

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, August 12, 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 16 people in the audience.

Also participating: Stuart Richards, Cynthia Stoddard, Jack Cushman, Linda Gray, Bill Bender, Cheryl Lindberg, Pam Smith, Linda Cook, Doug Wilberding.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to proceed with the agenda as drafted.
2. Public Comment. Stuart Richards said he feels it's unfortunate that the Planning Commission (PC) had a working group that met to address wastewater treatment issues without adhering to the open meeting law (OML). Richards also commented on his letter regarding the Police Chief's inclusion or lack thereof in developing town policy involving police. Richards said he hopes the omission has been remedied – that the Chief has been brought into these discussions. Roger Arnold said that yes, the Chief was later brought into the discussion and had input. Claudette Brochu thanked Bonnie, Judy, and the BCA members who made the voting possible.
3. Consent Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve the consent agenda, minus A/P warrants. **Motion passed unanimously.** Brochu had questions on the A/P warrant item regarding the Spencer Powers and Town of Hartford payments. Durfee said he will look into it and get back to the SB. Brochu asked about a loan payment on the town's 5-year loan. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve the A/P warrants, omitting payments to Spencer Powers, LLC and to the Town of Hartford for police dispatch services. **Motion passed unanimously.**
4. Financial Reports Available Through NEMRC. Layton said that looking at the budget from a "glide path" perspective, not overly specific, would be good. Layton liked the look of the Hartford presentation; Langhus agreed and liked the overview format. Arnold said that Hartford's presentation example was produced by their department of 3 employees, and was for a larger municipality. Durfee introduced Cynthia Stoddard, a NEMRC employee, to provide information to the SB regarding NEMRC reports. Durfee said that Stoddard will be consulting with Finance Committee Chairperson Emmanuel Tesone, to develop overview reports. Durfee thanked Stoddard for working with Becky in the Finance Office to streamline processes and train Becky on Finance functions. Stoddard gave an overview of her background and expertise. Stoddard said she understands generally what kind of information SB is looking for as an overview/high-level report. Stoddard then shared her NEMRC screen to show SB members some options for reports out of NEMRC. Stoddard said she can work with the SB to get them what they want; she just needs to hear from the SB what they want to see, specifically. Langhus said he thinks the NEMRC software is not as agile as it could be, and limits the town's choices of personnel.

4.1 Finance Office Staffing Proposal. Layton said she supports Durfee's proposal to hire Becky full-time. Layton thinks we haven't found the right person for a Finance Director, but we need to stay on track in the Finance Office. Langhus supports hiring Becky full-time, but is not as much in favor of hiring our accounting firm as consultant to perform Finance Director duties. Langhus wants us to check with Dartmouth and Tuck for recruiting. Arnold said he is concerned about putting off hiring the

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DPW position because we need that position, too. Brochu said that she's concerned about hiring Bonnie Batchelder (town's auditor), because then we would lose her as auditor – because of the conflict of interest created. Arnold said he thinks SB members agree that we need to hire Becky full-time, for sure, and use DPW laborer funds to put toward a Finance Director. Arnold suggested doing an RFQ for interim accounting services and also recruit for a Finance Director longer-term. Layton agreed that could work. Langhus suggested that maybe multiple towns could join together to share a Finance Director. SB members discussed options for Finance Director functions. SB members agreed with the plan to hire Becky full-time. Brochu said she wants to find an interim Finance Director. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to authorize the Town Manager to hire Becky Grammer as full-time Finance Assistant with the salary range as recommended by the Town Manager. **Motion approved unanimously.**

5. Special Town Meeting Results. Brochu said that the SB needs to come up with next steps given the town's vote not to move forward with the Tracy Hall energy and renovation project. Layton agreed that the SB needs to take that up at a future meeting and the SB will need to think about different options for Tracy Hall and fossil fuel reductions. Langhus said he is happy to work on the issue at a future meeting. Arnold thinks the main reason for the vote this time was COVID uncertainty. SB member agreed to put the issue on the next SB agenda. Jack Cushman urged the SB not to over read the vote's import/meaning; also there is a movement toward stimulus funding. Stuart Richards said he does not think it is helpful to speculate the motivation for the vote; the SB should consider other funding options to move forward with the Tracy Hall project.

6. Fee Schedule Update. Layton said we might consider investing in a scale to weigh waste and base fees on weight. Brochu asked about pavilion rental – Town Manager's list was different from the Recreation Department's list. Durfee said will clarify and get back to the SB on that. Brochu asked about Tracy Hall (TH) Gym rental. Durfee explained those fees. Layton asked whether SB wants to recoup costs, or do we want to raise funds with rental fees. Brochu said she'd like TH rental to generate revenue – at least from non-town sources. Brochu likes the rest of the proposed fee schedule. Arnold said the Norwich Library charges \$25/hour for their rental spaces. Gere asked how often outside renters rent TH. Durfee said most renters are town programs. Langhus said making TH available to townspeople is part of what the town does, so we shouldn't look at it as a money-maker. Gere suggested that facility rentals for non-town events could be marked up at 20% above base rate. Other SB members agreed. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to adopt the 2020 Norwich, VT Fee Schedule, as presented, excepting any ordinance-based fees and with the amendment that the VIN check fee for a town resident is \$0.00 and \$20.00 for non-residents; also there will be a 20% mark-up for non-town-based facility rental by non-residents. **Motion approved unanimously.**

** At this time, Brochu left the meeting; Arnold assumed the duties of meeting chair.**

7. DPW Part-Time Administrative Assistant. SB members agreed to move forward with hiring A DPW administrative assistant as soon as possible.

8. Net Metering Agreement. Langhus said he will recuse himself from any possible discussion about action with Solaflect involving town funds. Langhus explained what a net metering agreement is. Linda Gray explained why the town entered into the net metering agreement with Solaflect. Gray said the original net metering agreement allowed for a purchase opportunity, but that has changed and is no longer a viable option. Also the location of the solar array was changed, due to problems with the original proposed site on Route 5 in Norwich. Bill Bender, of Solaflect, talked about his company's email [as included in the SB meeting packet]. Layton said she'd like to have Bender meet with the TM to clean up inconsistencies, such as the purchase option and solar array location, in the existing contract with Solaflect. Pam Smith asked why the electricity costs for the town have

increased if we are getting a discount.

9. Town Manager Report. Arnold said he appreciated the new format of Durfee's written report. Durfee gave an explanation of his new report format, summarized report highlights, and asked for SB members' feedback. Arnold asked for update on the union contract; asked if we are close to signing. Durfee said he doesn't know why, except there is a hold-up on the union side. Arnold asked Durfee to try to urge the union along.

10. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). Arnold asked the SB if they have any input on the LHMP. Layton said the active shooter section needs to be addressed. Durfee said the SB will need to approve a plan in order to qualify for FEMA funding; SB must adopt the LHMP either tonight or at their next August meeting. SB members discussed options for proceeding. Layton said she thinks it's important to include an active shooter section. Gere said he wouldn't want to have that section be a back door to more NRA-type trainings. Langhus said he doesn't think an active shooter section is necessary. Arnold agreed. Arnold suggested adding more census information to the plan to describe the town more fully. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to adopt the Town of Norwich, Vermont 2020 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan as presented, with the omission of the active shooter section and the addition of census information in the community profile section. **Motion passed unanimously.**

11. DPW Dust Control Contract. Durfee introduced the topic and summarized the information in the meeting packet. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve a 3-year contract for the purchase of dust control liquid and use of related application equipment from Innovative Surface Solutions. **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 on Great River Hydro Proposed Agreement. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to make a finding that premature public knowledge of the Selectboard's position relative to civil litigation would place the town at a substantial disadvantage. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to enter executive session under 1 VSA § 313(a)(1)(E) – "...pending or probable civil litigation or a prosecution, to which the public body is or may be a party..." – to discuss a litigation issue involving Great River Hydro and to include the Town Manager. **Motion approved unanimously.** The SB entered executive session at 10:02 pm.

Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to enter public session. **Motion approved unanimously.** The SB entered public session at 10:13 pm.

Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve the Great River Hydro settlement agreement and to sign said agreement. **Motion approved unanimously.**

13. Executive Session on Interim Steps for IT Improvements. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to enter executive session under 1 VSA § 313(a)(10) – "...security or emergency response measures, the disclosure of which could jeopardize public safety." – to discuss the town's computer system security and to include the Town Manager. **Motion approved unanimously.** The SB entered executive session at 10:15 pm.

Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to enter public session. **Motion approved unanimously.** The SB entered public session at 10:32 pm.

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:33 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on August 26, 2020

Claudette Brochu
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – August 26, 2020 – Meeting at 6:30

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