

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, January 15, 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 20 people in the audience.

Also participating: Sharon Racusin, Liz Blum, Kathleen Shepherd, Mike Davey, Jeff Harrington, Linda Gray, Linda Cook, Cheryl Lindberg, Kris Clement, Eric Friets, Christopher Ashley, Jack Cushman, Norm Levy, Pam Piper, Omer Trajman.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to move agenda items 5d (EEI/Task Force Report) and 5e (Town Meeting Warning) forward in the agenda, just after item 2 (Public Comments).

2. Public Comment. Sharon Racusin spoke in favor of a proposed Fair and Impartial Policing Policy (FIPP). Racusin said that Winooski has adopted a policy exactly like the proposed policy, which is more protective than the model policy, and has suffered no adverse effects. Racusin would like to see Norwich enact the same policy as Winooski. The State of Vermont has said they will not pursue adverse action against any community that enacts the enhanced FIPP. Liz Blum said she would like to see Norwich enact the FIPP as proposed. Blum read from a statement by Dan Fraser in support of the proposed FIPP. Blum said that the Vermont dairy industry is dependent on undocumented employees. Kathleen Shepherd supports the proposed FIPP. Shepherd read from a prepared statement by a Dartmouth student who is an undocumented resident and fears for their safety and the safety of students' families coming to the area. Arnold distributed a memo to SB members detailing the revisions in the proposed FIPP.

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

5. d. EEI / Task Force Report. Mike Davey and Jeff Harrington, of Energy Efficient Investment (EEI) presented to the SB a set of PowerPoint slides detailing the process and research leading to the EEI and working group proposal. *[a copy of the PowerPoint presentation will be included in the 1/22/20 SB packet as correspondence]* Davey explained that geothermal energy did not make sense in the DPW garage. The presentation included information about options for heating Tracy Hall. The working group decided that geothermal was the best option. Kris Clement asked if there was a breakdown of the costs that comprise the \$2 million estimate for energy work. Langhus responded that various components of the work did not fall under the strict definition of a Performance Contract so this option was not being pursued. EEI would be the General Contractor with all work falling under the Town's purchasing policy. Davey said that information was included in the 1/8/2020 SB packet. Linda Gray said that EEI is not charging Norwich for their work unless and until the town decides to pursue the suggested improvements. Eric Friets suggested that EEI should add complete life cycle costs to all of the options detailed in the presentation so that people can understand all the costs of each option. SB discussed whether to include a question about the EEI-proposed improvements on the March Town Meeting ballot. Christopher Ashley said he would like to see this question on the March 2020 town ballot. Racusin said she would like to see this question on the March 2020 ballot because it will be a tremendous benefit to the town. Jack Cushman said he was struck by the fact that we will need to replace the current system soon, so it is best to act as soon as possible. Pepper asked about how the construction will affect town offices. Davey said they would work area by area,

in phases. Pepper wants to be sure we consider all options during the construction. Langhus said the language of the proposed warning article is drafted to allow for whatever borrowing method is decided to be best, if the article is passed. Cook asked whether a blower test was performed as part of the energy audit. Davey said that a blower test was performed. Cook asked about the return on investment from the project. Davey said an ROI analysis would be difficult in this case, because the existing building is not currently up to code and has no proper ventilation, so a large portion of the work would have to be done, regardless of the geothermal project. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to accept all work of the Town Facilities Working Group, including meeting notes, memos and related documents, as posted on the town website and provided to the Selectboard. **Motion passed unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to dissolve the Town Facilities Working Group. **Motion passed unanimously.**

e. Town Meeting Warning. Arnold said he thinks that the SB should definitely put the article about FIPP on the Town Meeting warning. SB members agreed that the article should be part of the warning. Durfee said that he thinks the EEI-related article allows for multiple options, but may require further language and a possible additional town-wide vote on a future ballot. Langhus suggested that the SB approve the warning as is, with the provision for Durfee to add language to the article if the town's bond attorney says it is necessary. SB members agreed. Arnold said he thinks the SB needs to make sure to get information out to all residents prior to voting. Gray said that the Energy Committee will take the responsibility to get ample information regarding this question out to the voting public. Pam Piper said she would like more information about the fund proposed in Article 7. Langhus said the fund could be used on road repairs, to help pay for the financing costs of a Tracy Hall renovation. The money would be spent as authorized by the SB. Gray said she is in favor of the concept of a climate fund, but would suggest starting it with less money, perhaps a penny on the tax rate, rather than \$450,000. Arnold said that the most interesting part of the fund idea is to gain resiliency for the town. Arnold wants to be specific about the fund's use, so as not to become a climate slush fund. Cook said she thinks this too much to put into the fund all at once. Layton said she is concerned about the large amount of money proposed for the fund. Brochu agreed that \$450,00 is too much in this budget year. Pepper said he is in favor of the concept of a climate fund with specific uses, and \$450,000 is too much. Langhus said he would be open to other fund amounts. SB members discussed options and agreed on the amount of \$40,000. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to remove Article 7 from the 2020 warning. **Motion failed (yes- Brochu, Layton; no- Pepper, Langhus; abstain- Arnold).** Arnold **moved** (2nd Brochu) to amend Article 7 to \$40,000, instead of \$450,000. **Motion passed (yes- Arnold, Brochu, Langhus, Pepper; no- Layton).** Brochu said that the SB will need to take up the issue of the climate fund's uses after the March 2020 Town Meeting, assuming Article 7 passes. Brochu **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve the Town portion of the 2020 Town Meeting Warning as amended this evening and to include the school district article information when provided to the Town Clerk's office. **Motion passed unanimously.**

a. Finance Committee Report. Omer Trajman said the Finance Committee will meet again on Monday, 1/20/2020 and hope to have their report to the SB just after that meeting.

b. Capital Budget and Plan. Durfee gave SB members hardcopies and a quick overview of the capital budget plan *[which will be part of the next SB packet for 1/22/2020]*.

c. Budget Adoption. Brochu said that she had asked Durfee about CATV's funding request and learned they are asking the same amount as last year. Brochu also said she has learned that the school and Recreation Department have agreed they will share the costs equally of maintaining facilities used by both. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to recommend to the voters a FYE 2021 Town budget of \$4,441,173 (not inclusive of other monetary articles). **Motion passed unanimously.**

(5) f. Fraud Policy Revision. Brochu said that the SB was asked by VLCT PACIF to review the fraud policy each year. Brochu has suggested some edits, which are shown in the SB packet. Brochu **moved** (2nd Arnold) to adopt the revised Fraud Policy, as revised and presented in the 1/15/2020 Selectboard packet. **Motion passed unanimously.** Brochu **moved** (2nd Arnold) to establish the annual Selectboard review of the Fraud Policy at their annual organizational meeting, to reaffirm or amend its content. **Motion passed unanimously.**

6. Town Manager Report. Durfee suggested that the SB amend Article 33 of the warning [regarding due date/time for property tax payments] to read “close of business” instead of “4:30 pm”. This would allow the Finance Office to stay open later on the due date to allow people extra time to pay their taxes without penalty. Cheryl Lindberg disagreed and said she wants the deadline to stay at 4:30 pm because people know they have to pay their taxes on time. Brochu **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve the Town Meeting warning Article 33 (Payment of Taxes). Spirited debate on whether to change the wording to “close of business” versus 4:30 PM. Consensus of SB members was to leave the wording as presented in the draft warning.

7. Town Manager Evaluation/Contract. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to enter executive session under VSA §313(a)(3) to discuss the Town Manager evaluation/contract. **Motion passed unanimously.**

SB moved into executive session at 10:33 pm.

Brochu **moved** (2nd Arnold) to enter public session. **Motion passed unanimously.**

SB moved into public session at 11:32 pm.

10. Adjournment. Brochu **moved** (2nd Arnold) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 11:33 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on February 12, 2020

Claudette Brochu
Selectboard Chair – at time of signing

Next Meeting – January 22, 2020 – Meeting at 6:30

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