

Minutes of the Special Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, December 8, 2021 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: Fielding Essensa, Linda Cook, Cheryl Lindberg.

1. Approval of Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the agenda. **Motion approved unanimously.**
2. Public Comment. No public comment was offered.
3. Consent Agenda. Calloway asked to pull the Eric Picconi correspondence from the consent agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) moved to approve the consent agenda, minus the Eric Picconi correspondence. **Motion approved unanimously.** Calloway said she has drafted a revised animal control ordinance and would like it to be included in a future SB meeting for consideration. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to accept correspondence from Eric Picconi regarding a Huntley dog incident. **Motion approved unanimously.**
4. Update on Town Manager Search. Arnold said the SB and town interview committee will meet tomorrow to interview 2 candidates.
5. Temporary Rule for the Wearing of Masks in the Town of Norwich. Francis gave a brief synopsis of his memo as contained in the SB meeting packet. Francis said the question before the SB is whether to proceed with enacting a mask mandate. The draft mandate in the packet has been reviewed by town's legal counsel. Francis said Thetford has a mandate, as do Lebanon and Hanover. Hartford does not. Calloway said she is in favor of a mask rule but thinks this rule goes beyond what is enabled by state law. Layton said she supports this rule as a statement of what we think is important for the health of the town. Gere said he thinks the rule will give business owners cover if they want to ask customers and employees to wear masks; he supports it. Brochu said this rule would send the message that science supports the wearing of masks to limit the spread of Covid. She supports enacting a rule, but wants to hear more about Marcia's criticisms of the rule. Marcia discussed several aspects of the rule with which she said she does not agree. Brochu said she is in support of the way the rule is written. Francis said this rule is substantially similar to the one enacted by Burlington and the VLCT model rule, which have been vetted by municipal attorneys. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to adopt the Rule Requiring Wearing Face Coverings Indoors in Public Spaces, as included in the Selectboard meeting packet, effective December 10, 2021 through April 30, 2022 **Motion approved (4 yes; Calloway abstained).**
6. Interim Town Manager Report. Francis said that Finance Office staff continue to work on overhauling processes and procedures. Grant management is one area the office is working on in particular. Finance has been working on the audit. The town has been switching our email over to Office 365 and there have been some difficulties, but they are being remedied. The next phase is to update the town's server, after which we will begin replacing other hardware, including workstations. The Tracy Hall (TH) boilers are 25-plus years old; we now have to find replacement parts on eBay. The town needs to think about replacement. We have begun interviewing candidates for the DPW Director position. We currently have a staff of 4, out of a possible 7, including the director position.

We have gotten one bid from a local contractor for plowing, but it was significantly higher than we had expected. Francis said the area towns are almost all seeking to fill multiple vacancies in their PW departments. The town received 2 bids/proposals regarding the police review project. Brochu asked if the town will pay for an employee to obtain their CDL. Francis said that is an option. Brochu asked if the CCI ticketing system was working well. Francis said CCI has been responsive; they have been capable and professional. Brochu asked about the status of the audit. Fielding Essensa said he has been responding to the auditor's requests for documentation, but he will have to reach out to the auditor to ask for a date the audit will be completed. Cheryl Lindberg said the A/PO warrants were not in the SB packet. Brochu said she is comfortable with having Arnold review the A/P warrant and signing it.

7. Department of Public Works: Operating Budget. [for details of the DPW draft budget, see the SB meeting packet for this meeting]. Francis introduced the topic of the DPW operating budget. Francis said this department's budget is the most directly affected by recent price fluctuations and increases. Therefore, the proposed budget includes price increases that are higher than CPI. There is one dump truck that is having serious problems and it will be up to the new DPW Director to decide whether to replace it sooner than originally planned. The proposed DPW budget maintains the current number of staff positions. Essensa shared his screen showing the draft DPW budget, as included in the SB meeting packet. SB members discussed the draft budget, including issues involving possible ARPA funding and allocations to designated funds. SB members agreed that they have no major concerns with the DPW budget, as drafted.

8. Update on Vehicle Replacement Schedule and Police Cruiser Replacement Schedule. Essensa introduced the 2 options he presented in the SB regarding the police car replacement schedule, as in the SB packet. Essensa explained that the 4-car model is less expensive. SB members discussed the possibility of transitioning to electric and/or hybrid cars. Essensa said the plan is to replace cars with hybrids as they come due for replacement. At present, electric cars are not a viable option for use as patrol cars, but as the technology develops, they may become an option. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to approve the 4-car police vehicle replacement schedule as discussed at this meeting, with the purchase of a RAV4 hybrid as a non-patrol car. **Motion approved (4 yes; Gere- no).**

9. Follow-up From Police Department: Operating Budget. Francis said the questions previously raised by SB members have been addressed in the packet materials. SB members discussed police body-worn cameras and police vehicle dashboard cameras. Arnold said he wants to have a policy discussion before he would approve adding body cameras to this budget as a line item. SB members agreed to make some allocation to the police designated fund to address the question of police cameras.

10. Budget Schedule Review. SB members discussed upcoming meetings for budget discussions. SB members agreed to meet on December 15, 2021 at 5:30 pm to discuss the budgets of other town departments.

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on December 22, 2021

Roger Arnold, Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – December 15, 2021 – Meeting at 5:30

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