

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Monday, February 12, 2020 at 7:00 pm

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

Vice Chair Brochu ran the meeting in Pepper's absence.

There were about 10 people in the audience.

Also participating: Christopher Ashley, Cheryl Lindberg, Demo Sofronas, Terry Ashley, Police Chief Jennifer Frank, Craig Layne, Brie Swenson.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to delete item #8 (Town Mgr. next steps) from the agenda and move the discussion of the 2nd quarter financial status to be part of the Town Manager Report agenda item.
2. Public Comment. Christopher Ashley said that the information from VLCT regarding the proposed Fair & Impartial Policing Policy (FIPP) is erroneous because it does not reflect court rulings subsequent to the date of the VLCT written opinion. Ashley would like to be sure that updated information is included in the SB packet when FIPP appears on the agenda. Cheryl Lindberg reminded everyone to file their Homestead Exemption paperwork with the state no later than April 15, 2020; there are no extensions allowed by the state. Demo Sofronas spoke about the upcoming school safety training. Sofronas believes that the safety of children is #1 and politics should not get in the way. Sofronas sees no problem with having the training at the Public Safety Building if the Police Chief approves of it. Sofronas said that Chief Frank has worked hard to obtain low-cost high-quality resources for the town. Langhus said that he thinks the objections people have raised against the training have merit. Terry Ashley said that she doesn't object to a safety training but does object to the organization giving the training. Christopher Ashley said that school principals do many things to make schools safer. Ashley said that there was a study document released recently that said that school "hardening" doesn't work. Ashley thinks that having an NRA training would have political implications. Brochu clarified that the SB has no say over what the School Board or school personnel decides to do. Police Chief Jennifer Frank said that she did want to correct an error she has seen circulating regarding a meeting she had with some citizens regarding their concerns about the training. Frank said that she did not refuse to answer their questions. Rather, she had to leave the meeting because of a police call she had to respond to. Norwich Police Department (NPD) has been transparent about the training; Frank posted information about it online in more than one place. Frank said the training is nationally recognized and seen as an effective program. Frank said that there are other training programs available that address other important aspects of school safety, and the training at issue provides important information not covered by other trainings. Frank said that, in deference to maintaining positive community relationships, the training is going to be moved to another town. Unfortunately, that means only one NPD officer can participate, rather than more. Now that NPD is not hosting the training, they will have to pay for it. Frank said she moved the training because she doesn't want to sacrifice relationships in Norwich for the sake of this training. Langhus said that the NRA is a lobbying group for gun rights and he distrusts any training they would pay for. Arnold said that we need to consider the community's values in policing. Sofronas said he thinks that his experience in the Postal Service tells him it's important to take advantage of good quality programming/training. Frank introduced the newest Norwich full-time police officer, Joseph Pregent. Frank said that Pregent comes to Norwich with many years of experience in law enforcement and a keen interest in

community policing. Frank said that Pregent also has training expertise which will be valuable to the NPD.

4. Consent Agenda. Langhus **moved** (2nd Brochu) to approve the consent agenda, including the suggested edits to draft minutes. **Motion passed unanimously.**

5. A. Liquor Licenses. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to recess the Selectboard meeting and then convene as the Norwich Liquor Commission. **Motion passed unanimously. SB recessed at 7:13.** Brochu asked Frank if Frank had received any complaints against any of the businesses seeking liquor licenses. Frank said she was not aware of any liquor-related complaints, with the proviso that, not having had advance notice of this question, she did not have time to conduct complete research. Frank said she will notify the SB of any complaints if she learns of any. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to approve liquor license applications for Frasers General Store (Dan & Whit's), Green Visions (Norwich Inn), and King Arthur Flour. **Motion passed unanimously.** Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to close the Norwich Liquor Commission session and reconvene the Selectboard meeting. **Motion passed unanimously. SB reconvened at 7:15.**

5. B. A/P Warrants. Langhus asked a question about road plowing charges from a private contractor and also about salt expenses. Durfee answered the question about the contractor and said that he has talked with the DPW director about limiting salt usage wherever possible, but it will be necessary to buy more salt, given the way this winter is going with ice – similar to last year. Cheryl Lindberg said the school needs cash and in the past, there has been a cash flow agreement between the school and the town. Lindberg said she has arranged for a cash flow schedule to be provided by Jamie Teague at the SAU to the Town for future fiscal years. Lindberg said the cash flow schedule would allow for monthly amounts to be paid based upon the cash requirements of both the Norwich and Dresden School Districts. Brochu asked about gasoline purchases. Durfee said that Dan & Whit's cannot themselves make a gas account arrangement with the town without D&W's gas vendor's involvement. Frank said that D&W's is contacting Citgo to find out about options for having accounts for Norwich vehicles. For any non-ethanol gas needs, the town will purchase small amounts of gas to have on hand for the vehicles and equipment that need it. Langhus **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve check warrant #20-16 for General Fund in the amount of \$92,684.09. **Motion passed unanimously.**

5. D. Conservation Commission Request re: FERC. Craig Layne, Chair of the Conservation Commission, said that the Connecticut River Conservancy suggested the town send to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) a letter containing the language included in the SB packet. After brief discussion, SB members agreed that the Town Manager will sign the letter on their behalf. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to approve the resolution addressed to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, as suggested by the Norwich Conservation Commission and contained in this meeting's packet. **Motion passed unanimously.**

5. E. Town Meeting Presentation. Arnold asked SB members for their input on his outline of the presentation. Langhus said the outline looks good and suggested adding information on the FEMA reimbursement status. Brochu suggested ensuring that all graphics in the presentation are legible. Layton suggested adding information about the increased sand usage because of changed weather patterns. SB members agreed to target 20 minutes as the length of the SB budget presentation. Sofronas suggested the SB coordinate with CATV to make sure the live feed for the Town Meeting is working. Arnold said he will have a draft presentation ready for SB review.

6. A. Brochu said she envisions a committee that will do work to find best practices and markets for waste. Langhus said that maybe this would be a committee convened periodically, rather than a Norwich Selectboard Minutes – 02/12/2020 Mtg

standing committee. Arnold said plastics recycling is particularly complicated. Durfee said this committee could be very helpful to the Town in providing information about solid waste and doing research into complex issues. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to adopt the Norwich Solid Waste Committee charge as described in this meeting's packet and amended to change the membership to 5 members, and to advertise for vacancies on said committee. **Motion passed unanimously.**

7. Town Manager's Report. Durfee gave the SB copies of a more detailed financial report than the one included in the meeting packet [the detailed report will be included in the 2/26/2020 SB meeting packet]. Durfee walked through the financial report, noting areas of interest. Brie Swenson said we had to pay for more port-o-potties this past summer because Hanover High School did not rent the Huntley tennis courts and therefore didn't help pay for the port-o-potties. SB members said budget information from the TM was very helpful. Brochu asked Durfee if he would be asking department heads to limit spending. Durfee said that yes, he has started doing that already. Durfee said that he is seeking SB input and concurrence with his proposal to hire Becky Grammer as Interim Finance Officer. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to concur with the Town Manager's recommendation to hire Becky Grammer as Interim Finance Officer. Langhus said that, ultimately, this is the TM's decision. Langhus said he wants to know what due diligence the town has completed in exploring Grammer's credentials. Durfee said that, in addition to supervising Grammer and observing her high-quality work, he has consulted Cynthia Stoddard from NEMRC, who has been working closely with Grammer and training her on NEMRC processes. Stoddard has said that Grammer is very competent and capable of performing the functions of the job. Also, Accountemps, the company providing Grammer's contracted services, has vetted Grammer prior to her being assigned to work in Norwich. Durfee said he has told Grammer that she needs to finish her degree in order to be appointed as a director. Langhus said he thinks the town would need a CPA. Durfee said that the former long-time Finance Director had originally been hired as a temp, and she was not a CPA. Layton asked about continuing education for Grammer and a timeline for completing sufficient coursework. Durfee said approximately two years depending on Grammer's current level of education. Durfee said he is eager to fully staff the Finance Office as soon as possible. Arnold said he likes the idea of an interim position. Langhus suggested that the SB table the motion and SB members agreed that Durfee will work with Omer Trajman, Cheryl Lindberg, John Pepper, and Roger Arnold to develop a strategy for staffing the Finance Office.

After brief discussion, Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to authorize the Town Manager to serve as a Town representative for the purposes of Social Security Business Services Online. **Motion passed unanimously.**

SB members agreed that Langhus and Layton will work together to develop a TM contract proposal to bring to the rest of the SB.

At this point – 9:15 pm – Langhus left the meeting. Arnold, Brochu, and Layton remained in the meeting.

SB members discussed how to proceed with the agenda for the remainder of the meeting. They agreed to hear the rest of Durfee's TM report and then adjourn after a brief executive session to receive information about a union grievance. Durfee asked for input from SB members regarding the format of his latest written TM report. Durfee said he is looking at outdated town strategic plans for guidance on updating a strategic plan. Layton said she likes the format of Durfee's latest TM report. Durfee said that the Norwich Prevention Network has obtained a grant for youth substance misuse prevention, for which grant Norwich will serve as fiscal pass-through organization. Durfee said he had provided Fair & Impartial Policing Policy (FIPP) information in the SB packet in an effort to give the SB helpful information as it came to him. Durfee said that the Safety Committee has begun

meeting again and will be looking at all required trainings. Brochu said that town employees will need AED training annually. Durfee said that cybersecurity training has begun for all employees with computer access. Durfee said he is working on an RFQ to hire a consultant to create a plan for integrated computer needs for the town. Durfee said he would like 2 of the SB members to sit with him to discuss what they'd like to see in a strategic plan. Durfee would also like input from SB members on his revised fee structure and an RFP for legal services on general town matter. Brochu agreed to help Durfee with the fee structure.

Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to find that premature general public knowledge of facts regarding upcoming a pending union grievance would clearly place the Selectboard at a substantial disadvantage. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Langhus **moved** (2nd Arnold) to enter executive session under 1 VSA § 313(a)(1)(B & D) to discuss a union grievance and to include the Town Manager. **Motion passed unanimously.**

The SB entered executive session at 10:25 pm.

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

The SB entered public session at 10:40 pm.

8. Adjournment. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:40 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on February 26, 2020

John Pepper (Claudette Brochu – Chair at time of signing)
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – February 26, 2020 – Meeting at 6:30

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