

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, February 8, 2023, at 6:30 pm

This meeting was conducted in person at the Public Safety building at 10 Hazen Street, Norwich, VT. Members present: Marcia Calloway, Chair; Mary Layton, Vice Chair; Roger Arnold; Aaron Lamperti; Brennan Duffy, Interim Town Manager.

Also participating: Lily Trajman; Stuart Richards; Jaci Allen; Cheryl Lindberg; Pamela Smith; Will Smith; Matthew Hall; Peter Orner

1. Meeting convened at 6:30 pm.
2. Agenda Review. Calloway **moved** (2nd Lamperti) to approve the agenda. **Motion approved unanimously (4 yes; 0 no – Gere absent).**
3. Public Participation. Lily Trajman reported as a member of the Norwich School Board on two articles that will be on the town meeting ballot in March:
 - a) Solution for longstanding septic problems affecting the Marion Cross School (MCS) schoolyard. The article reflects that the School Board has selected the lower cost of the two proposals received. The proposals may be reviewed on the SAU website.
 - b) Rebuild MCS playground for ADA compliance.

Trajman said it is hoped the work on these two projects will be completed by this summer. In response to Arnold, she said a new handout is forthcoming that will have up-to-date links.

She also reported that the school board has concerns about potential problems with timely meeting payroll obligations if property tax collection dates are moved, as has been proposed. Allen asked as well for clarification of property tax payment schedules. Lindberg, as Town Treasurer, addressed potential cashflow issues if tax receipts are rescheduled.

Trajman said the School may require a loan to cover any temporary gap in payments by the Town, since no payments have been made by the Town to the School since August. Arnold said the problem stems from the fact that income-sensitivity payments to individuals from the State do not well-enough coincide with the School's need for revenue, such that some citizens might have difficulty paying property taxes while waiting for income-sensitivity transfer payments. Arnold says the situation is complicated by Norwich being in a bi-state school district. He mentioned that by law towns must transfer monies to local schools within twenty days of tax receipts.

On behalf of the Selectboard, Lamperti thanked Tom Candon for his long service on the School Board.

4. Consent Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Arnold) to approve the consent agenda, which included several sets of minutes. **Motion approved unanimously (4 yes; 0 no – Gere absent).**

5. Highway Mileage. Following explanatory comments from Duffy, Layton **moved** (2nd Lamperti) to correct the town highway map and mileage of town highways to adjust for all or part of Town Highway 59 having been discontinued in 1992, which had not been reflected on the map. **Motion approved unanimously (4 yes; 0 no – Gere absent).**

6. Tree Warden. Layton **moved** (2nd Lamperti) to appoint Matthew Hall as Tree Warden. Lamperti said in actuality, Hall had already started tree work, following recent storm damage. **Motion approved unanimously (4 yes; 0 no – Gere absent).**

7. Moderator. John Carroll having retired from the position mid-term, Peter Orner has applied to serve as Town Moderator in an interim capacity for the remainder of the current term. The Town is legally obligated to have a moderator in place in time for Town Meeting Day. Lamperti **moved** (2nd Layton) to appoint Orner to the position. **Motion approved unanimously (4 yes; 0 no – Gere absent).**

8. Zoning Administrator. Allen reported that the Planning Commission is “very pleased” with the support received from TRORRC and unanimously supports their employee, Kyle Katz, as a candidate for acting Zoning Administrator while the search continues for a permanent replacement. Duffy reported that unfortunately there are currently no candidates, one having just recently withdrawn from consideration. Katz is able to allocate six hours per week to the temporary position, which will have to be sufficient in the leadup to Town Meeting.

Duffy noted that while the Zoning Administrator ordinarily reports to the Town Manager, because he is interim himself, that will be the Select Board’s responsibility.

Layton **moved** (2nd Lamperti) to accept the recommendation of the Planning Commission to appoint a temporary Zoning Administrator. **Motion approved unanimously (4 yes; 0 no – Gere absent).**

Layton **moved** (2nd Lamperti) to authorize the Interim Town Manager to enter into a contract with TRORRC for an interim Zoning Administrator. It is understood that this means the Town is indirectly hiring Katz, as recommended by the Planning Commission and will accept billing by TRORRC accordingly. Duffy noted that in this instance, TRORRC is acting essentially as an employment agency, so Katz will be paid through them. **Motion approved unanimously (4 yes; 0 no – Gere absent).**

9. Next Meeting and Town Meeting Preparation. The February 22 Selectboard meeting will be the last before Town Meeting and the formation of a new Selectboard. Duffy reported that the auditors have informed him they will not have their full report ready by that date and he's "not confident" they will even have it ready for the new Board's organizational meeting on March 6. As Arnold pointed out, this may violate the Town's statutory obligations. Calloway said she will ask the auditing firm to at least provide the minimum amount of information the State absolutely requires.

10. Major Issues Remaining. Calloway cited these as essential for any new Select Board to address:

Capital projects

Town Manager search

Energy efficiencies

Tracy Hall renovations

ARPA monies

Regarding ARPA, Calloway said the Town is "not allowed to have a reserve account for that money." This was echoed by Lindberg, who said, "This is not a reserve fund, this is a grant." Duffy said the issue will need to be clarified for the voters prior to their voting on the warrant to create just such a fund that has already been placed on the ballot and cannot now be revoked.

Arnold said the Board needs to draft language for RFPs to go to agencies in the searches for Zoning Administrator and Town Manager in terms of scope of work and required expertise. Calloway volunteered to move this process along and will bring a draft of specifications to the next meeting.

Calloway reported she has a list of search firms that should receive these RFPs. Layton said the search for Town Manager may have to be national in scope.

Layton volunteered to develop bullet points for an RFQ to hire an HR consultant.

Lamperti said the documents should be understood as requests for qualifications (RFQs) rather than for proposals (RFPs) if the intent is to evaluate the qualifications of search firms rather than potential applicants for the positions themselves.

On Tracy Hall, Lamperti said a report from "Living Buildings" on options for upgrades and renovations is anticipated and Duffy reported it is expected by about mid-March.

Calloway said that, among other things, the February 22 meeting should address the financial audit and the presentation the Board will make at Town Meeting.

There was discussion of the “Kids’ Bridge” and the need for the associated trail to be ADA compliant, including regular inspections.

Calloway opined that the Town needs a thorough re-working of its websites so that, for example, a newcomer to town might readily find whatever information they might seek on where to go for what. Layton cautioned that such efforts run the risk of overburdening volunteers. Lamperti mentioned that on at least one Town webpage, “I’m Claudette.”

It was agreed that topics addressed at the next meeting will include a revised schedule for payments to the school as well as presentations to be made at Town Meeting by Interim Town Manager Duffy and Interim Finance Director Joyce Hasbrouck. How best to prepare the new Board will be discussed as well.

Executive Session. Layton **moved** (2nd Lamperti) to move into executive session at 8:28 pm. **Motion approved unanimously (4 yes; 0 no – Gere absent).**

Layton **moved** (2nd Lamperti) to re-enter public session at 9:06 pm. **Motion approved unanimously (4 yes; 0 no – Gere absent).**

8. Adjournment. Layton **moved** (2nd Lamperti) to adjourn at 9:07 pm. **Motion approved unanimously (4 yes; 0 no – Gere absent).**

Approved by the Selectboard on February 22, 2023

Marcia Calloway, Selectboard Chair

Next meeting on February 22, 2023 at 6:30

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