

Town of Norwich, Vermont



CHARTERED 1761

AGENDA Norwich Selectboard

Participation: Remote Meeting Only

ZOOM access information: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86293758694>

Meeting ID: 862 9375 8694

US Toll-free: 877 853 5257

Regular Session

6:30PM

Wednesday October 26, 2022

-
- | | | |
|----|---|---------------|
| 1 | Convene Meeting | (6:30) |
| 2 | Agenda Review | (6:30 – 6:35) |
| 3 | Board Reorganization, Election of Chair and Vice Chair | (6:35 – 6:45) |
| 4 | Public Participation | (6:45 – 6:55) |
| 5 | Townwide Reappraisal RFP | (6:55 – 7:10) |
| 6 | Appoint Layton and Arnold to Collective Bargaining Cmte | (7:10 – 7:15) |
| 7 | Response to alleged violation of Open Meeting Law
(executive session expected) | (7:15 – 7:40) |
| 8 | Consent Agenda | (7:40 – 7:50) |
| | a) Consider AP Warrant | |
| | b) Approve draft meeting minutes (10/12 & 10/18) | |
| | c) Correspondence | |
| 9 | Future Agenda Items | (7:50 – 8:00) |
| 10 | Public Participation | (8:00 – 8:10) |
| 11 | Adjournment | (8:10) |

TO: Selectboard
FROM: Rod Francis, Town Manager
RE: Revised Draft RFP for Town-wide Reappraisal
DATE: October 20, 2022

Background

The Listers provided a revised version of an RFP on September 20, 2022 (emailed to all board members). Provided here is revised version. It has been reformatted, and the following changes have been made:

1. Minor changes to description of community, including area under current use, zoning districts etc.
2. Allowing a respondent to suggest different CAMA software. (See Background, Description of Project)
This is an effort to broaden the pool of respondents who may be able to start sooner. The RFP reviewers will need to decide if the cost benefit analysis works after reviewing any responses
3. Elimination of the proposed schedule
This was done in recognition of contractors now scheduling 2027 to start. The contractor will drive this element of the project and the town will likely just need to see what they offer
4. Use of standard Norwich RFP language re: accepting proposals
email proposals as pdfs (See Response Format and Due Date)
This allows the contractor more time to prepare the response, pdfs are searchable and therefore easier to review. Responses are likely to include hotlinks to websites and materials and the small number of expected responses does not make the cost of copying (if needed) a burden
Notification of receipt (as above)
Accepting pdfs via email requires a system of confirming receipt
Opportunity to pose questions (See Information)
All respondents have this right. All respondents must have the ability to see questions posed and answers provided. This ensures transparency and reduces likelihood of actions taken by unsuccessful respondents
5. Standardized provision of information (See Available Information)
This material should be made available to all respondents
6. Removal of language suggesting that the Listers can “negotiate” with a respondent
This has been removed because it is inappropriate to negotiate before a documented fair process has been completed to determine the winning proposal. The contract entered into with the selected respondent is the place for any such negotiations. Bargaining with respondents during the review process makes the town vulnerable to due process claims

Recommendations

Staff recommends that the Town Manager post the RFP on the town website, other online sites and solicit responses from firms qualified to work in Vermont as identified here:

<https://tax.vermont.gov/sites/tax/files/documents/Approved%20Appraisers-09Aug2022.pdf>

Staff recommends that a panel supported by the Town Assessor be seated to review the proposals and provide a recommendation to the Selectboard. This panel should comprise:

- Listers (2)
- Selectboard member (1)
- Board of Civil Authority member (1)
- Member of the Public (1)

Suggested Motions

That the Selectboard endorses the Town Manager releasing the Town-wide Reappraisal RFP.

That the Selectboard approved the establishment of a panel supported by the Town Assessor comprising the Listers, one Selectboard member, one member of the Board of Civil Authority and one member of the public to review any responses received to the RFP.

That the Selectboard solicit applications from members of the public to join the panel, select a member of the Selectboard to sit on the panel, and invite the Board of Civil Authority to nominate a member to the panel.

TOWN OF NORWICH

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Appraisal Services for Town-wide Reappraisal

October 27, 2022

Overview

The Town of Norwich is requesting proposals from qualified, licensed and certified reappraisal contractors to complete a town-wide reappraisal of all real property in Norwich.

The Town of Norwich in eastern Windsor County, Vermont is bounded to the east by the Connecticut River, the Appalachian Trail crosses the town along its southern border. The population of the Town of Norwich was estimated at 3,612 as of the 2020 census. Norwich's land mass is approximately 44.4 square miles. The town has easy access to Interstate 91. The Norwich School District is part of the inter-state Dresden School District with Hanover, New Hampshire.

Background

Norwich has a mix of residential, commercial, agricultural and forest lands .154 parcels (13, 968 acres) , or 49 percent of all land is enrolled in the State of Vermont's current use program for tax year 2021. Norwich has a Fire District that supplies municipal water to about 350 residences, businesses, and the Norwich grade school. Norwich has zoning and subdivision regulations with five zoning districts, 97 percent of the land area lies in the rural-residential zoning district. The 2022 Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) was 84.39% and the Coefficient of Dispersion (COD) was 13.49%. Norwich completed its last town-wide appraisal in 2016. Since then, numerous residential sales have occurred at values well above assessments. Vacant land sales have also been at levels above assessments on a per-acre basis.

The 2022 Grand List has 1,581 taxable parcels broken out on the attached 2022 Form 411. (See Exhibit A). The selected contractor will also collect data and take photos of 57 non-taxable parcels and 169 inactive parcels.

The town currently contracts with Patriot Properties Inc. and uses AssessPro Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) software. Responses to this RFP may propose a different CAMA program but would have the obligation of demonstrating any alternative CAMA software prior to the submittal date for this RFP.

Description of Project

The Town of Norwich's town-wide reappraisal project shall include:

- The development of new land schedules and neighborhood delineations to estimate land values for every site in town
- Detailed analysis of sales over a three-year period to formulate accurate, localized cost and depreciation schedules to develop a market adjusted cost approach for all property types
- Depreciation schedules shall adhere to standard AssessPro table structures (or if proposing alternate CAMA software demonstrate compliance with VTPIE) (see below)
- The reappraisal project will be completed with software capable of integrating with the new Axiomatic

Grand List software as used by the Vermont Property Information Exchange (VTPIE) as implemented by the Vermont Division of Property Valuation and Review (PVR)

- Multiple digital photos of each property
- Interior and exterior measurements and physical inspections of all properties to gather accurate and pertinent information.

These and any other applicable methods, shall be incorporated into the existing or cloud based AssessPro CAMA software system and the existing property listing data will be reviewed to assure compliance with new analyses.

The Contractor will work closely with the Norwich Assessor's and Listers throughout the project. The Town Assessor and Listers will coordinate with the Contractor's designated lead. The Town will provide the mailing services, access to the existing CAMA system and all documentation from the previous 2016 reappraisal as well as data from any neighborhood inspections.

Scope of Services

1. The contractor shall review existing AssessPro CAMA property descriptions, neighborhood delineations, tax maps, zoning descriptions and other relevant information to understand the current assessment system
2. The contractor shall analyze three years of sales information, verifying the sales information and correcting, as needed, the associated assessment information
3. The contractor shall review and refine neighborhood delineations, analyze vacant and improved property sales and develop land-pricing schedules that result in accurate estimates for land values for every property in town. These new schedules must produce current Act #60 Homestead site values.
4. The contractor will visit each property for the purpose of completing an interior inspection of all Residential (year-round and seasonal), Condominium, Farm/Agricultural and Commercial buildings and will update sketches and multiple photos for each property
5. The contractor will provide weekly updates on a supplied spreadsheet (See Exhibit B)
6. The contractor shall produce new models in the cloud based AssessPro CAMA system for cost and depreciation, sales comparison, MRA, income and any other applicable valuation methods for all types of real property in the Town of Norwich (or alternative CAMA software pending demonstration to Listers and Assessor)
7. The contractor shall review existing CAMA/NEMRC/VTPIE property descriptions to assure compliance with new market models for valuation
8. The contractor shall produce, review, and verify fair market value estimates for every property in Norwich. Each parcel file shall include a CAMA cost sheet and property record card. This new data will be available online
9. A Proposed Property Value Report listing all properties will be produced and mailed by the contractor to all property owners
10. The contractor shall schedule time for the express purpose of answering property owner questions on the proposed assessment values prior to formal grievances
11. The contractor will assist the Listers and Assessor with the formal Lister grievances and Board of Civil Authority (BCA) appeals
12. The contractor, working with the Listers and/or Assessor, shall produce a Change of Assessment Notice to be mailed to every property owner as the official notification
13. The contractor shall produce manuals clearly explaining the valuation methods, the data, and the processes to aid the Town in defending the new assessments, and valuing new properties, subdivisions and changes to existing properties. This includes a description of land grading values
14. The contractor shall complete all these activities in compliance with Vermont's "three-prong test",

- other accepted appraisal practices and conforming to all applicable State Statutes and rules
15. All data, maps, reports, forms, worksheets and other materials used for this reappraisal shall be the property of the Town of Norwich.

Deliverables

The final deliverables shall include:

1. A final computer-generated property record card and CAMA cost sheet for each parcel file, and for each dwelling/residence on that parcel
2. Multiple digital photos for each dwelling/residence uploaded to CAMA
3. A Proposed Property Value Report
4. A copy of the updated Abstract Grand List
5. Change of Assessment Notices to property owners as of April 1, 202_
6. A copy of the Grand List to be lodged with the Town Clerk
7. Updates to the appraisal software database that reflect the new land schedules and updated cost
8. Income and market models and the successful completion of any appeals through the Board of Civil Authority level
9. The documentation produced for this project shall include:
 - a. a new land valuation manual (including neighborhood descriptions)
 - b. land schedules and descriptions of adjustments
 - c. a copy of the sales file and adjustments made to create the land schedule
 - d. copies of any other manuals, tables or reference materials developed or used during this project
10. . Implementation of new software and training, if applicable
11. All materials related to this project shall become the property of the Town of Norwich

Response Format and Due Date

All Contractors responding to this Request for Proposal are required to submit a Proposal for Services that incorporates all the tasks outlined in this document and the following:

1. A cover letter signed by an authorized representative expressing the firm's/individual's interest in working with the Town of Norwich on this particular project, and identification of the principal individual(s) assigned to this project
2. A narrative proposal describing the approach to the Scope of Work, including a clear breakdown and explanation of tasks
3. Experience of company and individual(s) working on this project
4. A detailed budget by activity. The contract will be awarded on a fixed fee basis, the budget breakdown is used to evaluate the proposal and for any additional services during the contract period.
5. A date specific project schedule with benchmarks
6. Contact information for three references
7. Relevant work sample
8. Date available to begin

A PDF of the proposal must be submitted via email with the subject line: "Reappraisal Services" By: **10:00 a.m. November 21, 2022**, to:listeners@norwich.vt.us

An email confirmation will be sent when the proposal is received. Proposals may include links to additional materials, but inclusion of lengthy supporting documents is strongly discouraged.

Proposals received after 10:00AM November 21, 2022 will be rejected.

Information

Questions about this RFP must be emailed to Cheryl Lindberg at listeners@norwich.vt.us. All questions and responses will be posted on the Town’s website at <https://norwich.vt.us/listers/>. Intending respondents should monitor this website for answers to questions received.

Available Information

1. Tax map and parcel data
2. Examples of current land schedules
3. Property descriptions from the current CAMA system
4. Copies of completed sales verification forms

Disclaimers

1. Those submitting RFPs do so entirely at their own expense. There is no express or implied obligation by the Town of Norwich to reimburse any entity or individual for any costs incurred in preparing or submitting of proposals, preparing or submitting additional information requested by Selection Committee, or participating in any selection interviews.
2. The Town of Norwich reserves the right to withdraw this Request for Proposals, to accept or reject any or all proposals, or to advertise for new proposals if it is in the best interest of the Town to do so, and to award a contract as deemed to be in the best interest of the Town.

Additional Requirements

Sub-contracts

Work shall not be assigned or sublet to any other entity without full consent, and written permission, of the Town of Norwich. The contractor shall not either legally or equitably assign any of the moneys payable under a final agreement, unless by and with the consent of the Town of Norwich.

Equal Employment Opportunity

The Contractor shall comply with the applicable provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, Executive Order 11246 as amended by Executive Order 11375 and as supplemented by the Department of Labor regulations (41CFR Part 60.) The Contractor shall comply with all requirements of Title 21, V.S.A., Chapter 5, Subchapters 6 and 7, relating to fair employment practices to the extent applicable. A similar provision shall be included in any and all subcontracts.

Insurance

The Contractor shall take out and maintain during the life of this project, Comprehensive Board Form General Liability Insurance in the amount of \$2,000,000 including protection for bodily injury and property damage with a combined single limit of \$1,000,000 aggregate. The Worker’s Compensation Insurance shall provide employer’s liability insurance in the amount of \$100,000.

Certification of Insurance shall be supplied to the Town by the Contractor detailing the above coverage prior to commencement of work. This certificate will be issued by a carrier authorized to do business within the State of Vermont.

No Warranty is made that the coverages and limits listed above are adequate to cover and protect the interests of the Consultant for the survey operations. These are solely minimums that have been developed and must be met to protect the interests of the Town. It is the express responsibility of the Contractor to obtain adequate coverage for the project.

Indemnification

The Contractor shall and hereby agree to indemnify, save harmless and defend the Town of Norwich from the payment of any sum of money to any person whomsoever on account of claims or suits growing out of injuries to persons, including death, or damages to property caused by the Contractor, the Contractor's employees, agents of sub-Contractors or in any way attributable to the performance and prosecution of the work herein contracted for, including (but without limiting the generality of the foregoing), all claims for service, labor performed, materials furnished, provisions and supplies, injuries to persons or damage to property, liens, garnishments, attachments, claims, suits, costs, attorneys' fees, costs of investigation and of defense.

Evaluation

The Proposal should include the following:

- Scope of services
- Professional qualifications and names of the principals of the firm
- Qualifications of the project manager and key staff assigned to the project
- Descriptions of the proposed methodologies for assessing values on each class of property
- Description of quality control and testing of results
- Schedule of work by task
- Lists of all municipal reappraisals currently underway and completed within the last five years including client contacts and references.
- Cost proposal including software fees and maintenance
- An example of a data collection form
- The Contractor shall identify property types beyond their expertise (e.g., railroads etc.)

The evaluation of the Proposal will be based on:

- Firms understanding of the scope of the work
- Suitability of CAMA software proposed (if not AssessPro)
- Proposed methodology for completing the work
- Qualifications of the firm
- Work and experience on similar projects in VT
- Work Schedule
- Cost proposal

Norwich 2022 Billed Grand List
 Form 411 - (Town code: 450)
 In All Districts

(Taxable properties only - State and Non-tax status properties are not listed below)

REAL ESTATE Category/Code	Parcel Count	Municipal Listed Value	Homestead Ed Listed Value	Nonhmstd Ed. Listed Value	Total Education Listed Value
Residential I R1	827	356,783,200	262,272,552	94,510,648	356,783,200
Residential II R2	506	350,097,400	230,762,580	119,334,820	350,097,400
Mobile Homes-U MHU	2	5,700	0	5,700	5,700
Mobile Homes-L MHL	11	1,831,900	738,100	1,093,800	1,831,900
Seasonal I S1	4	427,100	0	427,100	427,100
Seasonal II S2	11	3,159,900	0	3,159,900	3,159,900
Commercial C	43	31,944,700	0	31,944,700	31,944,700
Commercial Apts CA	7	6,839,900	0	6,839,900	6,839,900
Industrial I	0	0	0	0	0
Utilities-E UE	7	11,278,600	0	11,278,600	11,278,600
Utilities-O UO	0	0	0	0	0
Farm F	10	8,358,400	6,676,869	1,681,531	8,358,400
Other O	28	7,685,800	4,680,700	3,005,100	7,685,800
Woodland W	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous M	124	23,180,400	0	23,180,400	23,180,400
TOTAL LISTED REAL	1,580	801,593,000	505,130,801	296,462,199	801,593,000
P.P. Cable	1	1,177,179		1,177,179	1,177,179
P.P. Equipment	0	0			0
P.P. Inventory	0	0			0
TOTAL LISTED P.P.	1	1,177,179		1,177,179	1,177,179
TOTAL LISTED VALUE		802,770,179	505,130,801	297,639,378	802,770,179
EXEMPTIONS					
Veterans 10K	7/7	70,000	60,000	10,000	70,000
Veterans >10K		210,000			
Total Veterans		280,000	60,000	10,000	70,000
P.P. Contracts	1	1,177,179			
Contract Apprv VEPC	0/0	0	0	0	0
Grandfathered	0/0	0	0	0	0
Non-Apprv (voted)	8/8	806,700			
Owner Pays Ed Tax	0/0	0			
Total Contracts	9/8	1,983,879	0	0	0
FarmStab Apprv VEPC	0/0	0	0	0	0
Farm Grandfathered	0/0	0	0	0	0
Non-Apprv (voted)	0/0	0			
Owner Pays Ed Tax	0/0	0			
Total FarmStabContr	0/0	0	0	0	0
Current Use	156/156	36,627,362	16,685,763	19,941,599	36,627,362
Special Exemptions	4		0	946,900	946,900
Partial Statutory	0/0	0	0	0	0
Sub-total Exemptions		38,891,241	16,745,763	20,898,499	37,644,262
Total Exemptions		38,891,241	16,745,763	20,898,499	37,644,262
TOTAL MUNICIPAL GRAND LIST		7,638,789.38			
TOTAL EDUCATION GRAND LIST			4,883,850.38	2,767,408.79	7,651,259.17
NON-TAX		57 NON-TAX PARCELS ARE NOT INCLUDED ON THE 411			

Norwich 2022 Billed Grand List
Form 411 - (Town code: 450)
In All Districts

(Taxable properties only - State and Non-tax status properties are not listed below)

REAL ESTATE Category/Code	Parcel Count	Municipal Listed Value	Homestead Ed Listed Value	Nonhmstd Ed. Listed Value	Total Education Listed Value
------------------------------	-----------------	---------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------------	---------------------------------

Status on Personal Property

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) Has inventory been exempted by vote of town/city? Yes___ No_XX_ | |
| 2) Has machinery and equipment been exempted by vote of your town/city? Yes___ No_XX_ | |
| 3) If yes for #2, what portion is now exempt? (include percentage) _____ | |
| 4) If no for #2, please indicate below how your town/city is assessing business personal property (Place "X" by option used) | |
| a) at fair market value __XX_ b) at depreciated value _____ | |

Summary of Adjustments to Taxable Values (Local Agreements Etc.)

Approved (VEPC) Contracts/Exemptions	0
Grandfathered Contracts/Exemptions	0
Non-Approved (Voted) Contracts/Exemptions	806,700
Homestead Non-Approved (Voted) Contracts/Exemptions	35,600
Nonhmstd Non-Approved (Voted) Contracts/Exemptions	771,100
Municipal Contracts (Owner Pays Ed Tax)	0
Special Exemptions	946,900
Current Use (Use Value Appraisal Program)	36,627,362
Veteran Exemptions	70,000
Homestead Veteran Exemptions beyond 10K	180,000
Nonhmstd Veteran Exemptions beyond 10K	30,000
Partial Statutory Exemptions	0

Norwich, Vermont - Progress Study

Date: 16-Oct-12

EXHIBIT B

Class	Description	Number	Ltr Sent	Measured	Total Inspected	Insp by Appt	Valued	% Valued
R1	Residence on less than 6 acres	795	505	512	339	209		
R2	Residence on 6 acres or more	490	490	490	350	174		
MHU	Mobile Home Un-landed	2	2	2	1	1		
MHL	Mobile Home Landed	13	13	12	8	6		
S1	Seasonal on less than 6 acres	0	0					
S2	Seasonal on 6 acres or more	0	0					
C	Commercial property	49	0	14	7	2		
CA	Commercial Apartments	7	0					
I	Industrial	0	0					
UE	Utilities Electric	4	0					
UO	Utilities Other	2	0					
F	Farm	13	11	11	7	2		
W	Woodland	0	0					
O	Other (Condos, Senior and Low income Housing)	40	40	14	6			
M	Miscellaneous (Vacant Land)	289	123	123				
E	Exempt Property	56	27	27	19			
CABLE	Cable Television and data transmission networks	1	0					
	Total	1761	1211	1205	737	394	0	

Improved Listing Percent Entry 1415 1088 1082 737 68.11%

Class	Description	Number	Planned					Total
			2nd H 2011	1st Q 2012	2nd Q 2012	3rd Q 2012	4thQ 2012	
R1	Residence on less than 6 acres	795	100	166	139	100	287	792
R2	Residence on 6 acres or more	489	161	115	157	57		490
MHU	Mobile Home Un-landed	2	1	1	0	0		2
MHL	Mobile Home Landed	16	8	3	1	1		13
S1	Seasonal on less than 6 acres	0	0	0	1	0		1
S2	Seasonal on 6 acres or more	0	0	0	0	0		0
C	Commercial property	49	0	1	0	0	84	85
CA	Commercial Apartments	7	0	0	1	0	9	10
I	Industrial	0	0	0	0	0		0
UE	Utilities Electric	4	0	0	0	0	4	4
UO	Utilities Other	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
F	Farm	13	2	8	1	0		11
W	Woodland	0	0	0	0	0		0
O	Other (Condos, Senior and Low income Housing)	40	0	0	13	27		40
M	Miscellaneous (Vacant Land)	289	52	33	38	32		155
E	Exempt Property	56	11	8	7			26
CABLE	Cable Television and data transmission networks	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	1763	335	335	358	217	387	1632

10/21/2022

Town of Norwich Accounts Payable

Page 1 of 2

01:15 pm

Check Warrant Report # 922 Current Prior Next FY Invoices

ashleyw

For checks For Check Acct 03 (General) 10/26/2022 To 10/26/2022

Vendor	Invoice	Invoice Description	Purchase Amount	Discount Amount	Amount Paid	Check Number	Check Date
AES NE	AES NORTHEAST	15409 P&Z-GIS SERVICES	1125.75	0.00	1125.75	12243	10/26/22
ALDERMAN	ALDERMAN'S TOYOTA	101822TOYOTA PD-2022 TOYOTA RAV	28594.00	0.00	28594.00	12244	10/26/22
MISC	ANDREW STEWART	PRMT REFUND Permit #32BH21 Refund	225.00	0.00	225.00	12245	10/26/22
ANTHEM	ANTHEM SPORTS, LLC	352031 DPW-VINYL FLOOR TAPE	198.94	0.00	198.94	12246	10/26/22
ANYTIME	ANYTIME CARPET CARE & CLEANING	497271 PD-CLEANING 9/13 & 9/21	360.00	0.00	360.00	12247	10/26/22
ANYTIME	ANYTIME CARPET CARE & CLEANING	497280 PD-CLEANING 9/28 & 10/5	360.00	0.00	360.00	12247	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	109132/7 DPW-SHIPPIING TAPE, TOWEL	26.97	0.00	26.97	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	111297/7 DPW-YLLW SAFETY SPRAY	6.99	0.00	6.99	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	122876/6 DPW-KEY & LOCK	35.45	0.00	35.45	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	123242/6 DPW-WHITE PAINT	31.96	0.00	31.96	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	126982/7 DPW-SHIPPIING TAPE, TOWEL	28.74	0.00	28.74	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	127067/8 P&R-PLAY SAND	42.95	0.00	42.95	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	129779/8 DPW-RUBBER STRAP	7.77	0.00	7.77	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	132241/6 P&R-PUSHBROOMS	61.98	0.00	61.98	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	134953/6 DPW-CLEAR POLY FILM	37.99	0.00	37.99	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	135079/6 DPW-FLEXOGEN HOSES	88.56	0.00	88.56	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	138507/7 DPW-SHIPPIING TAPE, TOWEL	17.98	0.00	17.98	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	150609/6 P&R-WHITE PAINT	59.34	0.00	59.34	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	151158/6 DPW-HEX KEY SET	23.99	0.00	23.99	12248	10/26/22
BETHELMIL	BETHEL MILLS	152770/6 P&R-WHITE PAINT	59.34	0.00	59.34	12248	10/26/22
BCBS	BLUE CROSS/BLUE SHIELD OF VERM	149504962 TH-NOVEMBER 22 INSURANCE	22459.97	0.00	22459.97	12250	10/26/22
BURLCOMM	BURLINGTON COMMUNICATIONS SERV	BCS11553 DPW-RADIO & GRADER	1478.50	0.00	1478.50	12251	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	10422COOP TH-FIELDING GOING AWAY	19.56	0.00	19.56	12252	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	10522PIZZA TH-FIELDING GOING AWAY	69.46	0.00	69.46	12252	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	10622 FIN-SEPT 22 FINANCE CHAR	7.63	0.00	7.63	12252	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	2279856106 P&Z-AARON ADOBE YEAR	254.27	0.00	254.27	12252	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	285251-25 TH-ANNUAL WEBSITE HOSTIN	300.00	0.00	300.00	12252	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	68747267 TH-JOB POSTINGS	126.00	0.00	126.00	12252	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	90222PETCL DPW-#2783 PETROLEUM CLEA	50.00	0.00	50.00	12252	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	90222PETCL2 DPW-#2782 PETROLEUM CLEA	50.00	0.00	50.00	12252	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	91322STMP5 TH-STAMPS/POSTAGE	65.64	0.00	65.64	12252	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	92722WTPGS TC-SEPT 22 WHITE PAGES	20.99	0.00	20.99	12252	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	92822KEYS TH-ALLEN WRENCH DOOR KEY	13.98	0.00	13.98	12252	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	INV167500763 TH-SEPT 22 ZOOM	503.83	0.00	503.83	12252	10/26/22
BUSINESS	BUSINESS CARD	KHMPM2QJM6J8 FD-ANNUAL DROPBOX SUB	119.88	0.00	119.88	12252	10/26/22
CANON	CANON SOLUTIONS AMERICA, INC.	6001935913 TH-COPIER MAINTENCE	329.57	0.00	329.57	12254	10/26/22
CASELLA	CASELLA WASTE SERVICES	0765841 DPW-SEPT 22 RECYCLING	5609.20	0.00	5609.20	12255	10/26/22
CASELLA	CASELLA WASTE SERVICES	0765842 DPW-SEPTEMBER 22 TRASH	6323.36	0.00	6323.36	12255	10/26/22
CASELLA	CASELLA WASTE SERVICES	0768043 DPW-SEPT 22 HIGHWAY DEPT	72.48	0.00	72.48	12255	10/26/22
CCI	CCI MANAGED SERVICES	CW-55098 TH-FOUR NEW COMPUTERS	2547.00	0.00	2547.00	12256	10/26/22
CCI	CCI MANAGED SERVICES	CW-55201 TH-OCT 22 SERVICES	3009.46	0.00	3009.46	12256	10/26/22
COMCAST	COMCAST	1006THINT TH-OCT 22 INTERNET	19.95	0.00	19.95	12257	10/26/22
COTT	COTT SYSTEMS INC	149766 TC-MONTHLY RESOLUTION 3	280.00	0.00	280.00	12258	10/26/22
DEADRIVER	DEAD RIVER COMPANY	1004OIL FD&TH-HEATING OIL	1197.48	0.00	1197.48	12259	10/26/22
GMPC	GREEN MOUNTAIN POWER CORP	93022TRNPKRD 38951919299 111 TRNPK RD	59.10	0.00	59.10	12260	10/26/22
K&R	K & R PORTABLE RESTROOM SERVIC	22554 P&R-PORTA TOILET	650.00	0.00	650.00	12261	10/26/22
MAYER	MAYER & MAYER	PR-10/19/22 Payroll Transfer	25.00	0.00	25.00	12262	10/26/22
NORFIREDI	NORWICH FIRE DISTRICT	101022HAZEN PS-HAZEN 3RD QUARTER	211.35	0.00	211.35	12263	10/26/22
NORFIREDI	NORWICH FIRE DISTRICT	101022MAINST TH-3RD QURTR 22 METER	170.13	0.00	170.13	12263	10/26/22
NORFIREDI	NORWICH FIRE DISTRICT	1010TRNPK P&R-3RD QURTR METER	98.45	0.00	98.45	12263	10/26/22

10/21/22

Town of Norwich Accounts Payable

01:15 pm

Check Warrant Report # 922 Current Prior Next FY Invoices

ashleyw

For checks For Check Acct 03 (General) 10/26/2022 To 10/26/2022

Vendor	Invoice	Invoice Description	Purchase Amount	Discount Amount	Amount Paid	Check Number	Check Date
OTIS	OTIS ELEVATOR COMPANY	F10000012390 TH-ELEVATOR INCREASE	125.00	0.00	125.00	12279	10/26/22
PITNEYPOST	PITNEY BOWES	1019POSTAGE TH-POSTAGE METER REFILL	1000.00	0.00	1000.00	12265	10/26/22
REDSTART	REDSTART FORESTRY, INC	10513 CC-PHRAGMITES	393.80	0.00	393.80	12266	10/26/22
RIVERROAD	RIVER ROAD VETERINARY CLINIC	366552 PD-STRAY CAT CARE	325.00	0.00	325.00	12267	10/26/22
SAFARILAN	SAFARILAND, LLC	I010-439570 PD- BLTPRF VEST GRANT	2979.00	0.00	2979.00	12268	10/26/22
STITZEL	STITZEL PAGE & FLETCHER PC	69090 TH-AUG 22 LEGAL EXPENSES	17238.90	0.00	17238.90	12269	10/26/22
HARTFORD	TOWN OF HARTFORD	12614 PD-DISPATCH SRVCS OCT-DE	18227.75	0.00	18227.75	12270	10/26/22
TLOGIX	TRAFFIC LOGIX	SIN17818 PD-3 RADAR SPEED SIGNS	8847.00	0.00	8847.00	12280	10/26/22
TWORIVERS	TWO RIVERS - OTTAUQUECHEE	23-31 DPW-TIGERTOWN CULVERT	5611.12	0.00	5611.12	12272	10/26/22
VERIZWIRE	VERIZON WIRELESS	9917394869 ALL DEPTS-SEPT 22 PHONES	241.56	0.00	241.56	12273	10/26/22
UTCAREER	VERMONT CAREER FIRE CHIEFS ASS	101822VCFD FD-ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP	25.00	0.00	25.00	12274	10/26/22
VTHEALTH	VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH	1000 TC-ENGRAVED PAPER	38.00	0.00	38.00	12275	10/26/22
VTMUNI	VERMONT MUNICIPAL ASSESSOR	1365 LISTERS-SEPT 22 ASSESSOR	3402.06	0.00	3402.06	12276	10/26/22
VMERS	VMERS DB	TRUE UP Q3 FIX VMERS CY22 Q3 W/H	10649.71	0.00	10649.71	12281	10/26/22
EARTHLINK	WINDSTREAM	75162611 ALL DEPTS-OCT 22 WIRELES	312.42	0.00	312.42	12277	10/26/22
WRIGHTS	WRIGHTS SAWMILL, INC	92722SDBRDS DPW-SIDEBOARDS FREIGHTLN	240.00	0.00	240.00	12278	10/26/22
Report Total			147,192.26	0.00	147,192.26		

To the Treasurer of Town of Norwich, We hereby certify that there is due to the several persons whose names are listed hereon the sum against each name and that there are good and sufficient vouchers supporting the payments aggregating \$ ***147,192.26 Let this be your order for the payments of these amounts.

Staff Accountant:

Ashley Wohler
Ashley Wohler

Town Manager:

DocuSigned by:
Rod Francis
D4520EC72DA7484...
Rod Francis

SELECTBOARD:

Roger Arnold
Chair

Mary Layton
Vice Chair

Robert Gere

Marcia Calloway

Aaron Lamperti

DRAFT Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, October 12, 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; Marcia Calloway; Robert Gere; Aaron Lamperti, Rod Francis, Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

Also participating: Stuart Richards, Kate White, Manu Tesone, Mary Gorman, Jaan Laaspere, Alena Berube, Bill Scavone, Peter Orner, Eva Rosenbloom, Garret Heaton, Cheryl Lindberg, Colleen Fox.

1. Convene Meeting. Meeting convened at 6:45 PM
2. Agenda Review. Layton moved (2nd Lamperti) to approve the agenda. Motion approved (4-yes; Calloway- no).
3. Public participation. Stuart Richards read aloud an April email from Arnold to town employees. Richards said the SB should have an open question and answer period. Kate White expressed concern about the environmental and health impacts of the Moore Lane Bridge. Manu Tesone asked questions about funding for the police department. Jaan Laaspere expressed concern about the town's management. Alena Berube and Bill Scavone each expressed concern about cars parking on Turnpike Road blocking traffic and causing congestion. Peter Orner expressed concern about the environmental and health impacts of the Moore Lane Bridge.
4. Authorize Purchase of New Vehicle with Police Cruiser Reserve Funds. After some discussion, Layton moved (2nd Gere) to authorize the Town Manager to purchase from Alderman's Toyota of Rutland, Vermont a Toyota RAV4 hybrid for a price not to exceed \$28,594.00 to be paid with funds from the Police Department Cruiser reserve fund. Motion approved unanimously.
5. Eva Rosenbloom and Garret Heaton each spoke in support of their respective applications for the Energy Committee. Layton moved (2nd Gere) to appoint Eva Rosenbloom to the Energy Committee for a 3-year term ending on March 30, 2026. Motion approved unanimously. Layton moved (2nd Lamperti) to appoint Garret Heaton to the Energy Committee for the remainder of an unexpired 3-year term ending on March 30, 2024. Motion approved unanimously.
6. Town Manager's Report. Francis introduced Wade Cochran, the newly appointed Chief of Police; he will start on October 25, 2022. Francis gave a spoken summary of his written report [as contained in the meeting packet]. Cheryl Lindberg spoke about her customary practices as Town Treasurer.
7. Approve Bid Moore Lane Bridge Hazardous Material Containment. Francis spoke about the history of the Moore Lane Bridge and said that the State of Vermont is compelling the Town to put into place a temporary measure to address the problems with the bridge. The Town hopes that the required temporary intervention will mitigate the conditions at the bridge and allow the Town the necessary time to effect a long-term solution. Peter Orner asked the SB to delay and not implement a temporary solution. Kate White asked the SB to delay implementing an intervention to the bridge. Stuart Richards echoed Orner's and White's suggestions. After discussion, Layton moved (2nd Gere) to authorize the Town Manager to accept the bid from Winterset to construct a temporary containment system to prevent hazardous materials from entering the stream at the Moore Lane bridge for an amount not to exceed \$62,000.00 to be paid from the Bridge Reserve Fund. Motion passed (4-yes; Calloway- no). Mary Gorman and Colleen Fox each expressed disagreement with the SB's decision.

8. Appoint Zoning Administrator. Layton moved (2nd Lamperti) to appoint Aaron DeNamur as Zoning Administrator effective October 13, 2022. Motion approved unanimously.

9. Receive Update from Town Legal Counsel on Town's Position re: BCA Appeal and Ongoing Litigation in Katucki v. Town of Norwich. Layton moved (2nd Gere) to find that premature general public knowledge of attorney-client communications between the Selectboard and Town Attorney as to matters for which legal advice is sought would clearly place the Town at a substantial disadvantage by disclosing privileged communications and waiving attorney-client privilege to discuss the pending BCA Appeal and Katucki v. Town of Norwich. Motion approved unanimously.

Layton moved (2nd Gere) to enter executive session pursuant to 1 VSA §313(a)(1)(F), for the purposes of considering confidential attorney-client advice, and to invite the town's attorney and the Town Manager to discuss a pending BCA Appeal and to discuss Katucki v. Town of Norwich. Motion approved unanimously.

The SB entered executive session at 8:38 pm.

Layton moved (2nd Calloway) to enter public session. Motion approved unanimously. The SB entered public session at 9:41 pm.

10. Consent Agenda. After some discussion, Layton moved (2nd Lamperti) to approve the consent agenda. Motion approved unanimously.

11. Future Agenda Items. SB members discussed possible future meeting agenda items, as listed on the meeting agenda.

12. Public Participation. Stuart Richards read aloud a portion of a letter from HR Happens addressed to SB members.

13. Adjourn. Layton moved (2nd Gere) to adjourn. Motion approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 10:26 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on _____, 2022

Roger Arnold, Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – October 26, 2022 – Meeting at 6:30

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

DRAFT Special Selectboard Meeting Minutes and Motions
October 18, 2022

1. Layton moved, second by Lamperti to approve the agenda. Vote: U-Yes
2. Public Comment by Omer Trajman. Welcome to the new Police Chief. Omer would like a breakdown of funds not expended in the police budget to date, and what the Chief intends to spend it on. An additional comment from Stuart Richards with concerns about the Open Meeting Law, the Moore Lane Bridge, a desire for a Question and Answer Period, and asked why he was asked not to provide Coke and Pizza to DPW workers.
3. Layton moved, second by Lamperti to find that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage regarding the terms and conditions of an employment contract. Vote: U-Yes
4. Layton moved to enter executive session pursuant to 1 VSA section 313(a)(1)(c) for the purpose of considering the Town Manager's Contract? Layton moved, second by Lamperti. Vote U-Yes.
5. Time executive session entered: 6:38 pm.
6. Time that the Selectboard reentered public session: 8:11pm
7. Layton moved, second by Lamperti to Adjourn? Vote: U-Yes

Approved by the Selectboard on _____, 2022

Roger Arnold, Selectboard Chair

William Scavone
1655 Turnpike Road
Norwich, VT 05055

12 October 2022

Rod Francis, Town Manager and the Selectboard
Town of Norwich, VT

encl: Recent (10/8/22) Photos of parking along Turnpike Road at Gile Mountain

Dear Rod, Roger, et.al.,

This is to follow up my letter of last week regarding the annual traffic issues adjacent to the Gile Mountain Trailhead. I am attaching 2 additional photos taken 10/8/22 to supplement my examples from previous seasons.

I have included my truck (2005 Ford F350) in each photo to provide a scale reference as far as whether emergency vehicles could safely pass the parked cars and pedestrians when responding to an emergency at either a residence or the trail. My vehicle has a wheel width¹ that is less than that of most emergency vehicles².

I hope these pictures can help to illustrate (to a point) the congestion that occurs when there is no traffic control on peak tourist days. In past years, NPD would be on duty to respond to resident calls. After issuing tickets/warnings, the congestion would decrease, and then take some time to build back up. On this particular day, I called NPD and was connected to Hartford dispatch twice. I received/missed a call back from the State Police, but there was no other followup, and the continuous congestion was much greater than I've seen before.

I can provide more examples upon request, including video. Of course, photos cannot fully give the same sense of the situation as in-person observation.

Sincerely,

Bill Scavone

1 80" measured from outside of tires on actual truck.

2 Eg., a fire engine width may be 98-100". <https://www.jdpower.com/cars/shopping-guides/what-are-the-dimensions-of-firetrucks#:~:text=Width%20of%2098%20to%20100,of%2024%20to%2035%20feet>



North of the Gile Mountain trail parking lot, looking north. The red truck is between 1720 and 1737 Turnpike Road; concrete blocks from the demolished Teeter camp building are visible, middle right.



North of the Gile Mountain trailhead, looking south. The red truck is between the driveways of 1737 and 1745 Turnpike Road.

From: [Demo Sofronas](#)
To: [Select Board](#)
Cc: [Rod Francis](#); [Miranda Bergmeier](#)
Subject: Veterans Day Invitation
Date: Saturday, October 15, 2022 7:10:08 PM

Dear Norwich Selectboard,

On behalf of the American Legion Post #8, I would like to extend an invitation to our Veterans Day ceremony honoring 14 additional names that will be added to two of our monuments this year. We will also be honoring all veterans who served their country.

The outdoor ceremony at the monuments site will take about 45 minutes. Invited guests include Congressman Peter Welch, Vermont State Representatives, Norwich Selectboard, Norwich Town Manager, Norwich Police and Norwich Fire Departments.

The event is scheduled for Friday, November 11 at 12:00 noon and an agenda will follow.

We hope to see you there.

Demo Sofronas

Dear Selectboard Members,

It goes without saying that Norwich is experiencing many problems related to the lack of police, lack of Department of Public Works (DPW) employees and lack of employees in the Finance Department. Our Selectboard Chair and Valley News would like to focus on the difficulty in hiring new employees and blame members of the public (including this letter writer) for those difficulties but the real question is why did 5 police officers and 8 DPW employees and two Finance Dept. employees leave Norwich. Some left for lower paying jobs and others left without a job to go to. At last Wednesday's Selectboard meeting the Chair attempted to cut me off on at least two occasions, shook his head and rolled his eyes and was rude to Selectboard member Marcia Calloway. I read his email of April 15, 2022 and a portion of an April 22 letter from HR Happens (HR) who was hired to look into personnel issues and try and offer solutions to personnel problems. The first document is in the next paragraph and the second document can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/3fh75xkn> .

“The Board takes seriously the concerns of all town employees, including the Town qualified professional to investigate current complaints and to assist the town in building a positive work environment for all. The Board understands that additional opportunities for creating and sustaining a healthy workplace culture will be made available to Department Heads through the support and direction of Town Manager Rod Francis. Thank you for the work you do on behalf of the Town of Norwich. The Board has authorized Claudette Brochu and I (sic) as contacts on these recent matters.

Sincerely,

Roger Arnold
Chair, Norwich Selectboard”

An important part of the HR letter says about Town Manager Rod Francis that “With the change in leadership, came a different style of performance management and a more "hands on" approach to correct a general lack of accountability and other personnel issues that hadn't been addressed satisfactorily by the previous Town Manager... The change in management style and substance resulted in push back at the department leadership level as well as with some staff and several complaints have been made to the Selectboard regarding the behavior and overall treatment of staff and leadership by the Town Manager, including that some employees "do not feel safe."

The independent evaluation above by HR says “The behavior and overall treatment of staff and leadership by the Town Manager, including “several complaints” that some employees "do not feel safe" appears to support what numerous employees have said about the Town Manager, that he is a bully, that he yells at employees, that he harasses employees, that he reduces some employees to tears and that he has created a toxic and abrasive work environment. Because there are numerous employees making the same accusation it would seem to be most unwise on the part of Roger Arnold to entrust the Town Manager “with creating and sustaining a healthy work environment” since the Town Manager seems to be the last person who should be entrusted with this responsibility.

The lack of transparency on the part of the Selectboard and Town Manager and lack of prompt action on a number of issues is troubling. Here are some examples. The Town recently instituted a 5% COLA raise for all employees except unionized workers (including police and some DPW workers) who are not getting the raise. The Selectboard has ignored repeated attempts by the union to understand the stipulations the Town has conditioned the COLA raise on so that union employees can get the raise they are entitled to. Why hasn't the Selectboard given the union the courtesy of a reply?

Former Police Chief Simon Keeling left his position on 3 days' notice. See the letter here <https://tinyurl.com/2p9xnpwv> Did the Chief leave because of his frustration with the Town Manager having ignored his repeated requests to advertise for additional police? Was he tired of being ignored and told by the Town Manager that his concerns were of no importance? On May 26, 2022 Chief Keeling wrote the Town Manager and Selectboard and said "I am disheartened to see from the last Selectboard packet that members have not been informed of the staffing shortage and pay situation." The starting pay for a police officer in Norwich is \$22.14/hour. This is lower than surrounding towns. When the question was asked by way of the Public Records Act (PRA) whether the Town had documents comparing the rates of pay for positions which are vacant the answer was "There is no record that compares Norwich rates of pay." There was a study done in 2012 comparing rates of pay in surrounding Towns which was supposed to have been updated every three year but our Selectboard hasn't done that. So how are we supposed to pay our employees properly and competitively without knowing what other towns are paying? Hartford offers a signing bonus of \$10,000 for certified officers.

When it comes to advertising for employees wouldn't it be nice to know where and when advertising has been placed, how much it cost and what the advertisement says. Although this information has been asked for and there is an obligation to respond all we know is that around \$2,000 has been spent on ads in Indeed. No copies of ads or dates of placement have been provided. No invoices or correspondence have been provided. Has the Town really made a good faith effort to timely advertise for needed employees and if so when did they advertise? An ad for DPW workers recently appeared in the Valley News but have there been other ads in the Valley News or elsewhere.? We really don't know because the Town won't answer questions. Is the Selectboard and Rod Francis hiding information that the public would like to know?

There are a host of other questions the public is interested in. HR started work in April and invoiced the Town \$3,900 in June for work performed. The invoice was approved by the Town Manager. It appears that since June HR has not completed its work. Roger Arnold has said that HR is not currently working for the Town and he doesn't know when or if they will resume work. Apparently HR has not submitted any reports and has not finished its work since June. Why not? They were supposed to submit reports and do 10-12 hours of needed "facilitation and mediation" to fix Norwich's employee relations' problems. Why did the Selectboard stop their work and why hasn't the work resumed?

The Town Manager was requested to supply the details of his moonlighting consultancy work for two towns in April and May. At the time he was holding down two jobs for Norwich, Town Manager and Director of Planning and Zoning Administrator. If he was so overburdened with

work for Norwich where did he find the time to moonlight and where is the documentation of Selectboard approval and consultancy work as required by his contract and what was he paid? On the Town Manager's employment application he lists a Phd. Has anyone ever seen a copy of the document?

The Town Manager has submitted a document showing that at least 14 police, DPW and Finance personnel have left Norwich employment. Are there any emails or other correspondence between the Town and these employees and did HR interview any of them or were those employees not interviewed because the Town Manager didn't want them interviewed?

Most recently the Selectboard has been required to do a reappraisal of town properties and to fix a bridge involving toxic chemicals and Blood Brook. It appears that the Selectboard has negligently let this go for years so that time has suddenly become of the essence and required due diligence which should have been done and still should be done is not being done. One has to wonder about the recent executive session with the Town's lawyer concerning the Open Meeting Law lawsuit. Is the Selectboard going to continue to throw money away pursuing this to the point where they add to the \$56,000 already spent and get to the estimated \$100,000 it may take to get a final judgment? Most recently an additional \$17,000 has been spent on legal fees. What's that all about? Why won't the Selectboard answer these questions. What are they hiding? The Selectboard's judgment, lack of transparency and utter refusal to have a question and answer session does not sit well.

Stuart Richards

Memorandum

To: Norwich Selectboard

From: Mary Layton

Date: October 20, 2022

Subject: Meeting with Town of Norwich "Co-equal branches of Government"

Charge

From the minutes of the September 14, 2022 Selectboard meeting:

Lamperti moved (2nd Gere) to direct Mary Layton, Vice Chair, to arrange meetings with Elected Officials, including the Listers, Treasurer, and Town Clerk, to get feedback on any concerns or recommendations for greater collaboration between elected officials and paid town staff. Motion approved unanimously.

Arranging to meet and setting an agenda

Working out the arrangements to meet with the Town Clerk, Listers, and Town Treasurer was a complex process. We all had to think carefully about how to meet. I started the process by contacting each official individually. All three of them said they were willing to meet altogether as a group, not individually. The next issue is that since under the Open Meeting Law a quorum of the Board of Listers would be meeting under those conditions, they would be the responsible body to warn the meeting. The Listers decided to add this meeting as an agenda item at their regular meeting on October 19, 2022. The Treasurer at one point in the conversation asked if the discussion could occur in Executive session. I sent a copy of 1 VSA section 313 (executive sessions) to all so that we could determine if the purpose of the meeting was allowed. We thought that 1 VSA section 313(1)(c) arbitration or mediation might work. The Treasurer also asked that a mediator be present. I located a mediator who was willing to work with us in a mediation process. This involves meeting with each person individually, then together. It also requires each person to agree to and sign a mediation agreement. The Town Clerk, Treasurer, and Listers did not contact the mediator to have an initial conversation, so mediation did not occur. The meeting was warned by the Listers without an executive session. One of the Listers had asked if the Selectboard had a specific list of questions. I said no, only the charge. I provided a list of questions that is shown below as "conversation starters." They were reviewed by the mediator who said they looked fine for that purpose. I made copies for the participants including extras for the public.

Co-Equal Branches of Government
Norwich, VT
SB Questions for meeting 10/19/22

1. What practices or changes are you willing to suggest to improve morale and performance among the co-equal branches of government who interact with each other in Tracy Hall?
2. What are suggestions for helping new employees feel welcome and supported during the “on-boarding” process?
3. As elected officials we each have sworn an oath to uphold the Vermont Constitution. Vermont is a Dylan state and we must follow statutes. Are there specific areas of statute that are not clear and would it be helpful to have clarification of these?
4. Do you think that having a Human Resources person as a Town staffer would help to resolve differences of opinion?
5. Would you agree to appear at the Women’s Club Candidates Night if invited, in order to explain your practice and willingness to serve to the voters?
6. Do you have an inclination to be a mentor for persons who could someday take over your role in this or another community?
7. When the Town Manager or his employees ask for changes that you disagree with, what is the best way to resolve the differences?
8. Should each co-equal branch of government have a separate PO box at the Norwich Post Office? Are there other instances where a bit of separation would be helpful?

The results of the meeting:

I attended the entire regular Lister’s meeting which started at 3pm and was located in the Lister’s office. Banana bread was offered by Pam Smith. Participants included Cheryl Lindberg, Pam Smith, Bonnie Munday, Mary Layton, Spencer Potter (for routine agenda items), Stuart Richards, Linda Cook, and Liz Blum. Cheryl Lindberg chaired the meeting. Each of the officials spoke to interactions that they felt could have gone better with town staff. No one felt that the above questions got at the heart of the matters that concerned them. There was a wide ranging discussion. In terms of general areas that they felt could use improvement they listed communication, collaboration, respect, safety, being recognized for their role in Town government. They reported feeling “invisible” in Selectboard meetings where they were called on as citizens rather than as elected officials. They felt the tone for governance in Norwich starts at the top where Selectboard members should show respect for everyone involved in the

meetings. There was camaraderie among them for keeping the Town offices going during the COVID pandemic. There was consensus that Town officials and staff should not work remotely and should be at Tracey Hall with an open door policy to welcome the public, and to be available to interact with others in nearby offices. There were quite a few comments about how mail is received within the building and distributed to different departments. The Treasurer spoke of a successful collaborative effort to resolve Delinquent Tax Report discrepancies. The Town Clerk said that “we can’t have one gatekeeper for every issue.” They felt that their elected positions provide value for the town and that the Selectboard should not move to ask the voters to eliminate the positions or to give authority to the Selectboard to appoint to the positions. The Town Clerk stated that she is planning to retire at some point after the November election and hopes the Selectboard will take action to ensure that there is a competent successor.

During the meeting I listened and took notes. I did not engage in presenting different viewpoints regarding interactions that were described. I believe I have managed to convey most of the concerns. Pam Smith is planning to write up this part of the meeting for the minutes, so there may be additional information from that source.

The meeting adjourned around 5:30 pm.

Possible Follow-up

Subsequent to this meeting I was approached via email by the three officials. I asked for individual replies to avoid an OML violation. Each said she appreciated the outreach. I suggested that I would compile their suggestions and suggested that there could be another meeting to discuss specific changes that they would recommend.

I am willing to do this work as charged. I do think as an ongoing and long term matter it might make sense for the Town to create a position of Human Resources Officer, so that when difficulties arise everyone at least feels that they are being heard. Rewriting parts of the Personnel policy to more clearly define roles, procedures, and supervisory powers also might help.

From: [Douglas Wilberding](#)
To: [Miranda Bergmeier](#)
Cc: [Morton Bailey](#)
Subject: SB Packet - new boiler - Tracy Hall
Date: Thursday, October 20, 2022 11:29:29 AM

Miranda

Can you include this email in the next Selectboard packet?

Q. Can the SB and the Energy Committee meet in person with Lyme Green Heat (copied here) to discuss their previous quote for a biomass boiler/furnace at Tracy Hall?

Lyme Green Heat has supplied bio mass heating systems to both the Montshire Museum and the Hanover NH Episcopal Church as well as many residential users (including myself and the current Chair of the SB)

This will go a long way towards achieving some of the Article 36 goals as Tracy Hall emits approximately 40 tons of Co2 annually of the 400 +- tons produced by the "Town". This system emits STEAM and the biomass comes from a sustainable forest.

www.lymegreenheat.com

Thank you

Doug
Norwich VT

Sent from my iPad