

Minutes of the Special Selectboard Meeting of  
Wednesday, January 5, 2022, at 6:30 pm

This meeting was conducted via teleconference using ZOOM and in person in Tracy Hall, in order to comply with Open Meeting Law requirements while providing remote access for attendees. Members present: Roger Arnold, Chair; Mary Layton, Vice Chair; Claudette Brochu; Marcia Calloway; Robert Gere; Rod Francis, Interim Town Manager; Miranda Harris Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

Also participating: Chris Katucki, Peg Merrens, Craig Layne, Fielding Essensa, Linda Cook, Pam Smith.

1. Approval of Agenda. Layton **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Brochu) to approve the agenda with the addition of Certificate of Highway Mileage. **Motion approved unanimously.** SB members agreed to take up the matter during the Interim Town Manager's report.
2. Public Comment. Chris Katucki asked for an update on the Town Manager search process. Arnold said he got a call from our VLCT consultant that the reference check will be completed very soon.
3. Consent Agenda. Brochu **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Layton) to approve the consent agenda. **Motion approved unanimously.**
4. National Opioid Settlement. Francis said the opioid settlement enrollment date has been extended and if Norwich wants to participate, we need to sign up. Francis suggested that the SB should authorize someone (such as the Town Mgr. or SB Chair) to sign the participation form. After some discussion, Brochu **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Layton) to designate the Interim Town Manager as the authorized signatory for the Town of Norwich for the purposes of any stipulation or settlement concerning the Janssen Settlement. **Motion approved (4-yes; Calloway- abstain).**
5. Interim Town Manager Report. Francis said we have filled one DPW Equipment Operator position and have engaged a new DPW Director to start in 2 weeks. Calloway asked if the roads are being taken care of and referenced a letter she received complaining about road conditions on Christmas Day. Francis said he hasn't received any complaints about the road conditions. Francis said we have provided all materials to the auditor that she has requested. Francis said the Recreation Department has suspended the after school programming temporarily until we have better information about COVID rates in our schools. Francis said the town buildings remain closed to the public and we are not hosting outside events. Brochu **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Layton) to approve the 2022 highway mileage certification. **Motion approved unanimously.**
6. Woody Adams. Francis said this conveyance is the next logical step in the ongoing process of preserving the Woody Adams area. The proposed action is to post a notice of sale. Calloway asked about the distinction between permanent protection and development restrictions. Peg Merrens, of Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) spoke about the proposed transfer, explaining that this would prevent any future development on the property. Brochu **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Layton) to approve the Town's conveyance to Upper Valley Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board of a conservation easement on the Woody Adams Conservation Forest, the Gile Mountain parcel and the Town Forest Parcel by way of Grant of Development Rights, Conservation Restrictions and Public Access Easement; the posting and publication of the Notice of Sale of Municipal Real Estate for the same; and to authorize the Town Manager or Interim Town Manager to execute the conservation easement as well as any other closing documents related to that easement, if no petition is submitted

objecting to said conveyance. **Motion approved unanimously.**

7. FY23 CIP Commitments. SB members discussed proposed CIP items, as included in the meeting packet. Fielding Essensa gave an overview of the proposed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), as included in the SB meeting packet. SB members discussed gift-giving to the Town and its implications. SB members agreed to consider the CIP at their next meeting, possibly approving it after further discussion.

8. Undesignated Fund Management. Francis said in 2020 the SB developed a policy to manage surplus funds, but no article was put before the voters to establish a reserve fund. Francis summarized the contents of his memo with attachments, as included in the SB meeting packet. Francis said his memo recommends proposing articles in the 2022 town meeting warning. SB members discussed options for going forward, including the descriptions of possible warning articles as contained in Francis's memo. Linda Cook said she'd like to see the details of where the budget surplus comes from. Cook would like to see the surplus funds returned to the voters. Pam Smith said we shouldn't count on having any particular surplus amount before we have a finished auditor's report.

9. FY23 Budget: Revised Estimates for Total Budget Increase and Tax Rate Considerations. Francis summarized proposed changes to the draft FY23 budget, as included in the SB meeting packet, resulting in a 5.02% increase to the operating budget. Essensa gave a range of possible budget increases and asked for SB feedback. SB members discussed options for budget spending. Essensa said the more conservative budget approach, as approved by consensus by SB members, with monetary articles will result in a tax increase of 5.61%; or 5.92% without monetary articles. The total town expenditures would be \$4,958,865.00 (not including monetary articles) or \$5,364,133.00 including estimated monetary articles of \$405,268.00.

10. After some discussion, Brochu **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Layton) to approve the Norwich municipal operating budget of \$4,958,865.00. **Motion approved unanimously.**

11. Draft Warning. SB members agreed to table agenda item #11.

12. Adjourn. Gere **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Brochu) to adjourn. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:32 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on June 22, 2022

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Roger Arnold, Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – January 12, 2022 – Meeting at 6:30

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