. Request to Purchase Hybrid Police Cruiser. Chief Frank spoke about the Police Department (PD) request for funds to replace one of their cruisers. The Norwich PD has a very aged fleet that has not been updated in some time. Frank detailed the significant shortcomings of the cruiser she wants to replace. Frank talked about the report included in the SB packet. Brochu asked if there are maybe grants to help purchase the vehicle. Frank said that yes, they are looking for grants. Langhus asked about what competitive options are out there – other vendors, etc. Arnold asked how a \$65,000

vehicle is relevant to community policing. Frank said that having properly-running vehicles and equipment directly affects how the officers can do their job. Arnold asked if other area departments are using the hybrid vehicles. Frank said that the 2020 model year is the first year a hybrid available, so there is no history to rely on. Pepper asked if Norwich's upfit package is comparable to area communities. Frank said that is it the same upfit as other towns near Norwich. Langhus asked if the SB should authorize the purchase of new cameras now and then put those new cameras into the new vehicle(s) when we get it/them. Frank said that it would be best to wait until the new 2020 equipment is available, so that it will definitely be compatible with future cruisers. Brochu **moved** (2nd Langhus) to authorize the Town Manager to expend an amount not to exceed \$65,000.00 from the Police Cruiser Designated Fund for the purchase of a new hybrid police cruiser, as recommended by the Police Chief. **Motion approved unanimously.**

6. Request to Use Conservation Commission Designated Fund. David Hubbard said that he doesn't know about any proposal for a dog park on the property at issue. The property is behind the Catholic Church on Beaver Meadow Road. Hubbard said he thinks this parcel is not the right place for a dog park. Langhus asked what the \$20,000 being requested goes toward. Hubbard said it goes to the cost of surveying and legal work. Linda Gray asked if there is a particular reason that the landowner wants to donate to UVLT, rather than to the Town. Craig Layne said the land isn't being donated; the development rights are being donated. Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to authorize the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$20,000.00 from the Conservation Commission Designated Fund to help, together with the Upper Valley Land Trust, to conserve the Robert Parker parcel, as based on the recommendation of the Norwich Conservation Commission. **Motion approved unanimously.**

7. a. Energy Related – Status of RFQ for Energy Performance Contract. Durfee explained that the energy audit is free to the town. Durfee is asking for a SB motion to show that the SB is aware of what's going on. Langhus said that the town should be careful not to enter any contract with the energy audit company that would lock the town into using only that company for work that is recommended, rather than being able to bid out the work. Linda Gray said she is comfortable working with the company. Langhus **moved** (2nd Brochu) to acknowledge that the Town Manager is proceeding with an energy performance audit, to be conducted by EEI (Energy Efficient Investments, Inc.), and that such audit will be conducted at no cost to the town. **Motion approved unanimously.**

7. b. Energy Related – Sub-Regional Energy Coordinator. Durfee said there has been a proposal to hire a part-time Energy Coordinator to help towns deal with energy issues. One possibility for hiring someone is to go through TRORC to hire and share someone or do an inter-local compact with other towns. Linda Gray said the Energy Committee has been interested in having an energy coordinator and has learned there is no grant funding. Nick Clark, a member of the Thetford SB, presented to the SB a handout regarding energy issues and possible options for hiring a shared Energy Coordinator. Clark said he favors the TRORC option. Clark has spoken to 6 of the 7 towns that would potentially be included in the venture. Langhus said it will be more than they are getting now. Clark said that one coordinator can provide the same help to multiple towns, and will prevent duplication of efforts. Gray said that she leans toward doing an interlocal contract among 4 towns, maximum. This would cost more, but would potentially worth more, too. Arnold said he thinks Norwich as a town in general would support this. Arnold supports the idea of looking at an interlocal contract from the standpoint of governing the position. Layton said it's important to look at the return of investment. Clark said the TRORC proposal includes overhead and benefits. SB members agreed they want to explore the possibility of an energy contractor.

8. Town Manager Report. Durfee said the electricity is out to some houses in Norwich right now and some roads are impassable near Beaver Meadow. [Later in the meeting, electricity was restored.]

8. a. Authorize Town Pool Designated Funds to Purchase Park Grills. Langhus **moved** (2nd

Arnold) to authorize the Town Manager to expend an amount not to exceed \$707.97 from the Town Pool Designated Fund for the purchase of grills for Ballard Park (the former Norwich Pool site).

Motion approved unanimously.

8. b. Contract with Stantec Engineering & Design Services. Brochu asked if this work is grant-funded. Durfee said that yes, it is, with a 20% match from Norwich. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to authorize the Town Manager to execute a contract with Stantec for engineering and design services in an amount not to exceed \$63,780.00 for Tigertown Road culvert work, and to authorize the Town Manager to act as the town's agent for administering the contract. **Motion approved unanimously.**

8. c. Application to the VT Recreation Trails Program. Durfee said this grant requires a 20% local match. Brochu said that she would want to know how much money the town would be applying for before giving the go-ahead. Other SB members agreed. SB members declined to vote on the motion.

8. d. Purchase of Winter Sand & Gravel. Langhus **moved** (2nd Brochu) to authorize the Town Manager to proceed with purchase of winter sand and gravel from Twin State Sand & Gravel, Inc., according to the recommendation of the DPW Director. **Motion approved unanimously.**

9b.i.1. Section 11: Balanced Budget. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to substitute the revised Section 11: Balanced Budget Policy (as prepared by Roger Arnold and presented to the SB tonight) for the currently-drafted section in the Master Financial Policy. **Motion approved unanimously.**

9b.i.1. Overall Schedule for 2nd Reading and Adoption. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to set the following schedule for the purposes of adopting the Master Financial Policy: Sept. 11, 2019 – Selectboard to review final draft of the Master Financial Policy; Sept. 25, 2019 – conduct the second reading and adoption of said Master Policy; and, Oct. 9, 2019 – serve as a back-up adoption date.

Motion approved unanimously.

8. e. [Added item by the SB at the beginning of the meeting] Executive Session Regarding a Personnel Matter. Langhus **moved** (2nd Brochu) to enter executive session to discuss a confidential item relating to town personnel, where the Town Manager and Treasurer may also be invited to participate. **Motion approved unanimously.**

The SB entered executive session at 9:35 PM.

Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to re-enter public session. **Motion approved unanimously.**

The SB entered public session at 10:37 PM.

10. Future Meeting Agenda Items. SB members agreed to the following future agenda items:

- a. Town Road Salting Policy (Langhus)
- b. Financial Policies – 2nd Reading & Adoption (Layton)
- c. FYE 2021 Budget Schedule (Board & Durfee)
- d. Additional Plastics Recycling (Brochu)
- e. Gile Mountain – Signs/Parking Lot (Brochu)
- f. Generators (Brochu)
- g. Impounding & Stray/Abandoned Animals (Brochu)
- h. Union Negotiations (Brochu)
- i. Expanded Governance Powers for Municipalities
- j. Financial Reports, Year-End

At 10:37 pm, Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to adjourn. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:37 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on September 11, 2019

John Pepper
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – September 11, 2019 – Regular Meeting at 6:30 PM

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