

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

Members present: Claudette Brochu, Vice Chair (serving as chair in Pepper's absence); Roger Arnold; John Langhus (via telephone); Mary Layton; Herb Durfee, Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

Member absent: John Pepper, Chair

There were about 6 people in the audience.

Also participating: Peter Brink, Philip Zea, Demo Sofronas, Omer Trajman, Deputy Fire Chief Matthew Swett, Linda Cook, Police Chief Jennifer Frank.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to delete item #8b (Cyber Security Policy) from the agenda and defer to a future meeting.
2. Public Comment. Demo Sofronas announced that the Veterans Memorial rededication ceremony at 1:00 pm on November 11, 2019 will be a brief ceremony and invited SB members to attend. Omer Trajman read aloud a statement by Lily Trajman regarding dangerous road crossing conditions at the crosswalk in front of her house. Trajman suggested possibly adding a set of pedestrian crossing lights at that crossing, where she has seen and experienced a large number of close calls with motorists ignoring pedestrians in the crosswalk. Sofronas agreed that there are many near misses at town crosswalks and we should do what we can to make them safer for everyone.
3. Consent Agenda. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Arnold) to approve the draft minutes for October 23, 2019 with amendments put forward. **Motion passed unanimously.**
4. Appointments – Historic Preservation Commission. Philip Zea spoke briefly to the SB about his interest in serving as a member of the Historic Preservation Commission. SB members said they appreciated the thorough and detailed application Zea had submitted. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Arnold) to appoint Philip Zea to the Historic Preservation Commission for a 3-year term ending on April 30, 2022. **Motion passed unanimously.** SB members discussed whether to try to solicit applications again for another Planning Commission (PC) member before next March. They agreed not to and to let the PC continue with their work, as they are currently configured.
5. Report from VLCT Loss Prevention Team. Layton said the town should take the suggested actions as detailed in the VLCT report, which is included in the SB packet. Brochu agreed. Arnold asked Langhus and Brochu if they think the SB should conduct an official Root Cause Analysis. Layton is concerned about a lack of smooth communication between the town Treasurer and the Town Manager (TM), and said she was concerned that the Treasurer didn't say anything to Durfee when she suspected a scam had happened. Layton also wants clear communication around staff vacations. Arnold expressed concern with the need to support the TM and the Finance Office in their goal to provide good reports to the SB. Brochu said that, in hindsight, she thinks she should have gone to Chief Frank when she heard about the possible scam. Brochu said an RCA (Root Cause Analysis) would have explored the situation in greater depth. Layton asked other SB members if they think they should schedule a special meeting to come up with an action plan for how to deal with situations like the recent fraud situation. Arnold asked about how the SB can support with the town's employees need. SB members talked about the options for an additional meeting. Langhus said the SB should be making concrete suggestions.

6. Financial Reports.

a. Accounts Payable Warrants. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Arnold) to approve check warrant #20-10 for General Fund in the amount of \$12,191.20; General Fund in the amount of \$414.00; Land Management Council Fund in the amount of \$178.08; and General Fund in the amount of \$14,196.90. **Motion passed unanimously.**

b. Account Payable Warrants from Missing Warrants. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Arnold) to approve check warrant #728 for General Fund in the amount of \$10,013.32; warrant #725 for General Fund in the amount of \$13,785.12; and warrant #724 for General Fund in the amount of \$13,442.61. **Motion passed unanimously.**

c. October Revenue/Expenditure Report. Durfee said there are several large payments that were made early on in FY20 that are affecting the balance sheet. The town anticipates payment from FEMA soon, which will offset much of the large expenditures.

d. Financial Procedures List with Priorities. SB members and Durfee discussed options for compiling a list of the town's financial procedures and prioritizing that list for updating.

e. Designated and Special Purpose Fund balances as of June 30, 2019. SB members briefly acknowledged receipt of documentation from the Finance Office showing these balances.

f. Update of Recovery of Funds Lost to Scam. Durfee said that VLCT has agreed to cover all the unrecovered funds lost by Norwich in the recent financial scam, minus the \$1,000 deductible.

7. Town Manager Report.

a. Budget FY21 Presentation. Durfee provided to the SB a draft budget summary, with overview explanations about some items, including the DPW request to add staff and the CATV request for funding. SB members discussed whether to ask outside agencies to make presentations to the SB. SB members agreed it would not be necessary, except for CATV, due to the significant changes in CATV's situation for FY21. Durfee said that he will provide to the SB a full budget, including line-by-line details, by their next meeting on Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>.

b. Other Updates. Durfee said the Hartford Town Manage recently reached out to Durfee regarding the MCS sewer issues. Durfee said this was the first time Hartford has reached out to the Norwich TM on this matter. Durfee said the town's audit is in progress and he hopes to receive the preliminary report soon.

c. Finance Officer Update. Durfee told SB members that Donna Flies is no longer employed as the town's Finance Director, as of Monday, November 4<sup>th</sup>. The town has an excellent temporary staff person, Becky, who has been a very quick study. Cynthia Stoddard, a NEMRC consultant, has also been filling in part-time and is working with Becky to put into place new processes using NEMRC. Durfee asked SB members' opinions on buying out the contract of a temporary agency employee. Layton and Brochu agreed they would consider the possibility of paying to buy out the contract of a promising temp candidate.

d. Brochu asked about town financial procedures. Durfee said he has been working through procedures with the finance office staff, so they are currently in flux. Brochu and Arnold asked Durfee to provide a list of financial procedures with indications of what is being worked on; Durfee said he will do that as soon as possible.

e. Fire Station Designated Fund. Deputy Fire Chief Matt Swett gave the SB some background information on the spending request, as outlined in the packet materials. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Arnold) to authorize the expenditure of up to \$1,500.00 from the Fire Station Designated Fund for the purchase of construction materials to reframe a wall in the fire station apparatus bay. **Motion passed unanimously.**

f. Transfer Station Designated Fund. Langhus asked what progress has the town made toward recycling plastic films. Durfee said that Casella will transport film for recycling. Langhus asked why the Transfer Station staff are not going to drive it down to West Lebanon. Durfee explained that the town does not have sufficient staff available to do that work. SB members discussed whether or not a shed would be necessary, including other options for storing recyclables at the Transfer Station.

Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Arnold) to authorize the expenditure of up to \$13,000.00 from the Transfer Station Designated Fund for the purchase and construction of a 16'x22' garage to accommodate plastic films collection. **Motion failed unanimously.**

g. General Admin Designated Fund. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Arnold) to authorize the expenditure of up to \$1,780.00 from the General Admin. Designated Fund for the purchase of a replacement computer for the Planning Director. **Motion passed unanimously.**

8. Social Media Policy. Brochu introduced the topic and gave a very brief overview of the policy draft contained in the meeting packet. Brochu said that she would like written input from other SB members. SB members agreed to take up the issue again at a future meeting. Brochu **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Layton) to conduct the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading of the Town of Norwich Policy on Use of Social Media by Town Officials, as presented in this meeting packet. **Motion passed unanimously.**

9. Re-Establish Solid Waste Committee. Brochu introduced this topic and said that solid waste issues are in the forefront in this and other area communities. Brochu wonders if there is interest in the town in resurrecting the Norwich Solid Waste Committee. Layton agreed that this is worth pursuing and gauging community interest. Linda Cook said that Carolyn Frye has offered to help with this and Cook thinks she will be willing to be on a committee. Langhus said he will work with Brochu to develop a committee charge so that the SB can advertise for applicants to serve on a committee. SB members agreed to take up this issue at a future meeting.

10. Meeting Debrief. During SB members' discussion about the meeting, Police Chief Jennifer Frank returned from a call. Frank offered the SB some information about animal control issues and police cruiser turnover in area towns. Frank said that for the last two years, the Norwich Police Dept. has received 190 "animal problem" complaints, which may be a low number. Of this figure, 114 of the calls concerned dogs, 24 were about cows, 11 were deer, and the rest were a wide variety of other animals. None of the calls concerned cats. Frank also offered information about police cruiser rotations for area police departments, in response to a question from SB members during their last meeting. Frank called 8 different departments and learned how often other departments are replacing their cruisers. Enfield replaces a cruiser after 4 years; Hanover is on a 3-year rotation; Ludlow is 3 to 5 years; Plainfield is 5 years; Springfield buys a new cruiser every 2 years; Thetford is on a 4-year rotation; Windsor is 4 years; and Woodstock is 4 years, also. Layton asked if you can retain some value (e.g. trade-in) if you only keep vehicles for a shorter time frame. Frank yes, that is true, and that fact was cited by some of the departments as a reason they turn over vehicles every 3-4 years.

11. Future Agenda Items. SB members discussed the possibility of scheduling additional SB meetings to work on the FY21 agenda – possibly holding a meeting on Dec. 4 and/or 11, 2019. SB anticipate the following future agenda items:

**Nov:**

- a. Prudential Committee update
- b. FY21 Budget discussion
- c. Policies (social media/cyber)
- d. Animal Ordinance
- e. Financial Protection update (ongoing discussion on what we are actively engaged in to prevent subsequent occurrence in part as result of RCA)
  - i. Cybersecurity
  - ii. Fraud policy revision outlining steps that must be taken
  - iii. Staff training (ongoing) on cyber security
  - iv. Computer infrastructure upgrades
- f. Dresden Finance MOU

**Dec:**

- a. Energy Performance update
- b. Town Plan update
- c. Regional Energy Coordinator update
- d. Budget update/presentations
- e. Policies
- f. Animal Ordinance
- g. Union update
- h. TM eval

**Soon:**

- a. Town attorney discussion
- b. TM contract

12. Adjournment. At 9:09 Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Arnold) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:09 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on November 20, 2019

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John Pepper  
Selectboard Chair

Next Meetings – November 20, 2019 – Meeting at 6:30

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