

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, February 10, 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.

There were about 20 people in the audience.

Also participating: Stuart Richards, Michele Tine, Kate Barlow, Demo Sofronas, Peter Orner, Andy Scherer, Gered Dunne, Eric Picconi, Shoshana Hort, Chet Clem, Jack Cushman, Police Chief Jennifer Frank, Linda Gray, Pam Smith, Cheryl Lindberg.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to delete item #8 (Climate Emergency Designated Fund) from the agenda.
2. Public Comment. Stuart Richards spoke about community policing funding and asked that the SB accept a \$1,000 donation to support community policing programs such as texting-while-driving prevention, babysitting training course, bike safety day, Coffee With a Cop, pen pals, Halloween safety, Touch-a-Truck, etc. Richards said he would like SB answers about accepting donations for community policing. Durfee said donations are not uncommon, so there is a process for receiving and allocating funds. Durfee clarified that a \$30,000 donation for the police department was actually a Byrne grant.
3. Consent Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the consent agenda. **Motion approved unanimously.**
4. Beaver Meadow Road Sidewalk Study Report. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to open the first public hearing to solicit public input regarding the Beaver Meadow sidewalk project. **Motion approved unanimously.** Michele Tine spoke in support of the sidewalk project and said there is ample evidence to show that a sidewalk will be beneficial for individuals and the community. Kate Barlow spoke in support of the sidewalk; she wants a safe walking loop in town. Demo Sofronas spoke in support of the sidewalk. Stuart Richards said he hasn't had a problem on Beaver Meadow Road while walking or bike riding and he doesn't think this is a good time to add a sidewalk because of budget constraints. Peter Orner spoke in support of the sidewalk and said there are problems with safety on Beaver Meadow Road without a sidewalk. Andy Scherer said the construction phase won't happen until a couple of years from now, so this is the right time to get the process started. Cheryl Lindberg said she agrees with Richards and the town should look at the existing sidewalks before building any new ones. Gered Dunne said he supports the sidewalk. Eric Picconi said he supports sidewalks and said the movement for a sidewalk on Beaver Meadow Road started in the 1980's and he doesn't want to wait another 40 years to build the sidewalk. Langhus said he was struck by the number of signatures and sees there is overwhelming support for the Beaver Meadow Road sidewalk. Langhus said the existing sidewalks are largely owned by the Fire District, which has control over their sidewalks, not the SB. Langhus pointed out that Norwich spends a lot on its roads and relatively little has been proposed for spending on the sidewalk. Gere said he noticed fast cars on Beaver Meadow Road today on his way to the dump and thinks safety for pedestrians is definitely an issue. Arnold brought up the issue of the mobility lane. Shoshana Hort said she strongly supports the sidewalk and sees the danger on the road; she does not support a mobility lane. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to close the first public hearing to solicit public input regarding the Beaver Meadow

sidewalk project and resume the regular Selectboard meeting. **Motion approved unanimously.**

5. Appointments. Chet Clem spoke in support of his application to the Upper Valley River Subcommittee of the CT River Joint Commissions, saying that the committee works in the area of his expertise, work, and study. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to appoint Chet Clem to the Upper Valley River Subcommittee of the CT River Joint Commissions. **Motion approved unanimously.** Jack Cushman said that he wants to serve on the Solid Waste Committee in order to help the town with an important issue. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to appoint Jack Cushman to the Solid Waste Committee. **Motion approved unanimously.** Brochu said she will be convening the committee soon.

6. Stop/Yield Ordinance. Layton said she was surprised by how many stop signs needed to be added to the ordinance and said she thinks it's important to update the ordinance. Arnold asked where to find data on traffic. Police Chief Jennifer Frank said there are multiple sources, but local departments can generally provide the best data. Frank said you must be consistent and specific when requesting data from various departments. Durfee explained that the ordinance will go into effect after 60 days. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to accept the second reading and adopt the Town of Norwich Stop/Yield Sign Ordinance, as contained in the Selectboard meeting packet. **Motion approved unanimously.**

7. Proposed Article 36 Task Force. Arnold summarized changes to the draft task force charge resulting from public and SB feedback. Layton had some suggestions and questions about the draft charge. Langhus suggested this group also tie into the green fleet issues. Gere said this group is important for focusing attention on energy usage by the Town. Layton said the SB will have to take direct action in addition to forming the task force. Linda Gray said he agrees it's important for the SB to take charge of the energy use issue and work. SB members discussed options for task force membership and projects/tasks of the proposed task force. Langhus **moved** (2nd Gere) to form an Article 36 Task Force according to the charge contained in the Selectboard packet, as amended to reduce the number of members from 7 to 5 and strike the Finance Committee member, reduce the Energy Committee members from 2 to 1 and include at least 1 member with experience in finance and or economics and to ask the Town Manager's office to advertise for applicants to said task force. **Motion approved unanimously.**

8. Climate Emergency Fund. SB members agreed to defer this agenda item to a future meeting.

9. Listers Request for Proposal for Reappraisal Services. Cheryl Lindberg said the Listers wanted approval for their RFP from the SB because the SB has spending authority. Durfee said he has to be involved in the Listers' sealed bid process, per the town's purchasing policy, but only to ensure a fair and competitive bid process. Langhus recommended the Listers have an attorney look over the contract attached to the RFP. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the Specifications and Request for Proposals for Norwich Real Property Reappraisal, as contained in the Selectboard meeting packet. **Motion approved (4 yes; Langhus abstained).**

10. Town Manager Report. Durfee said we recently got an email from U.S. Representative Peter Welch regarding available funding for Norwich when the aid package is approved by Congress. The projected amount for Norwich is approximately \$600,00-700,000. Durfee said the Town Report has gone to the printer and should be available soon. Durfee said the Finance Office has a temporary director set up through an agency; his focus will be on monthly reports and policies and procedures to ensure strong financial controls for the Town's finances.

11. Police Department Cruiser Purchase Proposal. Durfee said that Chief Frank has some information to share about possible options for police car purchase. Police Chief Jennifer Frank then spoke about specifications of 3 different vehicles: a Tesla, a Ford Mach-E, and a hybrid Ford Intercept. Frank said that she will have more specific information available for the next SB meeting. Frank said she has spoken to other police departments about their experience with electric cars. SB members discussed options. Arnold said he looks forward to hearing about electric options from other department heads, as well. SB members thanked Chief Frank for her research.

12. Town Meeting Presentation. Brochu said she and Arnold have worked on a PowerPoint presentation and seek input from other SB members. SB members then reviewed slides, as contained in the SB meeting packet. SB members agreed that Brochu and Arnold will incorporate SB feedback and then bring a revised presentation to the next SB meeting for finalization.

13. Executive Session – Town Manager Evaluation. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to enter executive session under 1 VSA §313(a)(3) to discuss the Town Manager performance improvement plan and to invite the Town Manager to join said executive session. **Motion approved unanimously.** SB moved into executive session at 9:21 pm. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to enter public session. **Motion approved unanimously.** SB entered public session at 10:08 pm.

14. Adjournment. Gere **moved** (2nd Langhus) to adjourn. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:08 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on February 24, 2021

Roger Arnold
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – February 24, 2021 – Meeting at 6:30

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