

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, January 8, 2020 at 6:30 pm

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

There were about 16 people in the audience.

Also participating: Kris Clement, Larry Wiggins, Bonnie Batchelder, Jim Clark, Eva Rosenbloom, Mike Davey, Stuart Richards, Linda Gray, Norm Levy, Christopher Ashley, Cheryl Lindberg, Marcia Calloway, Linda Gray, Bonnie Munday, Lynnwood Andrews, Rod Francis, Alex Northern, Jennifer Frank, Linda Cook.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to move agenda items 5b (FY2019 Audit Report), 5c (Alcohol Waiver Request), and 5d (Appointment to Historic Preservation Commission) forward in the agenda, just after item 3 (SB Comments).

2. Public Comment. Kris Clement asked if the DPW is plowing the roads after 5:00 pm. Larry Wiggins, DPW Director, said that the crew is out during every storm. Wiggins explained there are times, however, when the crew has been out for an extended number of hours, they need a break for safety. There is definitely late-night plowing. The current plowing standards are posted on the town website. Clement also said that the Town of Middlebury has a great document on their website that clarifies that town-formed subcommittees, working groups, etc., all are subject to the state's Open Meeting Law. John Pepper spoke briefly to relay a resident's concerns about the condition of the town sidewalks, following her slip and fall on sidewalk ice.

3. SB Comments. Arnold said that this agenda item could be a recurring agenda item for future meetings, and could have value to address items not needing agenda inclusion. Layton suggested putting a time limit on this agenda item.

5. b. Audit Report. Bonnie Batchelder, the contracted auditor, appeared to answer any questions from the SB regarding the audit report for FY2019, which was included in the SB meeting packet. Batchelder gave a brief summary of the audit report. Batchelder said she has no findings for FY19. The fraud event in August 2019 will figure into the audit for FY2020. This FY19 audit took a little longer than hoped, because of the disruption of the town's Finance Office personnel. Langhus said the Town Manager and other staff are to be commended for their work resulting in a "no findings" audit. Brochu **moved** (2nd Langhus) to receive the "Town of Norwich, Vermont Audit Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2019" and the "Reports on Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards, Internal Controls and Compliance with Laws and Regulations", as prepared by Batchelder Associates, PC. **Motion passed unanimously.**

c. Zienzele Foundation alcohol waiver request. Jim Clark spoke in support of the Zienzele Foundation's request for an alcohol waiver. Brochu **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve the Zienzele Foundation's request for a waiver allowing them to serve alcohol in Tracy Hall at their May 16, 2020 Zienzele Night Celebration event. **Motion passed unanimously.**

d. Appointment to Historic Preservation Commission. Langhus **moved** (2nd Brochu) to appoint F. Folger Tuggle to the Norwich Historic Preservation Commission for a three-year term ending in April 2023. **Motion passed unanimously.**

5. a. A/P Warrants. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to approve check warrant #20-14 for General Admin. Fund in the amount of \$2,608.90, for Police Special Equipment Fund in the amount of \$9,357.20, and for General Fund in the amount of \$80,301.31. **Motion passed unanimously.**

6. a. EEI / Task Force Report. Layton said she and Langhus were part of a group exploring geothermal and other options for town facilities' energy use. Geothermal could be a very good option for energy savings. Layton listed some options, including adding insulation and updating ventilation. One major source of energy loss is propping open gym doors in the winter. The main benefit of this work would be to replace fossil fuel usage with green energy. Langhus said that Tracy Hall needs updating, especially the boiler, at this time. Eva Rosenbloom asked if a cost-benefit analysis has been done on a geothermal system. Langhus said it will cost more, because we have to update the ventilation and the resulting updates will cause more electricity usage. Rosenbloom asked about what other options were considered. Mike Davey, with EEI (Energy Efficient Investments), said that of the other options explored, geothermal was the most cost-efficient. Stuart Richards asked for more information about solar and wind options. Richards said he would like to see the information showing an evaluation of the various options. Rosenbloom asked if the working group had explored putting in a geothermal system that would work for Tracy Hall and, at a later date, the school and other entities to tie into. Davey said that geothermal is often not as good an option for schools, because schools don't use their systems during the summer, and don't have much need for air conditioning. Brochu read an email [to be included in the 1/15/2020 meeting packet] sent by Charlotte Metcalf expressing concern and disagreement with the process the town used to obtain the energy contractor. Langhus said that Norwich used a process that is enabled by Vermont statute. Linda Gray said the town published a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeking competitive submissions for the project in August of 2019, with discussion at more than one SB meeting. Norm Levy said he would like to see information showing the actual tax effect on a variety of household situations/circumstances. Christopher Ashley said that in the last 9 or so years, Turnpike Road has washed out multiple times, after having had no washouts in the many years prior to that. Ashley said he hope the SB will vote to put this issue on the Town Meeting warning. Pepper raised the issue of Open Meeting Law (OML) violations by the Facilities Working Group. Pepper said there are options for curing the violations and wants to hear from other SB members. Layton would like to have another properly-warned working group meeting to decide how to cure the violations. Cheryl Lindberg said that she had raised the issue of OML requirements. Arnold made some suggestions for getting as much information as possible out to the public. SB members agreed that the working group should meet at 4:00 pm on Monday, January 13, 2020, in order to cure the OML violation. Marcia Calloway asked that the working group be sure to publish all the information that figures into the discussion and deliberations to be conducted at Monday's meeting. Linda Gray said that the SB packet for 1/8/2020 contains all materials the working group will consult. Bonnie Munday said there will be additional town-wide voting this November. Lynnwood Andrews said she feels very strongly that the climate crisis is paramount here and she hopes this OML issue won't derail efforts to address the crisis. Pepper asked if the working group considered the option of building a replacement for Tracy Hall. Layton and Langhus said they did talk about that and decided to pursue retrofitting the existing building.

b. Budget presentation. SB members discussed their individual suggestions for the proposed budget, line by line. Pepper made changes to the budget document as the SB talked. The resulting edited budget is attached to these draft minutes. Bonnie Munday said she is asking for \$1,500 in office supplies in order to cover recording books and other expenses that are dependent on how much land records activity occurs, which varies significantly. Also, Munday asked the SB to fund the Records Restoration Designated Fund. Pepper said he thinks it's necessary to spend more money to update the town's website and software. SB looked at designated funds and agreed there are sufficient funds, as is. Rod Francis explained that the Mapping line item needs to be \$2,000 so that maps can be updated, as is necessary. Brochu said she wants to cut Recreation Dept. summer

wages because she thinks that the Recreation Department's revenues have been lower than projected. Langhus cited the past year's budget numbers, and disagreed. Alex Northern, Fire Chief, spoke about the department's proposed budget, and said they are asking for additional money to allow for equipment safety testing. SB members discussed the possibility of selling the Fire Department ladder truck. Linda Cook encouraged the SB to allocate more money for pavement marking, because the lack of fog lines makes night driving more treacherous. SB members next discussed designated funds allotments. Under the grants heading, there is an allocation for another set of two RRFBs (Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons). SB members agreed to put a question on the 2020 Town Meeting warning asking voters whether to install the additional set of RRFBs. SB members agreed to the DPW proposal to hire 1 and ½ new DPW staff – a laborer and an administrative assistant. SB members discussed the need for 2 new generators for the town. Langhus asked the Town Manager and DPW director to look into purchasing a serviceable used generator, rather than buying new.

[See attached budget draft with SB edits for detailed numbers]

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

At this point, SB members agreed to defer remaining agenda items to future meetings, given the extremely late hour.

11. Adjournment. At 12:58 AM Brochu **moved** (2nd Arnold) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 12:58 AM.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on January 22, 2019

Claudette Brochu
Selectboard Chair – at time of signing

Next Meeting – January 15, 2020 – Meeting at 6:30

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