

Town Manager Update

March 2020

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Front Page Issues

COVID-19. The news is flooded with the coronavirus. What to do, what not to do, etc. Yes, to be repetitive, the best techniques for now appear to be to wash your hands - a lot - and to keep at least a 6' distance from other persons. For all that health-related information, I encourage you to stick with following the VT Department of Health, the CDC, and the Governor's Office.

Please adhere to what these entities offer and order. You all understand its importance.

TOWN SERVICES. During this epidemic, we all are doing our best to continue to provide town services, as best we can. Obviously, limitations already are in place. As we likely will move to additional limitations, there are several official media "outlets" that the Town uses to distribute info. The Valley News is the Town's designated paper of general circulation. In addition, the Town will continue to use the Town webpage (<www.norwich.vt.us>), the Norwich Listserve, the Norwich Listserve Extension FaceBook page, and the Norwich Police Department's FaceBook page.

Over the last couple of weeks the Police Department has collaborated with my office to provide periodic updates. To be consistent, we will continue to use that format for status and updates related to municipal services, and we will stick to the media outlets listed above.

Thank you for personally being safe, for safely looking out for other's well-being, and for your continued patience through this difficult struggle.

Tracy Hall Energy Project

You should know by now that Article 8 at Town Meeting related to Tracy Hall energy and ventilation construction passed, albeit by a narrow margin. Since then, a petition for reconsideration/rescission is likely to be submitted to the Town Clerk's Office. Such action will trigger the need to hold a Special Town Meeting vote within 60 days receipt of the petition. More details will be provided to voters, once the petition is submitted and the Selectboard discusses the schedule, public notice, warning, etc.

In the meantime, there have been a couple of project meetings that I scheduled with various individuals to help coordinate with Mike Davey, EEI. Aaron Lamperti and Larry Wiggins, PE, DPW Director to help serve as "clerk of the works" for the project. John Langhus, Selectboard member and Linda Gray, Energy Committee Chair also agreed to help get the project up and running. The project meeting notes are on the Town webpage and have been out on the Norwich Listserve.

Town Manager Verbal Info from 3/11/30

During the Selectboard's 3/11/30 meeting, there were some verbal updates provided. Below is a quick listing of most of what was provided:

- The Vital Communities Leaders Group continued to discuss the issue of homelessness in the Upper Valley. Their discussion included hearing from the "Continuum of Care" entity collaboration that is promoting that a new facility be built in the region.
- A status of COVID-19 (at the time) was provided, including the planned passing out of VT Health Dept contact info at the Transfer Station. It was also noted that a Town Services status would be prepared and posted via Town info "outlets".
- Research was conducted by the TM with its insurance carrier to ensure NPD police officers were covered by liability insurance related to Fair & Impartial Policing Policy issues. They are.
- A FEMA national firefighters grant application is being submitted to replace the SCBA units at the Fire Station, as the units are approaching their manufacturer's life span. Though extremely competitive, if awarded a grant, the grant would cover 95% of the units' replacement.
- A general update on the 1st project meeting related to Tracy Hall energy/ventilation renovations was provided. There was discussion on a "letter of intent" for EEL, at this time.
- It was noted that a memo from the TM was sent separately due to pending collective bargaining providing the Board a status on Union contract negotiations.
- Based on a request for proposals (RFP) to update the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan - a mandatory document to be able to receive FEMA funds - resulted in two qualified proposals. An "authorization to proceed" with one of the consultants will be offered to the Board at a future meeting.
- A request for qualifications was "let" out to obtain proposals from qualified firms to serve as legal counsel for the Town due to the retirement of Frank Olmstead, Esq.
- A RFP was also "let" out to receive proposals from qualified firms to conduct a sidewalk scoping analysis including a public participation process for Beaver Meadow Road area, essentially between Moore Lane and where the sidewalk currently ends nearer the Village.
- Related to the Tigertown Culvert project, final engineering plans were prepared, reviewed by VTrans, and a RFP was "let" to select a firm to conduct the construction. Though not a FEMA-related project, this is the last project to complete related to the July 1, 2017 storm event.
- Given voter authorization at Town Meeting, the Browns Schoolhouse Road Bridge replacement is on track with a RFP soon being "let" to identify a firm to conduct final plans and construct the bridge. Soon local financial institutions will be asked to provide favorable terms from the Board's consideration on the bridge's construction. The Trails Committee has been working to keep the TM informed of their efforts to identify possible private sources of funding to help offset the cost of the project.
- July 1, 2017 storm event FEMA/State reimbursement - review by FEMA for the final reimbursement amounts passed "muster" with their legal team, so reimbursement funding should be provided to the Town within several weeks. Fingers crossed.
- Now that the 2020 Norwich Town Plan is adopted, the regional planning commission has scheduled their 4/22/20 meeting to review the plan for "approval" and the Town's planning process for "confirmation". (That's a good thing!)
- On Wednesday, April 22, 2020 at 5:45 pm in the Multipurpose Room (which probably will be postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19) VTrans has scheduled a local concerns meeting to discuss the I-91 Norwich interchange (overpass) construction project.
- Annual update to the Town's Emergency Management Plan has been initiated, as is required.

Some Additional Accomplishments...

- The 2020 Norwich Town Plan has been submitted to TRORC for its "approval" at their April 22 meeting.
- A FYE21 budget schedule has been prepared such that the Department Heads and the TM will meet the Board's request to have a draft budget no later than the 2nd meeting in October.
- Work has been initiated to re-examine the Town's "chart of accounts" for warranted re-numbering of account line items. This is being conducted with Department Heads and, eventually, will be provided to other entities (e.g., Treasurer, Finance Committee, and the Board for their insight).
- Staff (including help from the Treasurer) have been asked to work at cross-training where necessary between and among duties.
- Generally, the technical/digital assessment has been completed by SymQuest, but further follow-up is necessary before recommendation and an RFQ can be pulled together.
- Working in tandem with Department Heads, especially with the Police Chief (as Deputy Town Manager) to prioritize department functions to be able to differentiate between "essential" and "non-essential" municipal services and duties/responsibilities. Using the Police Chief's outline, working to categorize services, etc. into different levels (e.g., Level 1 would be normal, day-to-day ops and the Level numbers would increase with changes from typical to more atypical services/duties provided, given severity of a situation, namely, COVID-19). This remains a work in progress.
- Staff have been asked to use the FEMA-related incident form the TM created after the July 1, 2017 storm event in anticipation that there would be other future events. The form intends to document emergency-related work. Now that the President has declared a national state of emergency, there is the possibility that FEMA might be able to reimburse towns for work, etc. undertaking related to the coronavirus. The forms would provide a critical level of documentation required by FEMA in a declared emergency.
- The TM's office through the Deputy TM helped the Selectboard prepare a published Town services info sheet.
- Numerous other projects, individual resident requests, e-mails, and the like. If more information is necessary, please ask.



"Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation."

Robert F. Kennedy

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Town Manager & Department Heads

Other Contact Info

Herb Duffee, Town Manager	802-649-1419 x1
Jennifer Frank, Police Chief Fire District	802-649-1460 802-649-3474
Larry Wiggins, Public Works Director Library	802-649-2209 802-649-1184
Bonnie Munday, Town Clerk Listers	802-649-1419 x3 802-649-1419 x6
Alex Northern, Fire Chief Town Treasurer, by appointment	802-649-1133 802-649-1678
Rod Francis, Planning & Zoning Director Transfer Station & Recycling Center	802-649-1419 x8 802-649-1192
Brie Swenson, Recreation Director	802-649-1419 x9
The Town Report includes a host of other information, including contacts, Reddy Grants, etc. For more information, call 802-649-1419, or committees, etc.	

Upcoming Events

The following information are meetings and hearings of the Selectboard, along with other important dates (e.g., tax payments, Town Meeting Day).

Selectboard Meeting	March 25
Selectboard Meeting	April 8
Selectboard Meeting	April 22
Selectboard Meeting	May 13