

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, February 24, 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 23 people in the audience.

Also participating: Linda Cook, Doug Wilberding, Police Chief Jennifer Frank, Demo Sofronas, Peter Orner, Cheryl Lindberg, Marisa Lorenzo, Jaci Allen, Charlene Gates, Ricardo Sini, Stacy Morig, Rebecca Crow, Angie Delcampo, Seth Robertson.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to proceed with the agenda as drafted.

2. Public Comment. Brochu read into the record a resolution by the Selectboard thanking Police Chief Frank. The resolution is:

WHEREAS, Chief Jennifer Frank has served the Town Of Norwich with honor and distinction as Police Chief for two years beginning March 1, 2018; and

WHEREAS, Chief Frank has conducted herself with impeccable professionalism throughout her tenure and has earned great admiration among the people of Norwich; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure Chief Frank has worked tirelessly to improve the professional standards of the Town of Norwich police force; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure Chief Frank has been instrumental in obtaining grant funding to support the workings of the police department; and

WHEREAS, Chief Frank initiated the development of the Norwich Cadet program and provided many opportunities for positive interactions between the Police Department and the children of Norwich; and

WHEREAS, Chief Frank has helped to better define and expand the concept of Community Policing in Norwich; and

WHEREAS, Chief Frank has chosen to pursue another stage of her professional career in Windsor, Vermont;

THEREFORE, the Town of Norwich Selectboard, on behalf of the residents of the Town, does hereby offer both its appreciation and thanks to Chief Jennifer Frank for a job well done and wishes her the best in all her future professional and personal endeavors.

ADOPTED this 24th day of February, 2021, by the Selectboard of the Town of Norwich.

Linda Cook thanked Frank for her service to Norwich, especially her work on a variety of events and activities. Durfee presented Frank with a distinguished service award for her service as Police Chief and her dedication to her work and to the community. Doug Wilberding thanked Chief Frank for her work. Wilberding asked if the SB has been doing research into air quality issues in Tracy Hall (TH). Chief Frank said she has learned a great deal while in Norwich, and thanked the townspeople. Demo Sofronas said the chief will be greatly missed. Peter Orner also thanked Chief Frank, especially for her work with the schoolkids. Demo Sofronas said he approves of the Beaver Meadow Road (BMR) sidewalk project. He does not agree with speed tables. Sofronas said he supports the purchase of a new cruiser, as proposed by the police chief. Sofronas wondered how much money has been raised by donors for community policing efforts.

3. Consent Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the consent agenda. **Motion approved unanimously.**

4. Beaver Meadow Road Sidewalk Study Phase II – Public Hearing. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to

open the second public hearing to solicit public input regarding the Beaver Meadow sidewalk project. **Motion approved unanimously.** Marisa Lorenzo said she strongly supports a sidewalk on BMR. Jaci Allen said she supports the BMR sidewalk; it is a good report and process and it is time to construct the sidewalk to close the walking loop. Charlene Gates supports the sidewalk to improve safety. Ricardo Sini thanked Chief Frank and said he supports the BMR sidewalk for safety. Stacy Morig supports the sidewalk; especially during the winter it will be much safer. Rebecca Crow said she fully supports the sidewalk for all ages. Angie Delcampo said she supports the BMR sidewalk project. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to close the second public hearing to solicit public input regarding the Beaver Meadow sidewalk project and resume the regular Selectboard meeting. **Motion approved unanimously.** Arnold asked Durfee what is the timeline for the grant. Durfee said mid-June the grant application is due; TRORC will help prepare the grant. If the grant is awarded, then design and engineering work will be performed thereafter – there will be a \$21,000 cost to the town. Phase III would be another grant process in June 2022 for construction – or in a later year. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to direct the Town Manager to apply for a VTrans 2021 Bicycle and Pedestrian grant for Phase II of the Beaver Meadow Road Sidewalk Scoping Study. **Motion approved unanimously.**

5. Climate Emergency Designated Fund. Langhus gave a brief summary of the draft policy document. As included in the SB packet. Layton said she thinks it's very well-written. Arnold offered input and asked about private gifts to the fund. SB members discussed option for edits to the draft. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to accept the first reading of the draft policy regarding the use of the Climate Emergency Designated Fund. **Motion passed unanimously.**

6. Town Manager Update. Durfee said the Police Chief search process has begun with advertising; also a public survey is soliciting input from town residents. The Women's Club candidate Forum was recorded and will be posted on the CATV website. Durfee said that an air quality assessment of TH concluded there is no mold present. Durfee introduced Seth Robertson, who is serving as temporary finance director. Durfee said that Robertson will discuss finances later in this meeting. Vital Communities is looking to establish a shared community case manager who can help citizens access services they need. SB members discussed the possibility of federal aid to the Town as part of pending federal legislation.

7. January 2021 Financial Reports. Seth Robertson offered information about his background and shared onscreen reports highlighting various aspects of the town's budget and finances. SB members offered feedback and suggestions for Robertson's future presentations. Cheryl Lindberg offered VTGFOA and GFOA resources to help with government accounting.

8. Police Department Cruiser Purchase Proposal. Police Chief Frank said the proposed vehicle would go into service in Jan./Feb. 2022. This will allow the PD to reduce the fleet from 4 to 3. Brochu asked if it wouldn't be better to get a new cruiser now, rather than waiting. Arnold questioned why we need 3 cruisers. Frank provided information about why 3 are needed. Langhus said he'd like to see the PD purchase an electric Ford pickup when it's available. Layton said she is concerned about the condition of the current police cars. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to authorize the purchase of a 2020 Ford Hybrid Interceptor Utility and to utilize up to \$52,500 from the Police Department Cruiser Designated Fund for said purchase. **Motion failed (2 yes – Layton, Brochu; 3 no – Gere, Langhus, Arnold).**

9. Town Meeting Preparation. SB members agreed to proceed with the presentation as included in the SB meeting packet.

10. Post-Election Organizational Meeting. SB members agreed to meet on 3/3/2021 at 6:30 pm
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for its organizational meeting.

11. 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.** The Selectboard moved into executive session at 9:09 pm. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to enter public session. **Motion approved unanimously.** At 9:49 pm the Selectboard moved into public session. No action was taken in public session, other than to adjourn.

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on March 10, 2020

Roger Arnold
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – March 3, 2021 – Meeting at 6:30

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