

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Monday, February 26, 2020 at 6:30 pm

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

There were about 16 people in the audience.

Also participating: Demo Sofronas, Jaci Allen, Roderick Francis, Charlotte Metcalfe, Christopher Ashley, Linda Cook.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to proceed with the agenda as drafted.
2. Public Comment. Demo Sofronas thanked the SB for their work, especially John Pepper, whose term is soon to expire.
3. Brochu asked about a pothole on Beaver Meadow Road and if the town is reimbursing people for damages to their cars. Durfee said that he refers any claims to the town's insurance carrier, who then handles the claim. Durfee said the DPW has been filling potholes whenever possible, weather and road conditions permitting. Langhus said there will be another information session regarding the proposed renovations to Tracy Hall at the library on Thursday. The Sunday presentation was taped and is available on the CATV website.
4. Public Hearing #1 – Draft Norwich Town Plan. Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to open public hearing #1 on the draft 2020 Norwich Town Plan. **Motion passed unanimously.** Jaci Allen presented information regarding the proposed Town Plan (TP), using PowerPoint slides included in the SB meeting packet. Allen said that climate change is addressed in every section of the TP. Charlotte Metcalf noted that the TP is shorter and clearer; she had a question about possibly using forest land for solar. Road Francis said the TP allows any landowner to approach the State for permission to obtain a certificate of public good; that would be up to the State to decide whether to grant such a request. Francis said that the State generally is not in favor of clearing forest to install solar. Christopher Ashley commended the Planning Commission for their work on the TP. Ashley has a concern about the TP addressing divergent housing, which would have the effect of allowing for more options for housing. Ashley said he and his wife are having to move out of Norwich because they can't find a house that meets their needs. Hemlock Ridge would be an example of the type of housing that would qualify as divergent housing. Langhus thanked the Planning Commission and Francis for their work on the TP, especially for working in climate concerns. Pepper agreed and commended them for the way they engaged the public in their work. Arnold had concerns about Dartmouth's plans to use Lewiston to meet their parking needs, concerned about expanding parking, especially a parking garage. Francis assured Arnold that Norwich's zoning regulations would not permit a parking garage. SB members asked about options for Lewiston. Francis said he has talked to Dartmouth planners about Lewiston, and was told they are looking at various options for Lewiston. Metcalfe said she is concerned about expanding parking lots along Route 5 South. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to close public hearing #1 on the draft 2020 Norwich Town Plan. **Motion passed unanimously.**
5. Town Manager Report. Durfee said the written TM report is in the meeting packet and asked SB members to raise any questions they may have. Durfee said he has been keeping in touch with the State regarding FEMA funding; they have not had follow-up requests in a while, so hopefully they will release remaining funds very soon. Durfee said that in the Eller planning /zoning appeal, the

audio recording of the proceedings was found recently and court has agreed to use that recording to constitute the record for appeal. Layton had questions about logistics in these matters. Durfee also offered follow-up answers regarding financial statements. Regarding the budget, the town has received estimates to fix one of the town's large trucks for plowing. The estimate is approximately \$26,000. SB members asked about the impact on DPW to have this truck out of service. Durfee said that more time is needed to complete the road plowing/sanding/salting, there are longer routes for the workers, and the town does the best we can to cover those activities. Brochu asked if we should look at buying a new truck, rather than putting more money into this truck that will be replaced anyway next year. Durfee gave to the SB some options for SB's consideration regarding the Finance Office. He would like to have the matter settled, to continue to get things back on track. Arnold said he is interested in Durfee's thoughts about additional cross-training on HR duties. Sb members had some questions about HR functions for the town. Brochu said she appreciates Durfee sharing this decision with the SB. Brochu asked what the SB's role is in this decision. Durfee said that the SB should make policy – including what positions should look like – and Durfee as Town Manager decides who the person in the position would be. Arnold said he wants to be sure that any Finance Director would have the experience and expertise to complement Durfee's skill set, rather than having Durfee supervise someone who doesn't already have experience and expertise. Pepper said he would like to see the town move away from NEMRC. Langhus said he thinks the town should hire an extremely qualified finance person who can support Durfee to fill in his areas of lesser expertise. SB members asked Durfee to provide job descriptions for the Finance Office. Durfee said he has proposed an RFQ for general town counsel (legal services) and after input from the SB and Langhus he would like to let out the RFQ. After brief discussion, Brochu **moved** (2nd Pepper) to authorize the Town Manager to issue the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) related to municipal attorney services with the needed amendments as identified in the draft RFQ and after comments by John Langhus, included as part of the Board packet. **Motion passed unanimously.**

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

7. A. A/P Warrants. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve check warrant #20-17 for General Fund expenses in the amount of \$2,109,827.14. **Motion passed unanimously.**

B. Vital Communities Meetings. Pepper said he thinks it's important to Norwich to participate in the monthly meetings to address regional issues. On housing, Pepper found it productive to work with other communities. Pepper said he found the dialogue very helpful and thinks it's important to continue this participation and have a SB members attend regularly and report back to the SB. Linda Cook said that Vital Communities is a long-standing group and it does good work. Sometimes it was hard for Norwich as a small town to contribute in a meaningful way.

8. A. Town Meeting Presentation. Arnold walked SB members through a draft presentation for Town Meeting, seeking input from SB members. [The draft presentation is part of this meeting packet.] SB members discussed what information to include on the presentation slides. The SB concurred on the format and content of the presentation.

11. Executive Session – Town Manager Contract. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to enter executive session pursuant to 1 VSA § 313(a)(1)(A) to discuss matters of personnel related to the Town Manager contract and improvement plan and to possibly include the Town Manager. **Motion passed unanimously.**

The SB entered executive session at 9:06 pm.

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

The SB entered public session at 9:40 pm.

8. Adjournment. Langhus **moved** (2nd Brochu) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on March 11, 2020

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

Next Meeting – March 4, 2020 – Meeting at 6:30

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