

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, March 23, 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, Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

Also participating: Doug Wilberding, Cheryl Lindberg, Fielding Essensa, Pam Smith.

1. Approval of Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the agenda. **Motion approved unanimously.**
2. Public & Selectboard Comment. Doug Wilberding commented on the Trustees of Public Funds policy. Wilberding said their proposed policy is from the VLCT model policy.
3. Consent Agenda. Calloway **moved** (2nd Brochu) to pull the Eanet and Benson letters from the consent agenda. **Motion approved unanimously.** Calloway said she would like Eanet to resubmit her letter without the term NIMBY in it. Calloway said she thinks the Town should revisit the solar site topic, based on the allegation that the site plan has been changed. Arnold **moved** (2nd Layton) to accept correspondence from Eanet and Benson. **Motion approved unanimously.** Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to approve the consent agenda. **Motion approved unanimously.**
4. Town Manager Report. Town Manager Rod Francis said that inflation has exceeded our estimate by a significant margin. Our fuel prices have increase dramatically, for example. The Town is in the process of renegotiating our contract with Casella Waste Management; we expect a price increase. We will need to consider raising transfer station fees, as a result. We are entering the phase of replacing town employees' computer workstations over the next month and are also looking to improve our internet access. Francis said he included a table showing DPW staffing levels at the back of his Town Manager report. Calloway aside if we've already contracted for locked-in price of road repair materials; Francis said yes, we have. Fielding Essensa said he is very pleased to announce that Lacey Millican has accepted the position of Finance Assistant, so the office is now fully staffed. Calloway asked if we've been advertising all our open positions in the Valley News. Francis said yes, we have. Pam Smith said she has had trouble on some of the Town's dirt roads lately. After a brief discussion about the need for new lockers at the DPW garage, Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to approve the purchase of new lockers for the DPW crew from Schoollockers.com in the amount of \$5,343.44. **Motion approved unanimously.**
5. Financials. Fielding Essensa, Finance Director, said he has provided monthly financials in the SB meeting packet. Essensa said we have spent 68% of our yearly budget, which is where we would expect to be at this point in the fiscal year. We will still need to be careful with our spending, because of inflation – 7.9% is the latest figure. Essensa shared his screen, showing a draft financial dashboard. Calloway said she thinks the tool is great. She said we need to be pragmatic and conservative about our spending. Brochu said she likes the dashboard and would like to know more about the details. Layton said she appreciates the dashboard and thinks it's very clear; Arnold agreed. Francis said the Town needs to find a new auditor as soon as possible. He said we'd like to find an auditor that will look closely at the books and offer support in devleop8ing and honing financial policies. We currently lack clarity in some of our financial policies, and we want someone who can consult with us to develop new policies. Essensa gave the example of tax collection – there is no written policy existing to provide guidance and structure. SB members discussed the possibility of

seeking a new auditor and consulting help. SB members agreed that Francis and Essensa will develop an RFP/RFQ to show the SB for input.

6. Renew Liquor Licenses. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to recess the Selectboard meeting. **Motion approved unanimously.** Brochu **moved** (2nd Calloway) to convene as the Norwich Liquor Commission. **Motion approved unanimously.** The Selectboard recessed and reconvened as the Norwich Liquor Commission at 7:52 pm. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to approve liquor license applications for Frasers General Store, Inc. (Dan & Whit's), L'Elephant Vert, LLC (Carpenter & Main Restaurant), Green Visions, LLC (Norwich Inn), and King Arthur Flour. **Motion approved unanimously.** Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to close the Norwich Liquor Commission session and reconvene the Selectboard meeting. **Motion approved unanimously.** The Selectboard reconvened at 7:52 pm.

7. Wastewater Feasibility Study Engineering Services Agreement. Francis explained that the total cost of the wastewater study will be reimbursed by the State of Vermont through a revolving loan. Calloway expressed concerns about this loan program. Francis addressed those concerns. Brochu said that the School Board is looking forward to the results of the feasibility study. Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to approve the Town Manager signing on behalf of the town an Engineering Services Agreement (ESA) with Dufresne Group for a Wastewater Feasibility Study for the Village and adjacent areas in the amount of \$98,000. **Motion approved (4- yes; Calloway- no).** Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the Town Manager signing on behalf of the town a Vermont Water and Wastewater Revolving Loan Fund Funding Application to cover the cost of the Wastewater Feasibility Study for the Village and adjacent areas in the amount of \$98,000. **Motion approved (4- yes; Calloway- no).**

8. Rule Requiring Wearing Face Coverings Indoors in Public Spaces. SB members discussed whether to extend the mask rule in Norwich and what messaging to put out to the public. SB members agreed to allow the mandate to lapse, but recommend and welcome masks indoors in Norwich. Brochu **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the extension of the Norwich Face Covering Rule to April 25, 2022. **Motion failed unanimously.** Brochu **moved** (2nd Gere) to authorize the Town Manager to offer signage to town businesses that say masks are welcome. **Motion approved unanimously.**

9. Selectboard Goals & Calendar Setting. Francis shared his screen, showing SB members a draft planning tool for structuring the SB's work over the upcoming meetings in the fiscal year. Arnold then shared his screen to show an online Gantt chart tool. SB members discussed the presented tools and how the upcoming meetings might be organized, including future SB meeting topics, such as ARPA.

10. Employee Complaint Pursuant to Town Personnel Policies. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to make a finding that premature public knowledge of the Selectboard's position relative to employee relations would place the town at a substantial disadvantage. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to enter executive session under 1 VSA § 313(a)(1)(F) – "...confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services..." – to discuss a personnel issue and to include the Town Manager. **Motion approved unanimously.** Robert Gere left the meeting after voting on the motion and before entering executive session. The Selectboard entered executive session at 9:29 pm. Layton **moved** (2nd Calloway) to enter public session. **Motion approved unanimously.** The SB entered public session at 10:15 pm.

11. Adjourn. Brochu **moved** (2nd Calloway) to adjourn. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:16 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on April 13, 2022

Roger Arnold, Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – April 13, 2022 – Meeting at 6:30

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