

Minutes of the Special Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, February 9, 2022, at 6:30 pm

This meeting was conducted via teleconference using ZOOM according to Open Meeting Law requirements. Members present: Roger Arnold, Chair; Mary Layton, Vice Chair; Claudette Brochu; Marcia Calloway; Robert Gere; Rod Francis, Interim Town Manager.

Also participating: Brooke Dingledine, Mary Gorman, Linda Cook, Rebecca Holcombe.

1. Approval of Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the agenda as amended to add consideration of the Town Manager contract, separation of the correspondence from the consent agenda, and review of the town meeting presentation. **Motion approved unanimously.**

1a. Town Manager Contract. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to enter executive session under 1 VSA §313(a)(3) to consider the appointment or employment of a public employee. **Motion approved unanimously.** The SB moved into executive session at 6:36 pm.

Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to enter public session. **Motion approved unanimously.** The SB moved into public session at 7:00 pm. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the Town Manager employment contract with Rod Francis and authorize Roger Arnold to sign said contract on behalf of the Selectboard. **Motion approved (4 yes; Calloway-no).** Arnold announced that Rod Francis has been selected as TM (Town Manager). Arnold said the SB is very pleased to make this selection and are impressed with the management team that Francis has developed. Layton said she's excited to work with Francis and thinks he will be very effective. Brochu thanked Francis for his work as interim; she said he has done a great job. Gere said he is very pleased that Francis has accepted the position. Calloway said although she voted "no", the SB will continue to work with the TM closely.

2. Public Comment. Linda Cook asked a question about correspondence. Brooke Dingledine, and attorney from Randolph, Vermont, said that she was contacted by neighbors of the proposed solar array on Upper Loveland. Dingledine expressed concern about preferred site support letters, such as the one issued by Norwich. She cautioned the town to be careful in considering requests for support of solar installations.

3. Consent Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Calloway) to approve the consent agenda minus correspondence. **Motion approved unanimously.** Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to receive correspondence from Neil Fulton & Cheryl Lindberg regarding a resolution honoring Henry Scheier. **Motion approved unanimously.** After brief discussion, Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to approve the Resolution Honoring Henry Scheier, as included in the Selectboard meeting packet. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Calloway) to receive correspondence from Kate Barlow regarding her resignation from the Town Service Officer position. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to receive correspondence from Geoff Martin regarding the Regional Energy Coordinator Report. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Calloway) to receive correspondence from Ryan Gardner regarding his resignation from the Recreation Council. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to receive correspondence from Chris Katucki regarding the 2022 Town Meeting warning. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Calloway) to receive correspondence from Heather & Jay Benson, et al. regarding the Upper Loveland Road solar project. **Motion approved unanimously.** Calloway said that she would like the SB to contact the PUC to ask if the SB can withdraw its letter of support for the Upper Loveland solar project. Brochu said she'd like to have a discussion at a future SB meeting so the topic can be properly warned, rather than talking about it during correspondence. Arnold said that the SB should respect the prior work of the Planning Commission. Brochu suggested that a SB member could

reach out to the Planning Commission to get their thoughts. Brooke Dingledine spoke about the PUC's process concerning preferred site. Mary Gorman said that she wants the SB to take up the issue at a future meeting to reconsider the project.

4. Town Manager's Report. Francis mentioned several items, including town's server update progress, which is now complete so the town is now completely on the new server. The next phase begins soon, which involves replacing/updating computer workstations. We are looking at options for higher-speed internet service. The new Finance Office assistant has been working very well. The Tracy Hall fire suppression system is leaking and we haven't been able to locate the leak yet; we have installed a back-up compressor to maintain sufficient pressure until we can locate the leak and repair it – hopefully in the spring when the weather warms up. At DPW, the new director is working on updating processes and cleaning and organizing the garage. We have received a draft audit from our auditor and have put portions of that in the town report, per usual. The Town Report has gone out to the printer and thanks to Jean Lawe, Doug Lufkin for helping us immensely. Arnold said it's good to hear that the new DPW director is getting up to speed and he asked if we are still getting help from our DPW director consultant. Francis said that yes, we are. Linda Cook congratulated Francis and said she hoped that Francis would not have to serve as Planning Director for much longer.

5. Presentation from Childcare Committee. Arnold described the Childcare Committee and their work and introduced Rebecca Holcombe, chair of the committee. Holcombe shared her screen to review a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the Childcare Committee's findings, as detailed in their report and included in the SB meeting packet. SB members discussed the report and possible ways to address the needs and issues identified by the committee. Holcombe said that some committee members are interested in continuing this work, but they agreed that the SB should solicit applications for additional participants if the SB wants the committee to continue. Holcombe said in closing that there's no way to fix the childcare problem without paying the providers adequately. She said she hopes this report helps the SB find a way forward on this issue.

6. Discussion of Ongoing Litigation, Katucki v. Town of Norwich. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to find that premature general public knowledge about ongoing litigation in Katucki v. Town of Norwich would place the Selectboard at a substantial disadvantage because it would disclose legal strategy. **Motion approved unanimously.** Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to enter executive session under 1 VSA §313(a)(1)(E) and invite the Town Manager and town's counsel to attend. **Motion approved unanimously.** The Selectboard entered executive session at 8:45 pm.

Layton **moved** (2nd Calloway) to enter public session. **Motion approved unanimously.** The Selectboard entered public session at 9:43 pm.

6a. (added agenda item) Selectboard's Town Meeting Presentation. Brochu asked other SB members for feedback on the draft presentation for Town Meeting. Calloway said it's overall nicely done. She suggested more focus on Article 7 and explain that this proposed article would give the voters more control over the reserved funds and Article 7 will allow us to be financially more prepared for unforeseen expenses than before. SB members discussed how to address disinformation posted on the listserv. Arnold said that he and Brochu will record a condensed presentation to be posted on the town's website for people to reference. SB members discussed ways to clarify and edit the presentation.

7. Adjourn. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to adjourn. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:22 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on February 23, 2022

Roger Arnold, Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – February 23, 2022 – Meeting at 6:30

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