

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, January 6, 2021 at 6:30 pm*

NOTE: this meeting was recessed and reconvened on January 11, 2021

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. As noted above, this meeting was recessed shortly after its start, to be reconvened at 6:30 pm on January 11, 2021.

There were about 13 people in the audience.

Also participating: Demo Sofronas, Bonnie Munday, Alex Northern, Cheryl Lindberg.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed there were no changes needed for the agenda. Brochu said that she is asking for a recess of the SB meeting tonight because of the events in Washington, DC, and to reconvene on a later day. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to recess the January 6th Selectboard meeting to a date certain. **Motion approved unanimously.** SB members agreed to reconvene the SB meeting at 6:30 pm on Monday, January 11, 2021. SB recessed the meeting at 6:39 pm on January 6, 2021.

At 6:31 pm on Monday, January 11, 2021, the SB resumed the meeting, beginning with agenda item 2.

2. Public Comment. Demo Sofronas spoke about two letters regarding Police Department funding. Sofronas is concerned that the SB would consider defunding community policing and spoke about the history of the town's decision to choose a community policing program. Sofronas said his letter explains why he believes the SB should continue to fund community policing efforts. Sofronas said he has sent to the SB the report generated by a SB-appointed committee regarding policing in Norwich. Sofronas read aloud from a portion of the report, explaining why community policing is important for Norwich.

3. Adding Articles for Town Meeting. Brochu asked SB members how they want to add articles to the Town Meeting warning. Layton said the SB may want to be flexible. If the SB allows electronic signatures, the the SB would get an idea of how much support is in the community for a given article. Langhus said the SB should allow articles without petitions from organizations that have been voted in the past. Bonnie Munday said the SB should not require signatures, because petitions are due on Thursday and it's not enough time for people to gather over 160 signatures, as would be required. Arnold **moved** that for the year 2021, the Norwich Selectboard waives the required signatures on monetary and advisory Town Meeting articles. No one seconded; **motion failed.** Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) that, for the year 2021, the Norwich Selectboard waives the signature requirement on petitions for citizen-raised articles and the Selectboard will meet on January 18, 2021 at 6:30 pm to consider submitted petitions and decide whether to include them on the Town Meeting warning. **Motion approved 3 yes, 2 no (Arnold, Langhus).**

4. Budget and Capital Improvement Budget and Plan. Arnold suggested the SB begin discussion with considering some larger-ticket spending. Arnold suggested that the SB consensus is currently at 11.5% increase. Brochu said she thinks that even 10% is outrageously high; she likes the Finance Committee's suggested increase. SB members discussed thoughts about how much of an increase is acceptable. SB members agreed not to include the new DPW laborer in the proposed budget. SB members agreed to discuss the largest expense items first, and start with Arnold's suggestion in his Norwich Selectboard Minutes – 01/06/2021 Mtg

January 6th memo. SB members went through larger-amount items. After doing this for a time, they returned to the method of going through the budget line-by-line. See the attached draft budget showing SB suggestions agreed to during the meeting discussion.

5. Executive session – Personnel Issue. Gere **moved** (2nd Layton) to enter executive session under 1 VSA §313(a)(3) to discuss a personnel issue and to invite the Town Manager to join said executive session. **Motion approved unanimously.** The Selectboard moved into executive session at 9:41 pm.

Gere moved (2nd Layton) to enter public session. Motion approved unanimously. The Selectboard moved into public session at 9:59 pm.

6. Adjourn. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to adjourn. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on January 27, 2021

Claudette Brochu
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – January 13, 2020 – Meeting at 6:30

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