

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, September 25, 2019 at 6:30 pm

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

Members absent: John Pepper, Chair, and John Langhus, who was present via telephone only for the executive session.

There were about 6 people in the audience.

Also participating: Linda Gray, Linda Cook, Fire Chief Alexander Northern, Garrett Palm, Police Chief Jennifer Frank, and Gerry Tolman.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to amend the agenda to postpone discussion of agenda items 8c and 8d (sexual harassment policy and banner policy) to the October 9, 2019 SB meeting.

2. Public Comment. Linda Gray spoke about the Climate Emergency Resolution – a copy of which is included in this week’s correspondence. Gray said that the resolution is the result of a grassroots effort among Norwich residents. Brochu reminded the public that the plastic bag ban ordinance went into effect on September 1, 2019. Arnold said that the Norwich Bookstore has been active in providing information about the ban.

3. Consent Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve the consent agenda. **Motion approved unanimously.** Linda Cook spoke about Gerry Tolman’s letter offering to help the town with IT issues. Cook said that Tolman has worked with the Town in the past and does very good work.

4. Accounts Payable – receive and review. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve check warrant #20-07 for Fire Apparatus Fund in the amount of \$1,295.35, and General Fund in the amount of \$131,887.35. Brochu asked about the Fire Department (FD) request for payment from the designated fund. Fire Chief Alex Northern said that the proposed funding was for the purchase of gear for firefighter and for lights for the new truck. This spending was approved by the SB a few months ago. Brochu asked which truck is DPW Truck #4 – that needed \$6,000 worth of work. Herb Durfee (TM) looked at the invoice and described the list of repairs to the vehicle, which is a 2010 Freightliner. Arnold asked if records are kept on vehicle repairs. TM said that DPW staff keep detailed logs at the DPW garage, which show all repairs and maintenance. **Motion approved unanimously.**

5. August 2019 Revenue/Expense Report. TM said that town staff have found approximately \$36,000 of FY2019 bills that were not attributed to the proper fiscal year. Brochu asked when the SB would get an updated revenue report. TM said that it will be in the 10/9/19 SB meeting packet. Arnold said that it is important to get the accurate version, rather than a draft. TM said that the yearly audit is the staff’s first priority, given the impending audit timeline. In the next packet will be the current quarter’s revenue/expenditure report. SB members requested that the report contain a list of ACHs alone from July 2019 – August 2019. SB members would also like an updated year-end report for FY19. Brochu asked that the quarterly report be separated into checks and ACHs. Layton asked that the reports be signed by the finance office in some capacity. Brochu asked for a report to be sorted by department and then by descending expenditure amounts. Brochu asked how many hours are being worked by staff in the finance office, currently. TM said that Cynthia Stoddard, from NEMRC, is in the office 2 days per week and an accounting temp will be in the office approximately 3 days per week. TM is looking into having them overlap for some of their time.

6. Year-End (pre-audit) Financial Statements. Garrett Palm, member of the Finance Committee (FC), said that the FC is available to help with the budget process as possible. The FC would like to help early on in the budget process. FC suggests the departments offer the SB high-level analysis of their budget proposals. Brochu asked if the FC has talked about helping with the year-end report. Palm said no, but the FC stands ready to help. Arnold asked for Palm's thoughts about what a budget-to-actual report should look like. Palm said that it should be easy to read. Arnold said the FC could offer written examples of easy-to-read report formats. Arnold is looking for input about what tools to use and is looking for concrete samples.

7. Town Manager Report.

a. Beaver Meadow Scoping Study. TM asked for SB input and approval to continue moving forward with the previously-discussed and authorized scoping study regarding Beaver Meadow Road. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to authorize the Town Manager to sign the Project Commitments Form related to a scoping study grant from VTrans. **Motion approved unanimously.**

b. Plastic Recycling. TM plans to develop handouts for distribution prior to accepting more plastics. TM would also like to start accepting more plastics hopefully later this fall. Updating the fees will be an important part of the FY21 budget process.

c. Gile Mtn. parking & signage. TM said that this discussion is currently on hold while the town deals with the finance issues. Police Chief Jennifer Frank said that there has been prior discussion about the placement of "no parking" signs. One possible solution is to place a sign at the beginning of Turnpike and another at the trailhead which state that there is no parking on the roadway. TM said the Trails Committee has worked on publicizing other trails besides Gile Mtn, and have also worked with local schools to encourage the use of alternative trails.

d. EV Charging station. TM said that work to install the new EV charging station at Huntley should begin soon, depending on weather conditions.

e. Nor'witch race. Frank said that the Norwich Police Dept. (NPD) has been working with the race organizers to improve the race experience for Norwich and its residents. Frank has come up with an agreement with the race organizers for police coverage to control traffic and keep people safe. NPD and the zoning office are working on an event form for future organizations' and race promoters' use.

f. Generators. TM said that the DPW has approached 4 different companies to get proposals from them for the public safety building and Tracy Hall. We hope to have responses by the end of the next week. Generator issues will become part of FY21 budget discussions, as well.

g. Other updates. The TRORC is meeting tonight regarding the regional plan; more information to come. Palm asked what the SB is doing regarding the school's septic system. Brochu said the town and SB have no involvement at present, because the school board hasn't approached the SB yet. The School Board has been doing its own work on the issue. Palm said that he thinks the issue is a town problem and needs SB involvement. Brochu said that the TM and some SB members have been working on this issue and efforts will converge in the future.

8. Policies.

a. Financial Policies. SB members discussed the latest version/draft of the financial policies. Frank said the SB should include language about reporting to NPD in the case of possible fraud. SB members agreed; Arnold asked why the VLCT model policy would not include such language. SB members agreed that verbiage about reporting to NPD is in the clean draft policy. Brochu asked

about finding a way to discourage year-end rushes to spend budgeted money. SB members and TM agreed that TM will clean up the policies draft and then transmit the policies to the FC for their input prior to SB consideration for adoption at their 10/9/19 meeting. Gerry Tolman said that the town needs to be mindful of the difference between policy and procedure, so that not all information is available to the public and potential hackers. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to conduct the 2nd reading of the Town of Norwich Master Financial Policy, as amended in this meeting and including those amendments noted on the Errata Sheet for Item 8a – Financial Policies, with possible adoption of said Financial Policy at the October 9, 2019 Selectboard meeting. **Motion approved unanimously.**

b. Draft Cyber Security Policy. Layton said the draft she wrote and submitted to the SB is bare bones and will need to be reviewed by experts. TM said he has given it to VLCT for comment. VLCT has responded to say that they will provide some information to address additional areas not addressed by Layton's draft. Brochu asked members of the public for their input on policies. Tolman said the draft get at the right things but doesn't say much of anything – which is good, because the less a town states specifics, the harder it will be for someone to work around the town's procedures. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to conduct the 1st reading of the Town of Norwich Cybersecurity and Electronic Payments Policy, as presented in this meeting. **Motion approved unanimously.**

9. Financial Investigation(s). Brochu said that John Langhus will join the SB via telephone to participate in executive session. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) that the Selectboard has made a specific finding that premature public knowledge of the matter being discussed would clearly place the Town of Norwich at a substantial disadvantage under 1 VSA § 313(a)(1)(E). **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to enter executive session to discuss a confidential town financial matter, and to invite Herb Durfee into the executive session. **Motion approved unanimously.**

The Selectboard moved into executive session at 8:45 pm. Langhus joined the SB executive session at 8:45 pm.

Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to enter public session. **Motion approved unanimously.**

The Selectboard moved into public session at 9:42 pm.

Brochu said that 2 things had come out of the executive session: 1) The SB has asked the TM to ask Susan Gilfillan, the town' attorney, for a completion date on the investigator's report regarding the town's recent financial issues; 2) the SB will hold a special meeting on Oct. 2, 2019 at 6:30 to discuss the financial investigation.

11. Future Agenda Items. SB members agreed to the following future agenda items for 10/9:
- a. Planning commission membership numbers
 - b. Policies – Financial / Banner / Sexual Harassment / Social Media / Cyber Security
 - c. Animal Ordinance
 - d. Climate Emergency Resolution
 - e. Finance Committee involvement in budget discussions
 - f. Finance Committee feedback on Financial Policies
 - g. Financial tools upgrades
 - h. MCS septic (only if requested by the School Board requests SB involvement)
 - i. DPW salt use (possible agenda)

12. Adjournment. At 9:56 pm, Langhus **moved** (2nd Arnold) to adjourn. **Motion approved**

unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:56 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on October 9, 2019

John Pepper
Selectboard Chair

Next Meetings – October 2, 2019 – Special Meeting at 6:30
October 9, 2019 – Meeting at 7:30 PM (Later time due to Yom Kippur)

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