

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, November 11, 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 (joined late – just after the vote to amend the agenda); Roger Arnold, Vice Chair; Robert Gere; John Langhus; Mary Layton; Herb Durfee, Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

There were about 5 people in the audience.

Also participating: Linda Cook, Police Chief Jennifer Frank, Tracey Hayes, Brie Swenson, Cheryl Lindberg, Emmanuel Tesone.

1. Approval of Agenda. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to amend the agenda to include reconsideration of the Woody Adams Parcel language that, for technical reasons, has to be amended and revoted. **Motion passed 4 to 0 (Brochu absent for this vote)**. Brochu joined the meeting just after the above motion and vote.

2. Public Comment. Langhus offered congratulation to Arnold on the birth of his son. Langhus also thanked Bonnie Munday, Judy Trussell, and all of the volunteers for a successful election process. Linda Cook asked if there will be a new COVID-19 update posted on the town's website. Durfee said that will be updated soon. Cook asked if the SB supports the Vermont Elder Justice project. Brochu said that no formal SB action has been taken. Cook asked if Tracy Hall is being opened to the public in the near future. Durfee said that it is not. Cook asked if the union contract has been signed yet and how much has the town paid in legal fees for that process. Durfee said the contract has been signed and is in effect; we will be able to tabulate all expenses after the last bill has been received, which should be soon. Police Chief Jennifer Frank spoke about events involving an unhomed person and his interactions with the Norwich Police Department (NPD). Frank said that, in multiple contacts with the person, NPD offered various services to them, including food, transportation, toiletries, and referral to social services, most of which the person refused. Arnold said that the SB owes Durfee an evaluation; they can take it up at their next meeting, if desired.

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

4. Letter Re: Cross-Border Travel. Langhus **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve for Selectboard signatures the draft letter to Michael Pieciak regarding cross-border travel from Vermont, as included in the Selectboard meeting packet and to mail that letter as addressed. **Motion failed (3 no – Arnold, Layton, Brochu; 2 yes – Gere, Langhus)**, per discussion as follows. Langhus said that this letter is meant to address restrictions for travel by Norwich school children to NH to do activities with other school district students and also for Hanover students to travel to VT for the same types of activities. This letter is meant to address particular difficulties encountered by Norwich & Hanover students in their interstate school district. Layton said she is nervous about opening up the restriction too much; she is concerned that this could give rise to outbreaks. Arnold said he'd like to amend this letter, although he supports the effort broadly. Arnold would like to take up a revised letter at the next meeting. Gere said he has been impressed at Hanover High School by students' adherence to distancing. Brochu said that VT has issued clear rules and the number of cases is at a record high level now. Brochu is not willing to support this letter. Arnold said it's appropriate to ask state government to reconsider. Brochu said she's satisfied with the state commissioner's answer to Town

Manger Durfee's inquiry. Langhus said he thinks it's good to add more voices to questioning the policy; he thinks the SB should advocate for our residents. Arnold said he is open to offering a different letter for consideration at a future meeting.

5. Mt. Ascutney Grant Results. Tracey Hayes shared her presentation about the Mt. Ascutney prevention grant. [This presentation will be included in the next possible SB packet.] Layton asked about sustainability of the grant activities. Hayes and Brie Swenson (Recreation Director) said that the Recreation Council is involved in continuing the work begun under the grant. Also, the PTO is working on becoming a free-standing officially recognized non-profit organization.

5a. Woody Adams Tract. Langhus **moved** (2nd Layton) to name the Adams' parcel and its associated contiguous forest conservation project the 'Woody Adams Conservation Forest' in perpetuity with appropriate durable and permanent signage at all trailheads and labeling on all town maps. **Motion approved unanimously.**

6. Renewal of NEMRC Bulk Time Agreement. Layton asked if this agreement will commit us to spending a set minimum amount. Durfee said that yes, it will, and even with a new Finance Director, we will need to use NEMRC's training services under the agreement. Those services can also be used by other town entities and departments, such as the Listers or the Town Clerk. Cheryl Lindberg asked how the expenses of the contract are being tracked. Durfee said it's being charged to a subcategory under Finance Director. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve the NEMRC Bulk Time Purchase Agreement, as contained in the Selectboard meeting packet, and to authorize the Town Manager to sign said agreement. **Motion approved unanimously.**

7. Policy Update – Incident Reporting... Layton **moved** (2nd Langhus) to approve as a second reading the draft Incident Reporting, Medical Treatment and Accident Investigation Policy, as presented in the Selectboard packet, and to adopt said policy. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Policy Update – Transitional Return to Work. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve as a second reading the draft Transitional Return to Work Program Policy, as presented in the Selectboard packet, and to adopt said policy. **Motion approved unanimously.**

8. Town Manager Report. Durfee gave updates: the professional audit has been completed; the union contract has been signed by the union and the town; a personnel matter involving an allegation of age discrimination is being investigated and Durfee can give the SB an update in a future executive session, if desired; Finance Director interviews have been concluded and we hope to choose a finalist in the next few days; Tracy hall's generator has been fixed and should hopefully last another 8 months. Durfee asked SB members their opinion of whether groups have to collect signatures on petitions if they are requesting more money than last year, or if they are new to the town appropriation process. Langhus said he thinks a brand new group should have to petition. Brochu said she would want a new group to at least speak to the SB. Layton and Arnold agreed. Brochu asked that the Town Clerk should find out from the Secretary of State if a petition is required or can it be waived. SB members agreed that they would like materials provided by any new group for a SB meeting packet. Durfee said that the upcoming Open Meeting Law training is going to be well-attended on 11-17-2020. Durfee is getting an air quality consultant to conduct an evaluation for Tracy Hall to find out what, if anything, is needed to bring the building up to code. Brochu asked when Bonnie Batchelder, the auditor, will be coming in to attend a SB meeting. Durfee said that depends on when the SB decides to have their budget meetings; he is working on scheduling Batchelder for the first meeting in December.

9. Budget Proposal & Capital Budget. Arnold asked about how the SB will plan out the work on
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the budget. Durfee gave the date of January 13th as the meeting when the SB must approve/finalize the budget. Brochu suggested the SB divide the departments to present to the SB on different days. Emmanuel Tesone, Finance Committee chair, asked for more information about that involvement the SB wants from the Finance Committee. Brochu asked if it's possible to have the non-capital budget departments /committees present at the next SB meeting. Durfee that yes, the department heads will come whenever the SB wants them. Durfee gave the SB the operating budget matrix tonight and will have the detailed budget back-up by the end of this week; the capital budget will be in SB hands by next week's meeting. Following discussion, SB members agreed to meet regarding the budget on 12/2/2020, 12/3/2020, 12/9/2020, 12/16/2020, and possibly on 12/23/2020. They will ask that department heads present to the SB on 12/2 and 12/3. Tesone shared with the SB some quick analysis of the draft budget; he also said he will confer with other Finance Committee members to develop further analysis to share with the SB.

10. Adjournment. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to adjourn. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on December 2, 2020

Claudette Brochu
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – November 18, 2020 – Meeting at 6:30

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