

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, March 22, 2023, at 6:30 pm

This hybrid meeting was held in the Multipurpose Room in Tracy Hall.

Members present: Marcia Calloway, Chair; Mary Layton, Vice Chair; Roger Arnold; Pamela Smith; Priscilla Vincent; and Brennan Duffy, Interim Town Manager
Also participating: Richard Brigham, CPA, Sullivan Powers & Co., P.C.; Cheryl Lindberg, Treasurer; Christopher Kaufman, Director, Department of Public Works; Brie Swenson, Recreation Department Director; Stuart Richards; Demosthenes Sofronas

1. Welcome. Calloway brought the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

2. Agenda Review. Arnold moved, seconded by Layton, to approve with elimination of Item 11. After discussion, motion failed. Arnold: Yes; Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent: No. Arnold moved, seconded by Smith, to approve the agenda. Passed unanimously.

3. Auditors' presentation. The Town's current auditor, Rick Brigham of Sullivan Powers & Co. joined via Zoom to report on their findings. He noted that this was not an easy audit to perform, particularly because without crucial signatures, they could not make judgments based explicitly on the numbers supplied by the Town. While the financial consultant was of considerable assistance, her status as an outsider was a considerable limitation. Brigham said, however, that while their report outlines material weaknesses and deficiencies, he "totally thinks" those will be adequately addressed in the audit report for 2023. Smith asked if the current report may affect the Town's credit rating and ability to bond or get loans. Brigham responded that he did not think that will be a problem.

Brigham said drawing conclusions regarding the Town's finances is complicated by the need to adopt GAAP rules in the context of an auditor's report. Pressed on the matter by Smith, however, he assured that he is confident that the Town does currently enjoy a substantial budget surplus.

Arnold asked Brigham to comment on the management of cash associated with fees at the transfer station, inquiring how much of a concern are the lack of internal controls. He responded that it is a significant concern not only in Norwich but in other towns as well and ideally, tickets for disposal at the transfer station would be sold exclusively at the Town Hall.

Brigham demurred when asked by Smith what an appropriate level of debt might be in specific terms but stated that compared to other communities of similar size, what the Town carries at present is “not an overwhelming amount of debt.”

Brigham’s main recommendation is to improve fiscal management through better policy manuals and adherence thereto. Calloway responded that the Board intends to use the VLCT’s recommendations as a guide in this regard.

Richards expressed particular concern about legal expenses, though Calloway pointed out that those are not within the purview of the audit.

4. Town Manager Report. Duffy requested that a special meeting be held given the amount of time that will be necessary to address the issues currently in play, noting though that retention bonus payments are due at the end of the present month. The Board agreed to schedule a special meeting for March 29, stipulating that it should last no more than two hours. Arnold cautioned that such precedents may make service on the Board appear untenable for working people with family obligations.

5. Finance Report. Smith noted with continuing concern that again the report was not signed by the interim Finance Director. She agreed to draft her questions and run them by Duffy as well as the Finance Director.

6. Receipt of Correspondence Policy. Smith moved to amend the policy to delete the words, “or four days prior to a special meeting” from the second paragraph and the entirety of the last paragraph, “All correspondence not requiring Selectboard action will be received in one motion.” Seconded by Layton. Passed unanimously.

7. Rules of Conduct of Regular and Special Meetings of the Selectboard. Calloway had modeled the current draft after the VLCT. There was extensive discussion of possible edits, with consensus prevailing. Smith moved, seconded by Vincent, to approve the policy as revised, which are to be signed at the next meeting. Passed unanimously.

8. Consent Agenda. There was general discussion of potential changes to policies concerning consent agendas in general, including the possibility of dispensing with them entirely, reaching consensus that they will be addressed further at a future meeting. Arnold moved, seconded by Smith, to approve the consent agenda for the current meeting. Sofronas expressed concern that the March 8 minutes had not reflected his contribution favoring the purchase of a new police cruiser to put the

cruiser replacement policy back on track. Duffy noted that those minutes also inaccurately reported that the meeting was convened by Calloway when it was actually convened by him.

Kaufman defended the DPW's practice of reimbursing employees for incidental expenses, such as for food and eating utensils during long shifts necessitated by storm conditions.

Calloway and Layton agreed to bring a draft of a "comprehensive" policies and procedures document to the next regular meeting.

Motion to approve the consent agenda, including the March 8 minutes with the amendments discussed passed unanimously.

9. RFPs (3) for DPW re line striping, culverts, generator. Kaufman described the bid process for extensive but necessary culvert work and line striping in various places around Town. Bids have been accepted for the non-routine work the DPW will not complete on their own.

Arnold moved, seconded by Layton, to authorize the Interim Town Manager to approve the bid by L&D Safety Marking Corporation to complete line striping work for an amount not to exceed \$70,223.00, to be paid from operating budget funds for FY2023 and FY2024. Approved unanimously. Kaufman explained that this work will be divided, such that one half will be paid in this fiscal year and one half in the next.

Arnold moved, seconded by Layton, to authorize the Interim Town Manager to approve the bid by Webster & Donovan Excavating, Inc. to complete culvert work on Beaver Meadow Road for an amount not to exceed \$99,750.00, to be paid in part by \$39,500 from a VTrans 2022 Grants-In-Aid and in part by a \$60,250.00 expenditure from the Bridge Designated Fund. Passed unanimously.

Arnold moved, seconded by Layton, to authorize the expenditure of \$24,160 for the completion of culvert work by DPW staff on New Boston Road, to be paid in part by \$19,300 from the 2022 Better Roads Grant and in part by \$4,860 from the Bridge Designated Fund. Passed unanimously. Kaufman confirmed that these costs are almost entirely for materials, as the labor will be in-house.

Arnold moved, seconded by Layton, to authorize the Interim Town Manager to approve the bid by Brook Field Service Company to supply and install a new generator for the DPW for an amount not to exceed \$48,563.00 to be paid from the Generator designated fund. Kaufman said one generator from another application was over fifty years old and decrepit while the other, inherited from the fire station was over twenty years old and had not been installed at the DPW. Recent storms had tested these units to failure. The new systems will be monitored remotely. The bid includes all work and materials, including removing and disposing of the old pad(s), as well as ongoing maintenance. Layton and Arnold spoke in favor, noting that while these will be powered with propane, because they will serve only as a backup source of power, they are consistent with the spirit at least of the Town's climate and energy plans. Motion approved unanimously.

10. RFPs (2) for softball and baseball field reconstruction. Swenson explained the need for reconstruction of two playing fields, noting that the work can be fully funded by the Girard Fund because its value has risen sufficiently. Kaufman said the DPW cannot complete the work involved so put it out for bids and received only one, at \$17,000 per field. The contractor volunteered to include the bases, their anchors, and installation at no additional cost.

Arnold moved, seconded by Layton, to authorize the Interim Town Manager to approve the bid by Valley Turf Services to complete reconstruction of the softball field and the Girard Baseball Field for an amount not to exceed \$34,000.00 to be paid from the Girard Fund. Passed unanimously.

11. Possible Article 10 revote action. Tabled, per discussion.

12. Extend TRORC contract ending 03/31/2023 for Zoning assistance. Arnold moved, seconded by Layton, to authorize the Interim Town Manager to sign the Addendum for Contract Extension, as included in the meeting packet, to secure municipal zoning services to be provided by Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission staff. Passed unanimously.

Adjournment. Smith moved, seconded by Layton, to adjourn the meeting. Passed unanimously at 10:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Ralph C. Hybels, Minutes Taker

Approved by the Selectboard on April 12, 2023

Marcia Calloway, Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – April 12, 2023 at 6:30

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SELECTBOARD