

Minutes of the Special Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, June 2, 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; Marcia Calloway; Robert Gere; Herb Durfee, Town Manager.

There were about 14 people in the audience.

Also participating: Elliot Harik, Peter Orner, Andy Scherer, Shoshana Hort.

1. Approval of Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Calloway) to approve the agenda. **Motion approved unanimously.**
2. Public Comment. No public comment was offered.
3. VTrans Bicycle & Pedestrian Grant Application re: Beaver Meadow Sidewalk. Arnold explained this special meeting is being held in order to discuss the Beaver Meadow Road sidewalk (BMR) grant applications, which is due June 4, 2021. Durfee said he recently learned that this next grant application has to cover both engineering and construction (Phases II & III), and we cannot separate the two. Since the beginning of the project, we have been planning to do each phase separately and have been discussing it with the public and SB that way. Durfee recommended that the SB not proceed with the grant at this time, because the town isn't ready to commit to the construction phase yet. The town should take the time to discuss and decide whether to move forward with the sidewalk construction. If the town did the grant now and later decided not to proceed with the construction, the town would have to pay back to the state any funds granted to the town. That is what happened with the Church Street sidewalk project. Durfee said that during the time until next year's grant deadline, we should complete a sidewalk inventory to determine the status/needs to current sidewalks in town and determine the gaps in sidewalk coverage; incorporate sidewalks in the capital budget and plan process and the FY budget process; and consider a special article for the 2022 Town Meeting for the spending needed. Layton agreed with Durfee's recommendation to wait a year to make grant application after the capital budget and plan. Layton said we can build a stronger case for the sidewalk by doing that. Calloway agreed to postpone application. Gere agreed to wait and Arnold said this sidewalk is an appropriate discussion for capital budget planning. Elliot Harik said that town citizens have worked hard to involve fellow residents in the process of proposing the BMR project. Peter Orner said he thinks the SB should proceed with the grant because the community has worked on this for some time and the project has widespread support. Andy Scherer asked if the VTrans Bike/Ped Grant is available every year. Scherer also asked, if we need Phase II work completed in order to get the public's support of the sidewalk, how do we fund that work. Durfee said the town could raise our own funds for Phase II through capital budgeting, or otherwise, or possibly find another grant opportunity. Durfee said that the VTrans Bike/Ped grants are available every year. Scherer said he thinks there is ample support in the community at this time and he hopes the SB maintains momentum on the project. Shoshana Hort said the citizens working on the sidewalk have worked collaboratively with town officials. Hort said she understands why the town would not proceed at this time, but wants to know what is the SB's plan for next steps; Hort wants this to keep moving forward and not be dropped. Brochu **moved** (2nd Calloway) to opt not to apply for the VTrans Bike/Ped grant for the Beaver Meadow sidewalk project at this time. **Motion approved unanimously.**
4. Town Manager Report. Durfee said the revised packet contains the financial reports; we are in good shape on tax revenue, slightly over on spending, but that includes some full-year expenses, Norwich Selectboard Minutes – 06/02/2021 Special Mtg

which are paid all at once. Our tax revenue is on pace with other years. The Finance Office Director position is covered by a temporary person (John Casey) starting today, who will be working 20 hours per week, just as Seth Robertson did before he left recently. Our latest Finance Director search has yielded fewer than 6 applicants. The yearly pre-audit process has begun. The A/P warrant process issue has been addressed such that, going forward, Durfee is working with Becky to have Becky print an "edit" list for Durfee's review before printing the final A/P warrant and checks. Durfee reviews the edit list, Becky makes any corrections or changes necessary, and then the final warrant and checks can be printed. Durfee said he didn't appoint an official second-in-charge person when he was on vacation recently, because Durfee remained available by phone and email while away and instead made arrangement with the finance office and the Assistant to the Town Manager. Layton said she thinks it's important for Durfee to name a second in command when he is away from the office. SB members discussed options for moving forward in the Finance Office. SB members agreed the town needs longer-term stability and solutions. Calloway asked about delinquent taxpayers; Durfee said the Sb recently updated its tax collection policy, which will be followed. Gere said he supports moving forward with recruitment firm to search for a Finance Director, as soon as possible. Durfee said he will contact Municipal Resources, Inc. and VCCT to ask about recruitment services. Calloway suggested we pursue the option of possibly having the Town Treasurer fill in as Finance Director temporarily. Calloway **moved** (2nd Brochu) to investigate the possibility of asking Cheryl Lindberg to serve temporarily in the Finance Director position while simultaneously pursuing a search for a permanent Finance Director. Brochu said she thinks it's premature to pursue the treasurer as an option. Calloway **withdrew motion** and Brochu **withdrew second**. Brochu asked Arnold to please talk to Lindberg about the possibility of Lindberg filling in as Finance Director temporarily.

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:28 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on June 23, 2021

Roger Arnold
Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – June 9, 2021 – Meeting at 6:30

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