

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, May 27, 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 15 people in the audience.

Also participating: Cheryl Lindberg, Linda Cook, Christina Hall, Alice Garner, Andrea Nolon, Marianne Barthel, John Pepper, Pam Smith, Omer Trajman, Larry Wiggins.

1. Approval of Agenda. Langhus **moved** (2nd Arnold) to remove the Listers appointment from tonight's agenda. **Motion approved (4 yes; Brochu abstained)**. Discussion on Jeff Swenson's appointment was moved to MOU discussion and Finance Committee revised charge.
2. Public Comment. Linda Cook spoke about the Hanover High School (HHS) car parade and said she thinks it's a great celebration for the students. Christina Hall said she and others have worked with the police chief and other community leaders to put together a car parade for all HHS graduates, including Norwich, Hanover, and any other towns with HHS students. Hall hopes the (Selectboard) SB will support this project. Alice Garner said she supports the parade plan and will do whatever she can to help it happen. Cheryl Lindberg asked whether Tracy hall will be open as of June 15, 2020. Herb Durfee said that he will not know for sure until closer to that time, depending on public health guidance from the governor and other factors. Andrea Nolon assured people that social distancing precautions will be put into place as part of the HHS parade. Tracy Hall will not be needed for the purposes of the parade. Marianne Barthel said she has been working on the parade plan; it will happen on Friday, June 12 at about 4:30 – 6:00 pm. Barthel asked if the SB needs to formally approve the parade event. Durfee said the SB does not need to; parade organizers are already working with the town police and Town Manager's (TM) office to make proper arrangements. John Pepper spoke in support of the parade. Brochu asked about the parade route. Barthels said the parade will start at Huntley Meadows and Chief Frank will work with Hanover officials to extend the route into Hanover. Andrea Nolon said they are working on a plan to coordinate with Hanover. Layton said she supports this, as did Langhus. Arnold asked if the students have been involved in the planning. Hall said that they haven't gotten involved until recently, after HHS gave their blessing to the event. The seniors who have talked to the parent organizers are very much in favor of it. Linda Cook asked who she should contact to volunteer to help. Barthel said to email her at Marianne.barthel@gmail.com. By consensus, SB is in full support of the graduation parade.
3. Consent Agenda. Langhus **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the consent agenda. **Motion passed unanimously**.
4. Woody Adams Conservation Tract Proposal. Langhus asked if the SB needs to cure the late minutes issue – the Conservation Commission did not issue minutes of the public hearings within the normal time allotment. Durfee said it would be up to the Conservation Commission to effect the cure of its own minutes. SB members agreed to this course of action, and took up the relevant motions. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to authorize the expenditure of up to \$130,000 from the Conservation Designated Fund for the purposes of providing matching funds for a VHCB grant to purchase a 186-acre forest parcel referred to as the Woody Adams parcel. **Motion approved unanimously**. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to accept the 186-acre Woody Adams parcel as town land, should the VHCB grant be awarded and all required matching funds be secured. **Motion approved unanimously**. Layton

moved (2nd Gere) contingent upon receiving the VHCB grant award, to protect permanently the Woody Adams parcel, the Town Forest, and the Gile Mountain parcel under a single conservation easement conveying development rights to UVLT and VHCB as grantees. **Motion approved unanimously.**

5. Selectboard Appointments. Brochu apologized for the appointment process not going well this year. She said there are now 2 openings on the Finance Committee (FC). Langhus said he is happy to entertain Pam Smith's application to the Finance Committee and he wants to discuss the process. Pam Smith said she has expertise in business and finance and wants to use that expertise for the town as a FC member. Langhus said that the SB and Norwich School Board have been developing an agreement for a FC that would have expanded duties to include working on the school budgets; currently the FC has worked only on town budget matters. Smith said that she is interested in those expanded duties, as well. Omer Trajman said that there had been 6 members on the FC before 2020 Town Meeting. After Town Meeting, they lost one member so they had one opening. Lindberg said the FC members have yet to establish staggered terms for their appointments. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Pamela Smith to the Finance Committee for the remainder of an unexpired 3-year term to expire on June 30, 2021. **Motion approved unanimously.**

6. Listers' Letter re: Extending the Deadline for Grand List. Cheryl Lindberg said the Listers want additional time to file the grand list. Langhus asked why the need for an extension. Lindberg said their assessor was limited by COVID restrictions and also they have software issues. Durfee asked if this delay will affect the SB's ability to set the tax rate for next year. Lindberg said she hopes it won't cause delay, but she's not sure. Durfee told Lindberg that the Listers can make appointments to conduct grievance hearings in Tracy Hall. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve the request by the Norwich Board of Listers for an extension to complete work relating to the duties of Listers and/or Assessors until August 15, 2020. **Motion approved unanimously.**

7. April 2020 Revenue/Expense Report. Durfee gave a brief overview of the revenue/expense report, as included in the SB meeting packet. SB members discussed various aspects, including delinquent taxes and normalized expenditures.

8. FY21 Budget In Light of COVID-19 and State Revenue Deficits. Brochu said she has heard from the state legislature representatives for Norwich about the state's plans for funding projects. SB members discussed concerns related to rising unemployment and food insecurity issues. Linda Cook summarized some of the Vermont legislature's recent actions allowing SBs greater powers. Cook asked the SB if they plan to do any of those things. Brochu said that they don't know at this time, but any such action would be discussed at a properly warned open meeting.

9. BREAK

10. Town Manager Report. Durfee said his written report is in the meeting packet, and welcomed questions from the SB. Durfee said that there is currently \$333,000 in the Bridge designated fund, plus another \$40,000 will be added this FY; There is currently \$189,000 + \$20,000 to be added in the DPW Vehicle designated fund. Durfee said that the Rte. 132 box culvert is an issue the SB needs to discuss; on June 10th, Durfee wants to discuss a personnel issue with the SB. Durfee said the Rte. 132 box culvert is in imminent need of repair or replacement. The town has 3 options: 1) do nothing and see how things develop, 2) wait for the VTrans grant application outcome, or 3) obtain short-term borrowing to finance a fix for the culvert now. The Town will likely soon need to close at least 1 lane through the culvert, in which case the town will need to rent traffic signals for the duration of that closure or narrowing of the roadway. Durfee said he'd like guidance from the SB on how to proceed. Durfee said he favors having the work done ASAP to replace the culvert; it will be the most cost

effective to finish the work as quickly as possible. Layton asked if the town could complete this work before winter. Durfee said it will depend on what bids come in. Layton said the culvert isn't looking good lately. Arnold said he would like to hear more from Larry Wiggins, DPW Director, about his opinion of the culvert's condition. Wiggins said the culvert wing walls and the deck are suffering corrosion, not only the wing walls and the guardrail, as has been suggested by VTrans. Wiggins has tried to get details from VTrans about their proposed repair to the culvert, but has not gotten answers from them yet. Wiggins said that no one knows how long this culvert will last or when it will fail. This culvert /bridge has in the last year become more pressing because the wing walls have moved more than in the past. Layton asked what other town bridges are of concern. Wiggins said that the Elm street bridge and one on Beaver Meadow are also being watched. SB members agreed to authorize the Town Manager to put out an RFP for work on the Rte. 132 box culvert.

11. SymQuest Proposal for IT Infrastructure Improvements. Durfee said he would like to get input from Rob Gere before taking any concrete steps on this topic. Gere said he will contact SymQuest to discuss their recommendations and then confer with Durfee.

12. DPW Truck Purchase. Durfee introduced the topic of the DPW trucks. Larry Wiggins, DPW Director, gave a summary of the materials and information he submitted for the Sb meeting packet. Langhus asked if there is a good market for obtaining high-quality used trucks. Wiggins said that there is not a good cost savings to used trucks, in his experience and based on his research. Layton asked what would be done with the old DPW trucks if we buy replacements. Wiggins said he would sell them for as much as possible. Arnold asked why do small towns have their own fleets. Layton asked if there are other vehicles that will need replacing. Wiggins said he has listed all the DPW vehicles in his capital plan for DPW; he recommends replacing another truck next year. Langhus said he would like Wiggins to try to find used truck options where possible; other SB members agreed. Linda Cook said she is concerned about a potential need to borrow to purchase a future truck. Cook asked about giving Wiggins a hybrid to use. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to authorize the expenditure of up to \$109,000 from the DPW Equipment designated fund for the purchase of a 2020 Ford F550 4WD truck with plow, wing, live body sander and sander controls to replace the current Truck 12, a 2000 Ford F-550 one-ton 4WD truck with front plow and fiberglass sander. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to authorize the expenditure of up to \$24,059 from the DPW Equipment designated fund for the purchase of a 2020 Vermont State Contract Chevrolet Silverado 4WD pickup with regular cab or its equivalent in a used format to replace current Truck 6, a 2006 Dodge 3500 RAM 4WD pickup. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to authorize the expenditure of up to \$30,394 from the DPW Equipment designated fund for the purchase of a 2020 Vermont State Contract Chevrolet Silverado 4WD pickup with crew cab or its equivalent in a used format to replace current Truck 9, a 2008 Dodge 2500 RAM 4WD pickup. **Motion approved 4 to 1 (no- Brochu)**

13. MOU for Norwich & Dresden Finance Committees. Langhus introduced the MOU topic, saying that when the SB revived the Finance Committee (FC), they had it look at only the town budget, but not the school budget. Gere **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Norwich Selectboard and the Norwich School Board regarding the Norwich and Dresden Finance Committees and to authorize Claudette Brochu to sign said MOU on the Selectboard's behalf. **Motion tabled (see following).** Langhus said the big changes proposed under the MOU would be for the FC to look also at the school budget and that the Norwich School Board will have responsibility to approve Norwich FC members. The Dresden FC is comprised of members from the Norwich FC and the Hanover FC. Langhus also said that the new MOU would not categorically bar people from serving on the FC if they have a family member who works for the Town of Norwich. Layton said it might be cleaner to leave the categorical bar to people who have a family member working for the town. Brochu asked how Hanover's charge addresses the potential conflict

of interest (aka bar to family members of town employees) for their FC. Langhus said he did not know and would find out the answer to report back to the SB. Lindberg asked if this new MOU intentionally excluded the town treasurer from the Norwich FC. Langhus said that was not done intentionally. SB members supported the treasurer being a member of FC as discussion ensued. SB members agreed to address the proposed MOU in more detail at a future meeting, and agreed to table the motion on the MOU. Brochu asked for acknowledgement that at the SB's 5/20/2020 meeting, SB directed her to contact Jeff Swenson about his inability to be appointed to the Finance Committee due to a clear conflict of interest (being the spouse of a Town employee). Supported by Arnold and Layton.

14. COVID-19 Update. SB members agreed not to discuss this topic, because there was no significant update to discuss.

15. Agenda for June 10, 2020. SB members discussed possible topics for the next meeting.

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:11 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on June 10, 2020

Claudette Brochu
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – June 10, 2020 – Meeting at 6:30

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