

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, October 28, 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; John Langhus; Mary Layton; Herb Durfee, Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

Member absent: Robert Gere

There were about 8 people in the audience.

Also participating: Linda Cook, Gered Dunne, Tracey Hayes, Brie Swenson, Nina Sablan, Arthur Smith, Cheryl Lindberg, Rod Francis, Richard Amore, Jaci Allen, Linda Gray, Bill Bender.

1. Approval of Agenda. Selectboard (SB) members agreed to defer agenda item #14 (NEMRC Bulk Time Agreement) until a future meeting.
2. Public Comment. Linda Cook said the Blood Hill residents may be putting together a petition. Gered Dunne said he is concerned about speeding on Union Village Road. He thinks it may be safer to have the blinking speed sign moved farther up the hill. Also, Dunne said that maybe speed bumps and another speed limit sign heading up the hill. Dunn also suggested speed cameras for additional enforcement.
3. Consent Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve the consent agenda, with the exception of the Blood Hill Road letter. **Motion passed unanimously.** Layton expressed support for not paving Blood Hill Road and said she'd like to know more about plans to pave the road, if any. Brochu said it won't automatically be paved; that possibility was raised in the capital budgeting plan originally under the former DPW director. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to accept as correspondence the letter regarding Blood Hill Road. **Motion passed unanimously.**
4. Presentation by Norwich Youth Advisory Council. Tracey Hayes spoke about the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) and shared a presentation developed by the YAC. The YAC is a youth-led group focused on building stronger connections between Norwich youth and their community. Hayes spoke about the activated that have been conducted and planned by the YAC. Brie Swenson said that this is an amazing group of kids who are following through with their planning and doing the work. Nina Sablan, a high school student and member of YAC, spoke to say that Tunes on the Trail was a very successful event. Sablan said she has learned about what it takes to plan events and it has been great to connect with Norwich as a community. SB members thanked Sablan for her work and participation.
5. VT Elder Project Outreach. Arthur Smith, the Grant Coordinator for the VT Elder Project spoke to the SB. Smith talked about the grant as it relates to Windsor County. Under the grant, they are focusing on elders who have experienced abuse, financial exploitation, etc. The project looks at identified needs for the target population – elders. Among other activities, the project has provided training to area providers and first responders regarding elder issues. In particular, they are training those personnel to spot signs and issues around possible abuse. The project is doing outreach in cooperation with area agencies and providers. Smith said the Elder Project is asking the town to help publicize the project's services and other resources. The project works with the local council on again, Senior Solutions. They want to tract actions related to relief from abuse orders, for one example.

6. Appointments to Open Positions. There were no applications received for open positions, so the SB did not take up this item.

7. Lister Request re: Errors and Omissions, 2020 Grand List. Cheryl Lindberg said that the request is to remedy an error related to current use allocation. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve the correction to the 2020 Grand List proposed by the Board of Listers relating to property at 742 Vermont Route 132, as described in the October 22, 2020 memo from the Board of Listers to the Selectboard, which memo is included in the Selectboard meeting packet. **Motion approved unanimously.**

8. Town Plan Implementation Plan. SB members discussed the reformatted implementation plan as drafted by Brochu. Rod Francis said that the Affordable Housing Subcommittee has been working on the issue of possible land suitable to affordable housing.

9. Village Center Designation Request. Rod Francis introduced Richard Amore of the Vermont Department of Housing & Community Development, who reviewed the presentation included in the SB meeting packet, which explained the process and benefits of a Village Center designation. Francis reviewed the proposed boundaries of the village center. Langhus asked if the school is part of the village center, would they qualify for possible grants to address the septic system. Francis and Amore said yes, that is a possibility. Layton said she likes the additions to the village center boundaries. Jaci Allen said Dan and Whits is already interested in some of the benefits of the program. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve the Resolution Authorizing the Application for Village Center Designation for the Town of Norwich, as contained in the Selectboard meeting packet. **Motion approved unanimously.**

10. Sept. Revenue/Expense Report. Arnold asked whether it will be a problem that the town won't be getting some of its projected revenue, such as for Tracy Hall rental. Durfee said that most of the revenue is property taxes, which remain steady. Also we are limiting expenditures where possible, so the decreased revenue should not be a significant problem. Arnold said he is interested in hearing about details such as Durfee's reporting about a recent grant to offset Rec Dept. losses due to COVID-19. Durfee talked about financial report; Durfee said he is paying smaller outside agency allocation at one payment; Durfee is working on how to handle the Cemetery Commission's finances going forward to streamline the process. Durfee said he will get the budget to SB members at their November 11 meeting. Durfee said that a cash receipts report was included in the packet, which should answer Brochu's questions about collected taxes.

11. Solaflect Contract. Durfee introduced the topic of Solaflect net metering agreement. He suggested that the budget process will be a good time to discuss credits. Durfee recommends that the town's legal counsel should review the proposed net metering agreement revisions. Layton said she has many questions about how to evaluate the proposed agreement. Linda Gray said that Solaflect was selected in 2013 based on a competitive bidding process. Gray said that Solaflect has done a very good job in making sure the town gets all possible solar credits. Bill Bender, of Solaflect, talked about the details of the net metering agreement. Langhus said he agrees that he is not the right person to review the contract because of his relationship with Solaflect personnel. Langhus said he will comment generally on this type of contract/agreement. Langhus gave an explanation of the "exclusivity" clause of the agreement. SB members discussed whether they want to have town counsel review the proposed contract changes. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to ask the Town Manager to consult legal counsel on the proposed amendments to the Net Metering Agreement offered by Bill Bender of Solaflect, inclusive of comments offered by the Energy Committee via Erich Rentz, and then to report back to the Selectboard at its November 11, 2020 meeting. **Motion approved (3 yes,**

0 no, Langhus abstained).

12. Winter Salt Bid. Durfee said that the DPW Director recommends the SB choose Cargill as a salt provider because it is a higher quality product. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve the purchase of winter salt from Cargill at a cost of 69.21 per ton, per the winter salt bid tabulation results contained in the Selectboard's meeting packet. **Motion approved unanimously.**

13. a. Policy Updates – Incident Reporting, Medical Treatment, and Investigation Policy. Layton asked if this draft policy represents a change from the one previously submitted to the SB. Durfee said no, it is just re-introduced after discussion with the union in recently concluded negotiations. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve as a first reading the draft Incident Reporting, Medical Treatment and Accident Investigation Policy, as presented in the Selectboard packet. **Motion approved unanimously.**

13. b. Transitional Return to Work Policy. Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve as a first reading the draft Transitional Return to Work Program Policy, as presented in the Selectboard packet. **Motion approved unanimously.**

14. NEMRC Bulk Time Agreement. SB members previously agreed to defer this item.

15. Town Manager Updates. Durfee had previously provided written updates. SB members briefly discussed the goals and process for the upcoming OML training.

16. Climate Change Designated Fund. Brochu requests 2 SB volunteers to draft a fund policy. Langhus volunteered to lead this effort and Brochu volunteers to assist.

17. Executive Session – Union Contract. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to find that premature general public knowledge about a pending labor relations agreement would clearly place the Selectboard at a substantial disadvantage. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to enter executive session under VSA §313(a)(1)(B) "labor relations agreements with employees" to discuss the union contract with the New England Police Benevolent Association and to include Herb Durfee in the executive session. **Motion approved unanimously.**

The SB moved into executive session at 9:41 pm.

Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to enter into public session. **Motion approved unanimously.** The SB entered public session at 9:57 pm.

Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to ratify the proposed Agreement Between Town of Norwich and New England Police Benevolent Association, dated July 1, 2018, provided the union drops its two outstanding grievances, as agreed by the union in an email from Sean McArdle to Susan Gilfillan, dated October 28, 2020. **Motion approved unanimously.**

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on November 11, 2020

Claudette Brochu
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – November 11, 2020 – Meeting at 6:30

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NORWICH SELECTBOARD.