

**Norwich Selectboard Special Meeting
January 4, 2023**

Start Time: 6:31

Selectboard members present: Roger Arnold, Marcia Calloway, Robert Gere, Aaron Lamperti, Mary Layton

- 1) **Welcome and remarks by Chair:** Calloway introduced **Rachel Coombs** who has volunteered to help with Zoom meetings, in particular with Hybrid meetings on or after 1/15/23.
- 2) Agenda Review: **Layton moved, second by Gere to approve the agenda as amended to show number eight as Future Agenda Items, and number nine as Adjournment. Vote: Unanimous-Yes.**
- 3) **“Final Pass” presentation by Interim Finance Director, Joyce Hasbrouck:** Hasbrouck presented version three of the draft budget. Changes from version two included adding \$5000 to the records restoration fund, adding the 1.0 FTE Town Manager’s Office Administrative Assistant (shared with DPW) and Assistant Town Manager positions to the Job Roster, removing the Lister Administrative Assistant, including the Recreation Department Assistant, adding \$40,000 to tennis court restoration as per the Capital Plan; Police Department lines to include salary, wages and benefits for four officer positions including the Chief, plus the Dispatcher, Crossing Guards, and Part Time Officers per request of the Chief at \$12,500; an increase in Petroleum products to account for full staffing; and an increase for the uniform cleaning line. DPW changes included the shared Administrative Assistant mentioned above, and with an urgent need to replace a generator there is \$15,000 in #46 Designated Fund for that purpose. The Emergency/Unexpected Expenses Fund level is at 13.5% of the budget excluding the separately voted articles. The Grand List and exemptions were updated for the tax calculator for an increase from FY23 to FY/24 for the municipal budget to 11.8% including Special Monetary Articles. The health insurance figures used were FY/23 for BCBS and for dental, life insurance, disability were based on FY/22 rates. **Discussion: Lister Cheryl Lindberg** asked that the line items submitted by the Board of Listers be approved. **Public comment: Jaan Laaspere** expressed concern that wages were not at the level that the Police Chief has recommended for successful hire of needed officers. **Demo Sofronas** hoped that the **Selectboard** has listened to posts and letters and is aware of recent incidents. He wants basic services restored and would like 24/7 coverage. He hoped there would be unanimous **Selectboard** support to “turn the ship around and give the town what they have had for many years.” **Charlotte Metcalfe** read a statement from **Priscilla Vincent** regarding a recent break in at her home and the adjacent Norwich Historical Society. Priscilla’s ask is to honor the Police Chief’s request for staffing and funding. **Pam Smith** had a question for Joyce Hasbrouck regarding the difference between revenue and expense lines which showed a \$457,548 surplus.
- 4) **Warrant articles, petitions, due dates:** The SB decided to include in the minutes this reprint of a notice sent on January 3rd by the Town Clerk.

TOWN OF NORWICH VT VOTERS

The following officers will be elected at the 2023 Town and Town School District Annual Meeting to be held on March 7, 2023:

Moderator - 1 year, Town Clerk - 3 years, Town Treasurer - 3 years, Selectman - 1- year unexpired term, 2 -year term, 3 year term, Cemetery Commissioner - 5 -year term, unexpired 4- year term, unexpired 2- year term, 2 Lister - 3 year term, unexpired 1- year term, Dresden - Norwich School Director - 3 years, Dresden-Norwich School Director 3- year term, Trustee of Public Funds - 3 years.

Petitions to file as a candidate for any of the above offices are available at the Norwich Town Clerks Office or by calling 802-649-1419, Ext. 103. The deadline for Candidate filing petitions is Monday, January 30, 2023, by 5:00 PM. All article petitions are due on January 19, 2023, by 5:00 PM. 5.

5)

“Final Pass” Budget Discussion: The **Selectboard** was concerned that the 12% budget increase estimate is too high to be acceptable to voters. They requested that **Joyce Hasbrouck** calculate two versions, each of which includes the following adds and cuts in addition to suggested cuts by department heads. The second version would also include a 6% across the board reduction in all items except salaries, wages, and related expenses such as payroll taxes, and insurances. For each version the budget bottom line and percent increase in taxes would be determined.

Additions

- a) \$3,250 Police part time wages,
- b) \$18,192 electricity line item FY24 on page 11,
- c) \$36,670 Regional Energy Coordinator
- d) \$27,000 Listers Assistant

Cuts

- a) Tennis court renovation reduced from \$40,000 to \$10,000
- b) Reduce the recreation line marking line by \$5,000

Lister Cheryl Lindberg wanted to know where the \$15,000 revenue is included in the budget that is money received from the state for the reappraisal fund. (A subsequent message to the **Selectboard** from **Hasbrouck** stated that she did not include this item in the budget as it is considered “pass through grant revenue” that does not include funds that must be paid by tax payers.) **Public Comment: Stuart Richards** objected to the need for funds to be expended for the Open Meeting Lawsuit brought by **Chris Katucki**. **Town Clerk Bonnie Munday** spoke to the need to more carefully consider the transition to a new Clerk/Assistant Clerk team before making cuts, and said that eliminating the Assistant position could not be done without a vote of the Town. **Public Comments: Charlotte Metcalfe** spoke to the value of the Town Clerk’s position and to the wisdom of including the Assistant Town Clerk in the transition process. **Ernie Ciccotelli** stated that the Town Clerk position is the most important in Town government, that it preserves democracy through well-run elections, and is critical for providing access to land records. He noted that the **Assistant Town Clerk Judy Trussell** has worked in that position for a long time. **Nan Carroll** urged the Chair to limit comments to three minutes, and noted 4, 5, 7 minute comments plus interruptions. The meeting would be helped if order were kept. She

wanted to know how many other towns in Vermont have two full time Town Clerks. She would like the transition conversation to be less about personalities, and to consider that technology has changed the job. **Demo Sofronas** stated that face to face interactions in the Town Clerk's office are valuable. **Roger Arnold** stated that it is a common management practice to expect that the salary level for an incoming employee be considered for savings. **Town Clerk Bonnie Munday** expressed concern that a qualified candidate could be found and felt that the **Selectboard** was not taking the time to address her concerns. **Chair Marcia Calloway** suggested we take up this issue as an agenda item on January 11th. The next part of the discussion resulted in the decisions described above at the top of this section. **Public Comments: Omer Trajman** The budget is increasing and it is of concern. He asked that the **Selectboard** add an article to the Warrant for Town Meeting to determine if the public would prefer to have a fifth police officer. **Jaan Laaspere** wanted to know what are police wage increases based on? **Police Chief Wade Cochran** said the wages as stated would not be enough to cover what he had asked for. **Aaron Lamperti** reframed the question. The Police Chief can hire within the FY23 wage structure and union contract. We are working on the FY24 budget. The amounts in the draft budget are placeholder amounts. We have committed to using money from the Unexpected Expenses Fund to make up the difference. **Roger Arnold** stated that there may be other mechanisms to support hiring and that this **Selectboard** supports restoring staffing levels. **Amy Stringer** said it is difficult to understand why the Police budget is not being increased, and that the **Selectboard** should not use union negotiations as a screen. She was concerned that the Town of Norwich stands to lose three workers now. **Roger Arnold** asked for the source of her information. **Stringer** refused to reveal her source. **Steward Richards** was concerned that there is no money for the Moore bridge, and said of the Police budget that it is insulting to not accommodate on "what has been promised." It made no sense to delay hiring because of collective bargaining. **Chair Marcia Calloway** stated that "the bridge is in there. One hundred thousand dollars were added to the bridge fund." **Steward Richards** wanted to know what funds are allocated to replace the Tracy Hall boilers. **Calloway** stated that this is a separate process. **Manu Tesone** said it is clear what the **Selectboard's** position is regarding the police budget, and that is not giving the Chief what he says he needs. Where do you stand on a separate article for the warrant? **Roger Arnold** noted that the article would by statute be advisory only. **Cheryl Lindberg** stated that it did not make sense to defund the Listers and at the same time add other positions, and that producing the Grand List and maintaining a low Grievance list is the Lister's annual evaluation. **Marisa Lorenzo** supports adding the Recreation Department Assistant. **Ernie Ciccietelli** asked why add a Recreation assistant as opposed to adding another police officer? **Pam Smith** said the Listers "ask was misinterpreted." The Listers would like to keep track of hours worked and be placed within the Grade and Step chart, similar to the Town Clerk. **Linda Cook** asked if it was time for a forensic audit. **Town Clerk Bonnie Munday** asked about the timeline for completion of the audit, and whether it will be necessary to hold an audit presentation after Town Meeting. **Roger Arnold** advised to ask the Auditors to provide a letter for the Town Report, and to release the Auditor's Report as soon as it is complete **Chair Marcia Calloway** asked that **Interim Town Manager Brennan Duffy** follow up with the Auditors. He stated that he will work with **Interim Finance Director Joyce Hasbrouck** and the Auditors on this issue. **Pam Smith** asked if there is an accounting of hours for the

Regional Energy Coordinator, and do we have an accounting of hours when the salary is based on a “percentage.”

- 6) **Appointment of Interim Town Manager to Collective Bargaining process, action item:** **Roger Arnold** advised as part of the Bargaining Team that it would make sense to keep separation between the bargaining process and management. The **Interim Town Manager** needs to work with the **Department Heads** and then convey information to the **Selectboard**. The **Bargaining Team** needs to move expediently on a new contract. **Chair Marcia Calloway** said that the Interim Town Manager needs ongoing support and guidance from the **Selectboard** in order to be successful. **Roger Arnold** stated that resuming monthly Town Manager reports would be very helpful.
- 7) **Consent Agenda, action item: Layton moved, second by Gere to approve the Consent Agenda to include correspondence. Vote: Unanimous-Yes** The draft Minutes of 12/21/22 and 12/28/22 need corrections before they can be approved. **Mary Layton** will work with **Roger Arnold** to compile the corrections to enable final approval of these minutes. **Pam Smith** asked that **Selectboard** members present be listed. **Chair Marcia Calloway** referenced correspondence from **Linda Adante** regarding a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) prepared by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation and received by her as an abutter on 12/22/23. “The objective of the CAP is to implement corrective action(s) that effectively mitigate dermal and inhalation exposure pathways for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHS) within the soil of the property.” This soil is described by **Adante** as being located between her home at 31 McKenna Road and the **Lubin’s** home, and may be composed of fill deposited in 2003-2004. **Adante** shared this information to advise the **Selectboard** of this finding in her neighborhood and to ask for thoughts and expertise.
- 8) **Future Agenda Items and Meetings, action item:** Items for **January 11th** were identified as Town Moderator appointment, Warrant Articles including changing the first tax payment date, final budget approval, Town Clerk transition. Items for **January 18th** are Town Manager search, ARPA, Emergency work arrangements for Tracey Hall. It was noted that starting on January 15, 2023, a physical location for **Selectboard** meetings must be provided. The January 18th meeting will be the first hybrid meeting, that will possibly be located at the Public Safety Building. The various Committees, Boards, and Commissions need messaging about this resumption of in-person meetings. The resumption of in-person meetings will cause an increase in scheduling time and possible conflicts. Access to space could be affected by heating failure at Tracey Hall. The Selectboard decided to submit warrant articles by the January 25th meeting. **Town Clerk Bonnie Munday** will get back to the Selectboard about the first day that the warrant needs to be posted and regarding formal language for articles. **Demo Sofronas** thanked the Selectboard for their work and is pleased that the Departments are doing well.
- 9) **Adjournment: Arnold moved, second by Gere to adjourn. Vote: Unanimous-Yes.**
Time Adjourned: 10:02 pm.