

Norwich Childcare Committee
Draft Minutes
November 1, 2021

Persons Present: Brian Loeb, Jamie Rosenfeld, Neil Odell, Mary Layton, Rebecca Holcombe, Linda Cook

1. Layton moved to **approve the agenda** as amended, second by Rosenfeld, Vote Yes: Unanimous. The amendment was to remove the Provider perspective item.
2. Layton moved to **approve the 10/4/2021 minutes**, second by Loeb, Vote Yes: Unanimous.
3. **Public Comments: None**
4. Rosenfeld moved to **accept Correspondence** from Taryn Morrissey (a Power Point slide deck) and Sara Kobylenski (email message). Second by Loeb. Vote Yes: Unanimous.
5. The Committee agreed to **table the Act 11 PreK Study Report**. The link needs to be copied and pasted to be live. Loeb stated that Brie Swenson is doing strategic planning within the Recreation Department regarding after care and support for children, including collaboration with the Norwich Public Library.
6. Layton shared perspective on the **list of appropriations** for direct and indirect support of childcare by Norwich voters. The support of \$4,348 for scholarships in Article 17 to the Child Care Center of Norwich, and a portion of the Norwich Recreation budget can be considered as direct support. Other articles support the growth and development of children in various ways besides direct payment for childcare. It was clear from perusal of this list that funding for direct and indirect support of childcare through the monetary articles has occurred by petition from organizations rather than by direct action by the Selectboard. It was suggested by Loeb that the Committee discuss the possibility in the final report among our recommendations that direct action be taken by the Selectboard to create a grant fund with seed money of \$10,000 with specific requirements of providers to create childcare slots for Norwich residents.
7. Loeb reported that **additional findings from the Parent Survey** fell within earlier established patterns. Rosenfeld suggested that graphs and tables would convey the information in an effective way in the report.
8. The Committee had a **wide ranging discussion of possible recommendations**, possible unintended consequences of certain actions especially in terms of regional equity, how to parse uncertainty of federal and state actions, and to try to identify the key points of explaining the child care issue and the recommendations. Holcombe asked what “stood

out for people.” Some of the answers are these: The low salaries for teachers which do not provide a living wage or benefits are a major impediment. The very high proportion of labor in childcare costs vs capital and overhead, especially for infant care is problematic. Parents who are forced or choose to cut back on employment to care for children are not contributing to the economy or supporting the tax base. The lack of affordable housing is an important stressor for families that impacts what they can pay for childcare and whether they can access it in their community. The effect of government subsidies for pre-K has had the effect on the industry of forcing out homecare providers who used to be able to take advantage of “cross subsidizing” infant care with that of preschoolers who are less labor intensive to care for. Parental leave is an important aspect of childcare, both maternity leave and flexible leave for children who are ill, need to go to medical appointments, etc. What is reasonable to ask of taxpayers who may be adversely affected by a new state education pupil weighting formula? What future funding may be available via the state or federal government and how likely are the funding mechanisms to actually address the problem of lack of childcare? Is it possible to have partnerships between municipalities and providers to provide more care? How is it possible to deliver a public good through a market? What use are subsidies if there are not childcare slots available? What is the balance or structure considering families, public and private entities? Does the report require a Glossary of Terms?

9. **The Committee reviewed the recommended actions in the draft report and talked about how to edit, restructure, and consolidate the final report as a whole to make it more readable.** It was recommended to include the slide deck by Taryn Morrissey or a more current version if available. Recommendation sections reviewed in the draft included Parental Leave, Raising Salaries of Early Educators, Restructuring Methods of Economic Support for the Childcare Industry to ensure the goal of higher salaries and more slots; the Need for State Involvement; Considering Equitable Solutions; Considering Advocacy by the Selectboard directed to the State Legislature and the VT Congressional delegation; Creation of a Norwich Childcare Grants Fund; Creation of a dedicated childcare page to be offered on the Town Website. Rosenfeld will work on general organization of the report and other Committee members will write sections to send to her.
10. **If the Selectboard decides to extend the work** of the Committee or to recommend a new one, a recommendation is to develop a Childcare Grant Fund which would be set up to pay providers to provide a certain number of childcare slots for Norwich residents.
11. The Committee agreed that **the single agenda item for the next meeting** will be to work on the second draft of the Final Report.
12. Loeb **moved to adjourn**, second by Layton, Vote Yes: Unanimous