

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, December 18, 2019 at 6:30 pm

Members present: John Pepper, Chair; Claudette Brochu (arrived at 6:45pm), Vice Chair; Roger Arnold; John Langhus (via telephone); Mary Layton; Herb Durfee, Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

There were about 11 people in the audience.

Also participating: Stuart Richards, Natalie Abair, Jaci Allen, Planning Director Rod Francis, Colin Calloway, Linda Gray, Cheryl Lindberg, Pam Smith, Alan Johnson.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to defer items #4b FY2019 Audit Report and #6a Capital Budget Matrix to future meetings.
2. Public Comment. Stuart Richards said that the Planning Commission did a good job in improving their procedures at their last meeting; he thanked whoever it was who relayed the suggestions for improvement.
3. Consent Agenda. After some discussion, Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve the consent agenda. **Motion passed unanimously** (4 yes, 0 no – Brochu not yet present).
4. a. Women’s Club Gala alcohol waiver request. Natalie Abair spoke in support of the Women’s Club request for an alcohol waiver. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve the Women’s Club request for a waiver allowing them to serve alcohol in Tracy Hall at their March 21, 2020 Spring Gala event. **Motion passed unanimously** (4 yes, 0 no – Brochu not yet present).

b. (deferred to future meeting)

c. A/P Warrants. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve check warrant #20-13 for General Administration Fund in the amount of \$1,780.00, for Recreation Fund – Dam Improvement in the amount of \$600.19, for Recreation Scholarships Fund in the amount of \$67.00, and for General Fund in the amount of \$1,226,512.83. **Motion passed unanimously** (4 yes, 0 no – Brochu not yet present).
5. a. Town Plan Update. Rod Francis, Planning Director, and Jaci Allen, Planning Commission (PC) Member, presented to the SB information about their progress on the Town Plan (TP). Allen and Francis discussed the information included in the PowerPoint presentation, which was part of the SB packet. Allen talked about the PC’s goals and efforts to develop a TP that will be accessible and easily read by all members of the community. SB members thanked the PC for their work on the proposed plan, including their responsiveness to community interests and concerns, and praised the high quality of the draft plan. Stuart Richards offered comments on the TP and acknowledged the efforts of the PC. Richards also read a paragraph he would like to see added to the TP [this written document will be included in the next SB packet as correspondence]. Colin Calloway thanked the PC for their work on the TP and said that he objects to the use of the term “undeveloped” in the TP. Calloway offered various critiques of the TP draft. SB members said that all members of the public will be welcome to offer input on the TP at the upcoming public forums on Jan. 9 and Jan. 13, 2020.

b. Budget presentation – Gen’l Administration. Durfee reviewed highlights of the Town Administration portion of the budget, including savings on the expense of publishing the Annual Town Report. Bonnie Munday, Town Clerk, gave brief overview of her proposed budget, including an

increase in her budget suggestion for statutory meetings due to a larger-than-usual number of elections in 2020. Munday also requested an allocation for her records restoration fund, which provides for the overall maintenance of the vault and its records. Durfee spoke about the Finance Dept. budget, which is proposed to be essentially level-funded, and will allow for flexibility in determining the staffing in that department. Cheryl Lindberg and Pam Smith offered input about the Board of Listers proposed budget, which is essentially level-funded. Lindberg said that the Listers are pleased with the assistant they have hired. They would possibly look at the next reappraisal occurring in 2024, unless something drastic happens that would require a reappraisal before then. Rod Francis, Planning Director, offered an overview of his department's budget proposal, including the reduction in planning services and Town Plan lines, because the TP should be complete before FY2021. SB members discussed various aspects of the Planning budget proposal, including vision for future enhancement of the department's functions. Brie Swenson offered an overview of the Recreation budget proposal, including new programming for adults and children, and decreases in rental fees and some rental revenue. Swenson explained that most of the increases in the Recreation budget are offset by increases in fee revenue. Swenson said the portable toilet budget line is increasing because of a need for those facilities at Huntley Meadow. SB members asked questions about the Rec budget, including tennis court repairs, the fact that the expenditures are offset by program fees, and whether Norwich should consider adding staff to manage all of the programming. Durfee said that the Workers Comp insurance rate is decreasing significantly for next year.

c. Finance Committee role in FY21 budget. Langhus said that he thinks the Finance Committee (FC) could offer input on the designated funds and capital expense planning, but not as much so for the line-by-line budget review. Arnold said that perhaps the FC could offer a different way of looking at budget planning. Layton said it makes sense for them to look at the designated funds. Brochu said she would like to see the FC look at the designated funds balances and capital budget proposals and look at the best way to finance the priority expenditures. Brochu agreed to draft an email for review by the SB to be sent to the FC to give them guidance of what the SB needs from them.

d. Whistleblower Policy. Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to adopt the Whistleblower Protection Policy, as presented in this meeting. **Motion approved unanimously.**

e. FEMA funds distribution. Brochu said that she wants to discuss how the FEMA reimbursement money is to be spent and who decides – Town Mgr or SB or combination. SB members agreed with Durfee that the money will be used to pay off the \$1.4 million line of credit and restore the undesignated fund deficit. After further discussion, Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to direct the Town Manager to pay down the Mascoma Bank line of credit plus interest using the FEMA reimbursement funds. **Motion approved unanimously.**

f. Regional Energy Coordinator. After some discussion, including Alan Johnson, member of the Hartford Selectboard, Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to support a March 2020 Town Meeting article in the amount of \$30,669.51 for Norwich's share of a Regional Energy Coordinator position serving 7 municipalities and based at the TRORC. **Motion approved 4-1-0** (Arnold no).

7. Town Manager Contract – executive session. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to enter executive session under VSA §313(a)(3) to discuss the Town Manager contract. **Motion approved unanimously.** The SB moved into executive session at 9:28 pm. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to enter public session. The Selectboard moved into public session at 10:15 pm.

9. Future Agenda Items. SB members anticipate the following future agenda items:
- January 8:
- FYE 2019 Audit Review (possible presentation by Batchelder Associates)
 - FYE 2021 Budget – General Government, Remaining Line Items, & Capital Budget
 - Town Meeting Warning Draft
 - Finance Committee Report
 - Fraud Policy
 - Town Manager Evaluation/Contract
 - EEI (energy efficiency contractor) Report

January 15:

- Finish FYE 2021 Budget
- Approve Town Meeting Warning

10. Adjournment. At 10:15 Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on January 8, 2019

Claudette Brochu
Selectboard Chair – at time of signing

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

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