

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, February 22, 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; Rob Gere; Brennan Duffy, Interim Town Manager.

Also participating: Manu Tesone; Cheryl Lindberg, Town Treasurer

1. Meeting **convened** at 6:30 PM.
2. Agenda Review. Calloway noted there was no new correspondence for consideration. It was agreed to drop Item 9 from the agenda because no one was there to represent the schools.

Lamperti said constituents have asked why the SB is not currently running hybrid (in-person and Zoom) meetings. Calloway responded that it is her understanding that a prototype of the hybrid model is currently being tested in Hartford, with the goal being to roll it out to all towns. Calloway also noted there has been a technical problem with Zoom in this meeting room. Lamperti hopes a solution will be pushed for. Duffy reported there is capacity in the room for dedicated hardware to run hybrid meetings if the Board requests its functionality to be implemented. Arnold said the \$500 current outlay for the Town's Zoom license is hard to justify if it's not being used. However, there is evident consensus on the Board to pursue the hybrid option. Layton asked why the \$500 license is necessary for multiple users—"seems like an important thing to sort out." Calloway said they should advise the new Board to make this issue a top priority.

Layton **moved** (2nd Lamperti) to approve the agenda as amended. **Motion approved unanimously (5 yes; 0 no).**

3. Annual Town Meeting General Information Update. There was general discussion of preparations for the Board's Annual Town Meeting General Information Update. Calloway said because there are technical uncertainties that may not be surmounted in time for Town Meeting, the Board should solicit questions from the public to be received by 4:30 PM, March 1 rather than depend on the proper electronic systems to be reliably available in time for the public's use at Town Meeting. Arnold suggested having a second information meeting to be certain everyone has a chance to pose questions. Calloway responded that having duplicative meetings could be problematic. The idea was not pursued further.

Arnold reminded the Board that it had provided a Zoom option at last year's Town Meeting so the public could readily pose questions from a distance.

Lindberg asked if the public would still have opportunities for questions during Town Meeting itself. The answer was "Yes".

Calloway said the informational meeting for the public will be properly warned, including on the Norwich Listserv.

4. Annual Town Audit Update. Duffy reported that the auditing firm has provided an initial draft of their report and on Friday will supply an electronic copy to be reviewed and finalized for general distribution by staff in print form.

Lindberg, Town Treasurer, advised the Selectboard that she had also received the draft audit documents and had done a preliminary review. She noticed that she, as Town Treasurer, was included as a signer on the Letter of Representation to the Auditor. She let the Selectboard know that she has concerns about being able to sign the letter which included 45 representations about financial matters of which she has not been included. Lindberg said she has “been kept out of most of the procedures and routines” relevant to the audit, which has contributed to her concern. Calloway said she would want to know which specific items in the auditors’ report will be within Lindberg’s “jurisdiction” as Treasurer and which will not.

Arnold said he thought it “wildly inappropriate” to discuss an audit before it is in the hands of the Board. Manu Tesone asked the Selectboard and the Interim Town Manager if they knew what the consequences might be if the representations are made without their having been officially approved via signatures by key people, such as Lindberg as Treasurer.

5. January 2023 Financials. The interim Finance Director, Joyce Hasbrouck, could not be at this meeting, but has submitted notes regarding some key issues which were reproduced in the packet for the present Selectboard meeting. On page 3, for example, she describes how she’s working to better document the allocation of quarterly bonuses, of which she anticipates presenting a full accounting by April.

6. Interim Town Manager Report. Duffy commended the interim Finance Director for the late hours she put in to enable completion of the most recent round of tax collection. He also reported that Kyle Katz, who is on loan from TRRPC to temporarily cover the duties of Planning Director while the search for a permanent replacement continues, has been working for the Town two times a week, 8 AM to 11:30 AM. He has been making good progress working with the assistant in that office, Pam Mullen, to address outstanding applications related to planning and zoning. The ad hoc committee working on recruiting a permanent Planning Director/Zoning Administrator has received only a couple inquiries thus far, but Duffy expects that to improve some once a more formal process is in place. The ad hoc search committee is comprised of himself as well as one member each from the Planning Commission and the DRB. Following a reminder from Arnold, Calloway recommended Duffy consult Town attorneys to be sure the OML is adhered to, particularly in regard to properly warning meetings.

Duffy reported that Sergeant Stuart Rogers will join the Police Force March 6th. He also said some responses have come in regarding recent RFPs, such as for line striping on Town highways and installation of an emergency generator system.

Duffy hopes to have monthly department head meetings going forward.

He praised Miranda Bergmeier for the work involved in preparing and distributing the new Town Report.

Responding to Arnold's inquiry, Duffy said he will pursue more information regarding necessary steps for ADA-certified compliance of the trails in the Milt Frye Nature Area.

Regarding the Huntley Meadow bridge, Duffy reported that approximately \$3,600 has been spent to date on repairs and renovations, with about \$13,000 remaining in the fund. He believes additional fundraising likely will be necessary to bring the current work to completion.

7. Consent Agenda. Layton requested clarification as to what sets of minutes were under consideration, particularly from the February 8 meeting, which had an initial version that then was superseded by one incorporating revisions (both appear in the SB packet for this meeting). Consensus emerged to have the motion to approve include reference to the draft minutes for February 8 "as amended." Layton so **moved**, seconded by Lamperti, and the **motion passed unanimously**.

8. Approve Liquor Licenses. Layton **moved**, seconded by Gere and it was **passed unanimously** to reconvene as the Norwich Liquor Commission at 7:37 PM to consider applications for liquor license extensions from King Arthur Flour, the Norwich Inn, and Dan & Whit's. Layton **moved** to that effect, seconded by Gere, **passed unanimously**.

The Selectboard **reconvened** at 7:38 PM.

9. Agenda item dropped, per agenda setting discussion and motion, above.

10. Selectboard Presentation for Annual Meeting. The Board discussed Lamperti's draft of its report for Town Meeting. Consensus was it should be more brief. Calloway suggested it be condensed to a single slide with bullet points and make clear that at Town Meeting the Board will focus primarily on the budget. Lamperti will create a final draft reflecting the Board's wishes. Lamperti said he will only briefly introduce the summary report at Town Meeting and then members may participate in discussions as appropriate.

11. 2023 Road Mileage Certificate. Layton **moved**, seconded by Lamperti, to correct the Town Highway Map by subtracting 0.25 mi. of Class 3 road and 0.25 mi. of Class 4 road, thus eliminating Town Highway 59, which formerly connected the upper end of Elm St. to Bragg Hill Rd., it having been discontinued in 1992 but inadvertently left on the Map and therefore yielding inaccurate total mileage numbers for the Town highways. **Motion passed unanimously**.

Layton **moved**, seconded by Gere, to authorize the Selectboard Chair to sign the letter included in this meeting's packet addressed to the Vermont Agency of Transportation clarifying the Board's decisions regarding Town Highway 59. **Motion passed unanimously**

12. Executive Session. Layton **moved**, seconded by Gere and it was **approved unanimously**, to enter into executive session to discuss personnel matters and with Duffy as interim Town Manager participating. Executive session began at 8 PM.

Resumption of Public Meeting. Layton **moved**, seconded by Gere, to re-enter public session. **Motion Passed unanimously**. Regular meeting resumed 8:08 PM.

Layton **moved**, seconded by Gere, and **passed unanimously**, to authorize the interim Town Manager to hire the candidate for a position as Equipment Operator in the DPW as was discussed in executive session, pending successful completion of drug and alcohol screening.

The next meeting will be the organizational meeting for the new Selectboard.

Adjournment. Layton **moved** (2nd Lamperti) to adjourn at 8:12 PM. **Motion approved unanimously**.

Respectfully submitted,

Ralph C. Hybels, Acting Clerk.

Approved by Selectboard on March 8, 2023

Marcia Calloway, Selectboard Chair

Next meeting March 8,2023 at 6:30pm

Please Note: CATV POSTS RECORDINGS OF ALL REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE NORWICH SELECTBOARD