

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, April 28, 2021 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: Roger Arnold, Chair; Mary Layton, Vice Chair; Claudette Brochu; Marcia Calloway; Robert Gere; Herb Durfee, Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

There were about 27 people in the audience.

Also participating: Linda Cook, Elissa Close, Rod Francis, Pam Smith, Seth Robertson, Cheryl Lindberg, Sue Pitiger, Irv Thomae, Joshua Bohar, Nancy Osgood, Jaci Allen, Brian Loeb, Stuart Richards, Paul Manganiello, Deborah Hannam, Alka Dev, Jennifer Roby, Charlotte Metcalf, Richard Adams.

1. Approval of Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Calloway) to approve the agenda. **Motion approved unanimously.**
2. Public Comment. No public comment was offered.
3. Consent Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Calloway) to approve the consent agenda with the exception of the A/P warrants, minutes, and correspondence from Elissa Close and Stuart Richards. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the A/P warrants. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Calloway) to accept correspondence from Elissa Close. **Motion approved unanimously.** Calloway **moved** (2nd Layton) to accept correspondence from Stuart Richards. **Motion approved unanimously.** Calloway **moved** (2nd Layton) that the 4-14-2021 regular meeting minutes be corrected on page 36 of the Selectboard meeting packet to read that Calloway cited 24 VSA §1233. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the 4-14-2021 regular Selectboard meeting minutes. **Motion approved unanimously.**
4. Town Manager's Report. Durfee said this is Seth Robertson's last SB meeting; he is starting a new job next week. Seth Robertson spoke about the financial dashboard document, as included in the meeting packet. Cheryl Lindberg asked about payment to the school of tax revenue. Pam Smith asked a question about biodiesel fuel. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Linda Gray as the town's representative to the Inter-municipal Regional Energy Coordinator Steering Committee for a one-year term ending on April 30, 2022. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to authorize the expenditure of up to \$49,220.00 from the DPW Equipment Designated Fund for the purchase of a 2021 Ford F550, as authorized by the Selectboard on May 27, 2020. **Motion approved unanimously.**
5. Appointments to Committees. Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to appoint Matthew Stuart to the Development Review Board for a 3-year term expiring on April 30, 2024. **Motion approved unanimously.** Susan Pitiger spoke in support of her application to serve on the DRB. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Susan Pitiger to the Development Review Board for a 3-year term expiring on April 30, 2024. **Motion approved unanimously.** Irv Thomae spoke in support of his application for the ECFiber Board, gave some history of the organization, and said that there can be 2 alternates appointed by the town. Joshua Bohar spoke in support of his application to the ECFiber Board. Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to appoint Irv Thomae as representative to the ECFiber Governing Board for a 1-year term expiring on April 30, 2022. **Motion approved (4 yes; Calloway abstain).** Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to appoint Joshua Bohar as 1st Alternate Representative and Rob Gere as 2nd Alternate Representative to the ECFiber Governing Board for 1-year terms expiring on April 30, 2022. **Motion approved (4 yes; Gere recused himself).** Nancy Osgood spoke in support of her

application to the Historic Preservation Commission. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Nancy Osgood to the Historic Preservation Commission for a three-year term expiring on April 30, 2024. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Maggie Boone to the Historic Preservation Commission for a 3-year term expiring on April 30, 2024. **Motion approved unanimously.** Jaci Allen and Elissa Close spoke in support of their respective applications for Planning Commission. Brian Loeb spoke in support of Jaci Allen's application to the Planning Commission. Stuart Richards said that he encourages new applicants to join the Planning Commission and also wants Jaci Allen to be able to continue. Richards suggested expending membership of the Planning Commission to 9 members. Calloway moved to appoint Elissa Close to the Planning Commission for a 4-year term expiring April 30, 2025. There was no second of the motion; motion failed. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to appoint Jacqueline Allen to the Planning Commission for a four-year term ending on April 30, 2025. **Motion approved (4 yes; Calloway- no).** Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Rod Francis as representative to the TRORC for a 1-year term expiring on April 30, 2021. **Motion approved (4 yes; Calloway- abstain).** Rod Francis said that Jeff Lubell could not attend tonight's meeting because he is at the TRORC meeting, where he serves as Norwich's alternate representative. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to appoint Jeff Lubell as alternate representative to the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission for a 1-year term expiring on April 30, 2021. **Motion approved unanimously.** Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to appoint Aaron Lamperti and Ernie Ciccotelli to the Article 36 Task Force. **Motion approved unanimously.**

6. Police Chief Hiring Update & Discussion. Durfee summarized his memo, as contained in the Meeting packet, and said that he will be appointing Sgt. Keeling to Interim Chief for one year while the town conducts discussions about how to move forward. Linda Cook asked if the Officer in Charge (OIC) position currently occupied by Keeling is a salaried or hourly position and was Chief Frank paid for her extra time while working as police chief. Paul Manganiello said he supports Durfee's decision to put a hold on the police chief hiring. Manganiello said we need to examine what is the proper role for police. Stuart Richards quoted some police statistics as listed in the 2020 Town Report. Richards said it's a mistake to postpone hiring a new police chief. Deborah Hannam agreed with Richards, in saying she disagrees with the decision to delay hiring a police chief; Hannam said she is worried about public safety. Alka Dev said she has felt shaken by her interactions with Norwich's police force; she wants to hear more about what we're going to do during the interim before hiring. Jennifer Roby said she supports the interim chief plan and she looks forward to the upcoming discussion. Durfee explained that the police chief is a salaried position and gets some on-call pay by not overtime pay. Sgt. Keeling's pay structure as interim chief has not yet been determined. Durfee said the interim chief will be part of the upcoming discussions, along with any other police department members. Calloway said we need to make sure people feel safe in the community; she wants to move expeditiously to look at what to do in the future. Layton expressed concern about police staffing levels; she prefers for the town to go ahead and hire a police chief, rather than wait. Gere asked if the interim chief will have the same authority as a regular chief. Durfee said yes. Gere asked if the interim chief will have the same influence as a regular department head. Durfee said the fact that Sgt. Keeling is in the union bargaining unit complicates things. Brochu said she sees an opportunity to explore possibilities for using technology to help with speed control, for example. Calloway said it would be more straightforward to go ahead and hire a new chief and continue discussions. Layton said she agrees that we should proceed with hiring a new chief. Layton **moved** (2nd Calloway) that the Town Manager hire a full-time police chief now. **Motion failed (yes- Layton, Calloway; no- Brochu, Gere, Arnold).** Gere said he's worried that Norwich has had difficulty hiring department head positions. Arnold said he supports Durfee's proposal to hire an interim chief. Arnold asked fellow SB members to bring to upcoming discussions what they have heard and what they have read, not only what they think. Brochu suggested that the SB use a facilitator for the public discussions. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) that the town manager proceed with his interim hiring plan. **Motion approved (4 to 1; no-Calloway).** Charlotte Metcalf asked how it's possible that, without a town vote, Norwich Selectboard Minutes – 04/28/2021 Mtg

we are reducing the number of police officers. Richard Adams thanked the SB and town manager for listening and acting respectfully in an effort to take care of everyone. Alka Dev said she agrees with Adams. Dev said we can use scientific methods to determine the community's needs.

Arnold **moved** (2nd Layton) to table the remaining agenda items and discuss them at a special meeting on May 5, 2021. **Motion approved unanimously.**

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:59 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on May 12, 2021

Roger Arnold
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – May 5, 2021 – Meeting at 6:30

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