

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, April 22, 2020 at 6:30 pm

This meeting was conducted via teleconference using ZOOM, in order to maintain appropriate physical distance under COVID-19 precautions. Members present: Claudette Brochu, Chair; Roger Arnold, Vice Chair; Robert Gere; John Langhus; Mary Layton; Herb Durfee, Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

There were about 17 people in the audience.

Also participating: Doug Wilberding, Stuart Richards, Pam Smith, Rod Francis (Planning & Zoning Director), Joel Stettenheim, Irv Thomae, Sage McGinley-Smith, Arline Rotman, Jeff Goodrich, John Pepper, Jennifer Frank (Police Chief).

1. Approval of Agenda. After discussing some meeting ground rules, Selectboard (SB) members agreed to alter the agenda by postponing items #9 and #11.

2. Public Comment. Doug Wilberding asked questions about the Tracy Hall project, Gile Mountain, and FEMA reimbursement money. Durfee said that EEI was the sole company to respond to the publicly posted RFQ for the Tracy Hall project; the town has posted signage at the Gile Mountain trail to remind people about safe distancing; and the town has just received notice from FEMA that they have issued the final approval of our reimbursement payment of approximately \$600,000, which FEMA hopes to disburse soon. Stuart Richards asked if the SB will invite Steve Flanders to speak about what he has written about regarding the Tracy Hall project. Brochu said that there are no immediate plans to invite Flanders to present, and the SB will need to decide that as a group. Richards asked how many positions are there on the Planning Commission, 7 or 9? SB members said there are currently 9 positions. Pam Smith asked for clarification on how many proposals the town received in response to the Tracy Hall project RFQ. Durfee said we received 1. Durfee said that, after discussion about the submission, the town decided to move forward with that proposal. Stuart Richards asked if anyone is aware of an alternative to Comcast; Gere said that ECFiber provides internet access, but does not have cable TV or other full-range services.

3. Consent Agenda. Gere **moved** (2nd Layton) to approve the consent agenda, excluding a letter from Amy and Michael Staggs. **Motion passed unanimously.** SB members then discussed the Staggs's letter, in which they expressed concerns about the proposed solar project on Turnpike Road. Rod Francis, Planning & Zoning Director, announced that TRORC had just approved the Norwich Town Plan, and said that he will prepare materials to reach out to the Stagg family to explain their options regarding the project. Joel Stettenheim said that he works for Norwich Technologies and said his company has reached out to the Stagg family, as well, to discuss the project. Brochu **moved** (2nd Langhus) to accept as correspondence the letter from Amy and Michael Staggs regarding the proposed solar installation on Turnpike Road. **Motion passed unanimously.**

4. Selectboard Appointments. Irv Thomae, who applied for appointment as the Norwich representative to the ECFiber Board, tried to join the meeting but was unable to do so. The SB agreed to proceed with his application nonetheless. Gere talked about his own role as alternate ECFiber Board member and also spoke in favor of Thomae being reappointed as the primary representative. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to appoint Irv Thomae as representative to ECFiber for a 1-year term to expire on April 30, 2021. **Motion passed unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to appoint Rob Gere as alternate representative to ECFiber for a 1-year term to expire on April 30, 2021. **Motion passed 4 to 0 (Gere recused).** Durfee said that John Farrell has worked closely and effectively with Durfee as Town Service Officer. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to appoint John Farrell

as Town Service Officer for a 1-year term to expire on March 31, 2021. **Motion passed unanimously.** Sage McGinley-Smith spoke in support of her application to the Conservation Commission. She said that she is a junior at Hanover High School and has been attending Conservation Commission meetings; McGinley-Smith is passionate about this work and thinks she has a lot to contribute. She hopes to serve on the Conservation Commission for one year. SB members discussed the logistics and Layton expressed concern about a student occupying an “adult” seat on the Conservation Commission. Langhus **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Sage McGinley-Smith to the Conservation Commission for a 2-year term to expire on March 31, 2021. **Motion passed 4 to 1 (no- Layton).** Langhus **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Richard Stucker to the Development Review Board for a 3-year term to expire on April 30, 2023. **Motion passed unanimously.** Arline Rotman said that she would like to continue on the Development Review Board (DRB) because, as the only lawyer on the DRB, she can provide help in developing Zoning regulations, given the newly-approved Town Plan. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to appoint Arline Rotman to the Development Review Board for a 3-year term to expire on April 30, 2023. **Motion passed unanimously.** Layton spoke in favor of Sue Pitiger’s application as alternate to the DRB. Langhus **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Sue Pitiger as alternate to the Development Review Board for a 3-year term to expire on April 30, 2023. **Motion passed unanimously.** Jeff Goodrich said that he has served on the Planning Commission (PC) for a length of time and is a lifelong Norwich resident. Brochu asked about Goodrich’s attendance record at PC meetings. Goodrich said that his only conflicts with attending meetings will be possible SB meetings and coaching baseball. Langhus **moved** (2nd Arnold) to appoint Jeff Goodrich to the Planning Commission for a 4-year term to expire on April 30, 2024. **Motion passed unanimously.** Langhus spoke in favor of Jeff Swenson’s application to the Finance Committee. Langhus **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Jeff Swenson to the Finance Committee for a 2-year term to expire on April 30, 2022. **Motion passed unanimously.** John Pepper said that he would like to continue to serve the town and would like to do so as Finance Committee member. He has

5. A/P Warrants & Executive Session Regarding Insurance – SB members agreed to move the executive session to the end of the meeting. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve check warrant #20-19 for General Fund in the amount of \$135,214.80 and for Recreation Facility Fund in the amount of \$500.00. **Motion passed unanimously.** Arnold **moved** (2nd Gere) to authorize Claudette Brochu to sign the A/P warrants approved by the Selectboard at their March 25, 2020 meeting. **Motion passed unanimously.**

6. COVID-19 Update. Brochu said she has made a draft flyer to distribute to all households to allow for analog/non-digital access to information. Arnold suggested the SB make a consensus decision to edit the flyer offline and then put out and distribute. Broch summarized some of the conversations she has had in developing the flyer. Brochu will send out the updated flyer electronically to the SB members for editing. SB members discussed whether to distribute to all households. Layton said she hasn’t found any one way to organize neighborhoods. Gere said there are 1,281 mailing addresses in the town as of his research. Brochu asked Cook if she has an idea how many people in town don’t have internet or TV. Cook said she does not. Arnold said he thinks we should use the road captains to distribute flyers. Brochu said she will circulate the flyer to SB members for edits and then give it to Mary Layton and Arnold for distribution to road captains. Durfee said he is closing all town buildings to the public, but offices will be available via telephone and email. As appropriate, offices can make appointments to meet with people. This is due to the stay-at-home order issued by Vermont Gov. Scott. Durfee is coming out with a statement detailing essential and non-essential town staff. Chief Frank said the SB needs to know that reusable bags may be banned in Vermont and the SB should have the heads up. Langhus said that in NH, the Coop is having patrons not use bags in the store, but patrons can take purchased goods loose in their carts out to their cars, where they can pack them in reusable bags. Gere said to beware of scammers looking to prey on the COVID-19 situation. A significant number of the downloadable apps to give updates on Norwich Selectboard Minutes – 04/22/2020 Mtg

OCOVID are actually scams and computer viruses.

7. Town Manager Report. Durfee said he is coordinating with Bonnie Munday regarding the reconsideration vote, and the SB may need a special meeting to sign the vote warning. Durfee said that Brie Swenson is dealing with VLCT regarding volunteers and town insurance coverage. Because the US President has declared a state of emergency regarding COVID-19, the town is tracking expenses under FEMA in case of available funding in the future. Durfee and Police Chief Frank told the SB that there may a federal funding conflict, should an enhanced FIPP be put into place. Durfee said that NEMRC programs are being shifted to cloud-based system so that employees can work remotely in NEMRC. Durfee has started work with town department heads on upcoming budget development, including the capital improvement plan. Also, RFP responses for various projects are coming in – such as Beaver Meadow Scoping Study and Attorney Services. Chief Frank is serving as the Town Manager's Public Information Officer (PIO); Durfee has started cross training among town staff on finance, HR, DPW and Recreation functions. Durfee said the Transfer Station's Plowshare building is now closed and the transfer station attendants are encouraging people to keep moving. Layton asked if we have enough attendants for enforce the 4-care limit at the station. Layton and Brochu both said that the last time they were there, it was business as usual, with more than 4 cars. Gere said he wants to be sure that transfer station employees feel they have the authority to enforce a 4-car limit.

8. Set Agenda for April. SB members discussed setting a date for the special town meeting reconsideration vote. After some discussion, Langhus **moved** (2nd Arnold) to hold a Special Town Meeting to conduct the reconsideration vote regarding Article 8 on May 12, 2020. **Motion passed unanimously.**

9. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to enter executive session under 1 VSA § 313(a)(6) – "...records exempt from the access to public records provisions..." – to discuss insurance payments and to include the Town Manager at some point. **Motion passed unanimously.** The SB entered executive session at 9:20 pm.

Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to enter public session. **Motion passed unanimously.** The SB entered public session at 9:49 pm.

Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to enter executive session under 1 VSA § 313(a)(3) – "...employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee..." – to discuss Town Manager contract issues and to possibly include the Town Manager. **Motion passed unanimously.** The SB entered executive session at 9:51 pm.

Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to enter public session. **Motion passed unanimously.** The SB entered public session at 10:13 pm. Brochu announced that the SB has approved an extension of the Town Manager's contract for an additional 15 months, beginning May 1, 2020, and the contract period will include a performance improvement plan, all of which documentation will be available to the public after it is finalized and signed. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to approve the entry into a new employment contract with the Town Manager in form and substance agreed to today in executive session and to be included in the next Selectboard packet; Roger Arnold will sign the contract on behalf of the Selectboard. **Motion passed unanimously.**

10. Adjournment. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:16 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on May 13, 2020
Norwich Selectboard Minutes – 04/22/2020 Mtg

Claudette Brochu
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – April 8, 2020 – Meeting at 6:30

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