

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, July 22, 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 14 people in the audience.

Also participating: Kris Clement, Cheryl Lindberg, Laura Stone & JB McCarthy (VTrans), Pam Smith, Linda Cook, Police Chief Jennifer Frank, Jeff Goodrich, Emmanuel Tesone, Libby Chamberlin, Planning Director Rod Francis.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to proceed with the agenda as drafted.
2. Public Comment. Kris Clement read aloud her written statement regarding her concerns about two emails from John Langhus; Clement also read aloud the emails at issue. Clement's statement and accompanying copies of emails will be included in the next SB packet as correspondence. John Langhus said that he thinks the emails speak for themselves and he stands by what he wrote. Cheryl Lindberg said that the Listers have lodged the Grand List last Wednesday. The new Grand List will be posted on the town website in the next several days.
3. Regional Concerns Meeting – VTrans – re: I-91 Bridge over Rte. 10A. Laura Stone, of VTrans, presented the slides contained in the SB packet. Stone explained that the substructure of the I-91 bridge/overpass is in poor condition and needs work, which will affect traffic. This work will begin in 2023 and will be a rehabilitation of the bridge. They will reroute I-91 traffic using crossovers. VT Rte. 10A will be intermittently closed for about 4 hours at a time during construction, as needed. Brochu asked about the I-91 onramp and where it might be relocated. Stone said there will be no lead remediation necessary. Stone said she's not sure if there has ever been any major repair work done on this bridge since its construction. Durfee asked if they will be doing night work requiring lighting. JB McCarthy, of VTrans, said there may be, but they will confer with the town before doing so; it will depend on what the contractor bids. Durfee suggested that there be no Rte. 10A closures during the AM or PM rush hours. Police Chief Jennifer Frank said the Ledyard Bridge work is slated to begin close to the same time as the I-91 work, so they will want to coordinate with NH DOT.
4. Consent Agenda. Langhus said he wants to discuss the attack on him regarding conflict of interest. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to approve the consent agenda, with the exception of correspondence from Doug Wilberding. **Motion passed unanimously.** Langhus said that he has no actual conflict of interest, despite what was suggested by Wilberding. Langhus said he recused himself during any SB discussion concerning Norwich Technologies, his former employer. Arnold said he is not pleased about the tenor of the discussion on this subject. Layton said she would like to have open public discussions about substantive topics, but it is not helpful to have personal attacks put into the public discourse. Jeff Goodrich said he doesn't see any conflicts of interest in Langhus's work. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to accept correspondence from Doug Wilberding. **Motion passed unanimously.**
5. 1. Appointments – Finance Committee. Emmanuel Tesone said he has been on the Finance Committee (FC) for 2 years and has extensive experience in finance. Tesone wants to continue on the FC because he feels he can best contribute to the town in this way. Tesone said he thinks there is a lot of expertise on the FC that could help the town. He'd like the FC to opine on more town

issues, such as budget preparation. Cheryl Lindberg said that she thinks does good work on the Finance Committee. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to appoint Emmanuel Tesone to the Finance Committee for a 3-year term to expire on June 30, 2023. **Motion passed unanimously.** Libby Chamberlin said she would like to be appointed to the FC. She has just finished her graduate degree in Washington, DC and is now back home in Norwich. Chamberlin may need to relocate because she's doing a job search and will adjust her FC involvement as necessary. Chamberlin said she is currently living in Norwich. Langhus **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Libby Chamberlin to the Finance Committee for a 3-year term to expire on June 30, 2023. **Motion passed unanimously.**

2. Appointments – TRORC Rep. Rod Francis applied to continue as the Norwich TRORC rep. Langhus asked how Francis's status as Norwich staff has affected his service as TRORC rep. Francis said there's been no time he's had to consult with Durfee on TRORC matters. Langhus asked if TRORC staff ever consulted Francis about the Regional Energy Coordinator position. Francis said no, they hadn't. Goodrich said he would prefer that a town resident serve as the TRORC re. Langhus **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Rod Francis as the Norwich representative to the TRORC for a 1-year term to expire on April 30, 2021. **Motion passed unanimously.**

3. Appointments – Development Review Board. Langhus **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Matthew William Stuart as alternate to the Development Review Board for a 3-year term to expire on April 30, 2023. **Motion passed unanimously.**

6. Special Town Meeting Informational Meeting. Brochu said the informational meeting is not about the primary, but about the Town Meeting articles. CATV will host and simulcast and John Carroll is moderator. Brochu would want any computer presentation to show only the text of the proposed article being voted on. Langhus said he doesn't see the utility of showing the article text. Layton said she wants to keep it simple and likes Brochu's idea. Arnold asked if the SB has any obligation to correct misinformation. Durfee said the SB can decide how to proceed on that issue. Brochu said John Carroll told her he would be open as moderator to allow the Energy Committee to make a brief 5-10 minute presentation and to allow the opposition to make their own 5-10 minute presentation. Brochu also relayed the announcement that drive-through voting will happen at the Norwich Transfer Station at 24 New Boston Road from 7:00 am – 7:00 pm on August 11, 2020.

7. Regional Energy Coordinator (REC) Update. Langhus gave a brief recap of the 7/8 SB meeting discussion and action, which was that the SB chose not to sign the REC agreement. Langhus was asked to relay the SB's concerns to Peter Gregory at TRORC; Langhus did so. Langhus received a reply from Gregory to say they would make no change in the contract and that TROR had decided to proceed with the REC without Norwich. Durfee said that originally the REC was to be a collaborative project. Arnold asked if Francis or Durfee saw any communication failure by Norwich. Francis said the beginning of the REC process involved him, but when Langhus was appointed as liaison, Francis stepped away from the process. SB members agreed the Norwich remains open to an REC opportunity, if such opportunity presents itself.

8. 1. Tax Collection Policy. After brief discussion, Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to adopt the Tax Collection Policy as presented. **Motion passed unanimously.**

2. Policy on Posting of Police Standards. Arnold introduced the topic and Police Chief Jennifer Frank said that the word "key" should be added to directives and standard operating procedures in order to protect certain sensitive information. Gere asked Frank if she thinks there has been enough communication and consultation with the Norwich Police Department (NPD). Frank said yes, after initial difficulties. Gere asked if Frank feels there is any animus from the SB toward the NPD. Frank said she tries not to assume others' feelings and motivations. Langhus said this policy is a good idea; it is important to provide as much information to the public as possible. Arnold **moved** (2nd Langhus) to adopt the Policy on Posting of Police Standards, Procedure and Key Department Directives with

the deletion of the local training standards. **Motion passed unanimously.**

9. June 2020 Revenue/Expense Report. Durfee said the June financials are in the packet. The normalized FY20 status is 101.59% of projected revenue and 95.38% of expenditures. We are looking to close FY20 by the end of July.

10. Town Manager Report. Durfee said the Finance Director interview team agreed that no one candidate is ideal for hiring. The choices now are to either re-open the search or to engage a contracted part-time Finance Director and retain Becky Grammer as a full-time employee, as well. SB members agreed to take up the issue at their next meeting, and Durfee will provide them with written synopsis and recommendations for action. Durfee said that the tax bills were mailed out today. Union negotiations have resulted in a handshake agreement and the union members must now vote on the proposed contract. The Brown Schoolhouse road bridge project is now starting work. Norwich is at 4.4% unemployment rate. The Public Safety Building generator went out to bid and we are working on fixing the other town generators. The fee schedule can be discussed at a future meeting. Brochu asked whether the Beaver Meadow scoping grant money has been approved and also the Rte. 132 box culvert grant; Durfee said yes, the state has approved the expenditures.

11. 1. DPW Funding Requests - Paving Contract. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to authorize the expenditure of up to \$132,030.30 for road paving and to authorize the Town Manager to execute a contract with Pike Industries to complete that work. **Motion approved unanimously.**

2. DPW Funding Requests – Dust Control. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to authorize the purchase of dust control product and lease related equipment from Innovative Surface Solutions, as a sole source provider for FYE2021, due to the offline tanker truck. Durfee said our tanker truck is out of commission, so we want to be able to use the same supplier, per usual, and to rent from that supplier the equipment needed to apply the dust control product. Langhus said he is reluctant to do sole source contracts, but this is a special circumstance because the truck is broken. Langhus asked if maybe another town could rent to us equipment to apply the dust control. Durfee suggested, and SB members agreed, to table this matter for the next SB meeting, after getting information from DPW Director about the possibility of using another town's equipment.

12. Executive Session to Discuss Town Manager Evaluation. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to enter executive session under VSA §313(a)(3) to discuss the Town Manager evaluation. **Motion passed unanimously.** The SB entered executive session at 9:27 pm.

Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to enter public session. **Motion passed unanimously.** The SB entered public session at 10:40 pm.

13. Adjournment. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:41 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on August 12, 2020

Claudette Brochu
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – August 12, 2020 – Meeting at 6:30
Norwich Selectboard Minutes – 07/22/2020 Mtg

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