

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of  
Wednesday, January 27, 2021 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. For the purposes of this meeting, Arnold acted as Chair.

There were about 24 people in the audience.

Also participating: Cheryl Lindberg, Stuart Richards, Ned Redpath, Demo Sofronas, Dayton Crites, Louise Hamlin, Peter Orner, Hilary Lynch, Pam Smith, Aaron Lamperti, Police Chief Jennifer Frank, Deputy Fire Chief Matt Swett, Linda Cook, Jack Cushman.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to delete item #11 (Climate Emergency Designated Fund) from the agenda.
2. Public Comment. Stuart Richards said he doesn't understand why the SB chose to appoint Finance Committee members if the SB wasn't going to consider their input. Richards also said he thinks the SB is shutting down public participation via their interpretation of Vermont's Open Meeting Law (OML). Ned Redpath offered comment on his letter protesting the SB's reduction of spending on police services. Stuart Richards spoke again, saying that he supports Redpath's comments. He doesn't want to cut spending on police services, especially community policing. Brochu said the budget has passed the SB and now it's up to the voters. She thinks the Finance Committee issue will be discussed at a future meeting. Demo Sofronas also said he thinks the SB should not have cut the Police Department budget, and he had said so at the SB's last budget meeting.
3. Consent Agenda. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Langhus) to approve the consent agenda, including the A/P warrants, as contained in the packet, and to include the proposed change to the minutes on page 77 of the packet. **Motion approved unanimously.**
4. Beaver Meadow Road Sidewalk Study Report. Dayton Crites, of Dubois & King, gave a synopsis of the Beaver Meadow Scoping Study, using the presentation as included in the SB meeting packet. SB members discussed design options for the sidewalk. Demo Sofronas gave some historical background. Stuart Richards wondered about funding not coming from the town; what costs have been incurred so far; and whether alternative #1 is the only one being considered; and whether this project will go before the town for a vote. Arnold made note of the questions. Louise Hamlin said she appreciates the modified sidewalk design on the west side of the road. She wonders what opportunity costs would result from sidewalk construction. Peter Orner spoke in support of the sidewalk project and said he appreciates the work of the SB and the input from all the citizens. Orner said we shouldn't wait for something bad to happen before we address the need for pedestrian safety. Hilary Lynch said she supports the sidewalk. Pam Smith said she wonders if a traffic study is going to be conducted, especially regarding truck traffic. Stuart Richards wonders what the situation with existing sidewalks is. He said he'd like to see the existing sidewalk better taken care of. Aaron Lamperti said that a mobility lane is an excellent option and should be kept as an option for the plan. Gere said he thinks the town needs to move forward with the next phase. Langhus said he agrees, as did Layton and Brochu. Arnold agreed and said he'd like to consider the mobility lanes, if possible. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Langhus) to schedule public hearings on Feb. 10 and Feb. 24, 2021 to solicit public input on the draft report and to gauge public support for moving forward with an application for a 2021 VTrans Bike/Ped Grant for phase II of the 3-phase project. **Motion approved unanimously.**

5. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Gere) to approve the Certificate of Adoption and Resolution Adopting the Norwich, Vermont 2020 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, as included in the Selectboard meeting packet. **Motion approved unanimously.**

6. Stop/Yield Ordinance. Police Chief Jennifer Frank said that the existing ordinance only has 13 signs and was drafted in 1978. The new ordinance is updated to include all existing signs in the town and doesn't add any signs that aren't already in place in town. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Langhus) to accept the first reading of the Town of Norwich Stop/Yield Sign Ordinance, as contained in the Selectboard meeting packet. **Motion approved unanimously.**

7. FEMA Grant Request. Deputy Fire Chief Matt Swett spoke in support of the Fire Department's request to apply for a grant to purchase equipment. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Langhus) to authorize the Town Manager to apply for funding through the 2020 Assistance to Firefighters Grant, with the understanding that the Town of Norwich will be responsible for payment of matching funds equal to 5% of the grant amount total. **Motion approved unanimously.**

8. December 2020 Financial Reports. Town Manager Herb Durfee spoke about the financial reports, as contained in the SB packet, highlighting a few line items.

9. Ford Sayre Request to Reduce Usage Fees for Huntley Meadow. Durfee said the Ford Sayre program seeks further reduction beyond their 50% discount off the non-profit usage fee. Because the fee structure was approved by the SB, it is up to the SB to decide on any further discount. Langhus said he thinks we should discount the rate because of the nature of the use. Brochu said she found Langhus's arguments persuasive and she thinks we should waive the fee altogether. Gere agrees we should waive the fee. Layton said she is not comfortable with the precedent being set. Langhus **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Brochu) to waive the usage fees for Huntley Meadow for the Ford Sayre program according to their request, as outlined in their letter dated January 11, 2021 and contained in the Selectboard meeting packet. **Motion approved (4 yes; Layton abstained).**

10. Proposed Task Force to Address Article 36. Layton said she is inclined to approach this as a first reading; also she wonders if the SB should be creating yet another task force. Langhus said Layton's points are well-made; Langhus said he's inclined to shrink the size of the task force down from 9. Langhus thinks the charge is a good start. Brochu questioned the proposed membership – the make-up of the group. Durfee suggested the SB consider asking the Energy Committee to form the task force. Langhus said he thinks the task force needs to be led by the SB. SB members discussed options for approaches to Article 36. Linda Gray encouraged the SB to do something like the proposed task force in a timely manner. Pam Smith said she thinks the SB should set up a capital budget committee, instead. Aaron Lamperti said he supports having the SB form the task force so they can gather information. Jack Cushman said he supports this effort. He wants the SB to include a broadening phrase to allow the task force some flexibility to explore related objective and approaches. Brochu **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Arnold) to accept the Article 36 Task Force draft as a first reading and revisit and possibly adopt at a future SB meeting. **Motion approved unanimously.**

11. Climate Emergency Designated Fund. SB members agreed to skip this item, per earlier discussion.

12. Listers RFP for Re-Appraisal Services. Cheryl Lindberg said the Listers want to keep everyone informed so they can get input and suggestions. Langhus suggested the Listers include a proposed contract along with the RFP. Arnold said he thought a 30-page RFP might be too detailed; most other RFPs he saw were 10-11 pages.

13. Town Meeting Presentation. Brochu said she wants the SB members to start thinking about what type of a presentation they want, and would the SB like to hold earlier meetings, prior to the March 1<sup>st</sup> informational meeting. SB members discussed options. SB members agreed that Langhus will deliver the presentation and Brochu and Arnold will draft the presentation to share with the SB for approval.

14. Adjournment. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Brochu) to adjourn. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:19 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on February 10, 2021

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Claudette Brochu  
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – February 10, 2021 – Meeting at 6:30

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