

Minutes of the Special Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, April 12, 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

Also participating: Brennan Duffy, Interim Town Manager; Christopher Kaufman, Director, Department of Public Works; Cheryl Lindberg, Treasurer; Alexander Northern, Fire Chief; Nancy Osgood, Historic Preservation Commission; Luke O'Neil, Simpson Brook Farm; Jeffrey Grout, Municipal Energy Resilience Program; Linda Gray

1. Welcome. Calloway brought the meeting to order at 6:36 PM.

2. Agenda Review. Calloway asked to add an action item for the approval of a liaison to the School Committee, which was agreed to by consensus. Vincent expressed concern about the frequency of last-minute additions to the Selectboard packets.

Layton moved, seconded by Smith, to approve the proposed agenda. **Passed** with four Yes votes and one abstention (Vincent).

3. Minutes. Consideration was given to the minutes of March 15, 22, and 29. It was agreed that those of March 15 misstated the Town Clerk's salary and should be corrected. It also was agreed that in the March 29 minutes, the words, "Smith argued" should be replaced with "Smith expressed concern."

Layton moved approval of the three sets of minutes, seconded by Vincent. **Passed** unanimously.

4. Correspondence. Calloway stated in response to communications from Stuart Richards that the Board could not publicly address at that time issues currently in litigation or collective bargaining.

Layton moved, seconded by Arnold, to accept correspondence as included in Selectboard meeting packet. **Passed** unanimously.

5. AP Warrant. Layton moved, seconded by Smith to approve check warrant #988 in the amount of \$53,772.26 and check warrant #989 in the amount of \$187,831.00. **Passed** unanimously.

Retail Cannabis. Luke O’Neil, an owner of Simpson Brook Farm, addressed the Board to inquire how they may initiate the process leading to a Town vote to allow them to establish a retail cannabis operation in Norwich. Calloway responded that the next opportunity for such a vote will be in March 2024 and referred him to the guidelines provided on the Town website and recommended they seek guidance also from the Town Clerk’s office regarding the petitioning process. He asked if the Board might consider calling for a special vote prior to that date.

Calloway further noted that all parties should follow the procedures approved by the State’s Cannabis Control Board. O’Neil concurred.

6. Minutes of Schema Task 2 Working Group meeting; Outline of Responsibilities & Outstanding Work.

Calloway asked that this item be **tabled** for a future meeting.

7. Recreation Department Assistant job description.

This item was also **tabled** since the Recreation Director was out of town.

8. IREC / Energy Committee work presentation. Jeff Grout of the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP), whose presentation was provided in this meeting’s packet, joined the meeting via Zoom. He discussed the process to follow in obtaining grant funding for energy-related projects. In particular, he recommended applying for an initial “mini grant,” whose application requirements are not at all burdensome. Grout also addressed potential geothermal applications for the Town offices, including what would be involved in developing “thermal mass” as a resource to address both heating and cooling needs. Arnold expressed particular concern about how that might reduce available interior space by expanding the floor space occupied by external walls.

Linda Gray voiced support for Grout’s recommendations.

Arnold moved, seconded by Layton to direct the interim Town Manager to work with Grout and the MERP to complete an application for the mini grant as discussed. **Passed** unanimously.

9. Interim Town Manager Contract. Calloway noted that the current contract expires June 30, 2023 and it was agreed that the Board will need to address this issue at the April 26 meeting.

10. Reports Submitted. The Police Chief's report was **tabled** until the April 26 meeting at the request of Chief Cochran.

Lindberg reported on arrangements she has made for the reappraisal firm, KRT, to present their plan for a Townwide reappraisal at a public forum on May 2, 2023 at 7pm in the multi-purpose room.

Smith volunteered to serve as liaison to the School Board, which appointment Layton moved to make, seconded by Vincent. **Passed** with four Yes and Smith abstaining.

11. Local Emergency Management Plan Adoption. The Fire Chief, Alex Northern, joined via Zoom. He commented that the recent smoke event in Tracy Hall did not qualify as a "local emergency." He also said that while the official version of the Plan will include personal contact details for relevant officials, those will be redacted in the version for more general public distribution.

Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to adopt the Local Emergency Management Plan as presented, and to authorize the appropriate signatures, as required. **Passed** unanimously.

12. DPW Request for Two Grant Applications (Paving and Structures). Chris Kaufman joined via Zoom to review these grant applications.

Layton moved, seconded by Arnold, to approve applying for the Municipal Highway Grant for repaving on Beaver Meadow Road. **Passed** unanimously.

Layton moved, seconded by Arnold to approve applying for the Municipal Highway Grant for culvert work on Route 132. **Passed** unanimously.

13. Public Safety Facility Fund Overdraft. This item was **tabled** until a future meeting.

14. Finance Dept. Request re: Underpaid Property Tax. There are some instances of delinquent taxes in small amounts that require outlays associated with ongoing collections efforts. Lindberg said she had learned on a listserv for town clerks and

treasurers that any write-off of such accounts cannot be authorized by anyone other than a selectboard, including any delinquent tax collector.

Smith moved, seconded by Layton, to authorize a one-time write-off of delinquent tax amounts of less than \$5.00 per parcel. This is not to make this a matter of policy in perpetuity but was further specified as being a part of any future financial plan and delinquent tax policy review. **Passed** unanimously.

15. Amended Resolution for Municipal Planning Grant. Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to approve the Amended Resolution for Municipal Planning Grant, as presented. **Passed** unanimously.

16. Historic Preservation Commission Request re: Grant Application. Nancy Osgood was invited to join the meeting to discuss this grant application. She reported that while it has already been accepted, it requires a signed grant agreement and the selection of a consultant. Duffy added that although this is a “matching grant,” the Town’s contribution, rather than any outlay of cash, will be limited to “in-kind services” provided by existing staff with associated billable hours amounting to \$7,500 to be reimbursed by the State.

Layton moved, seconded by Smith, to execute the grant agreement for the Jones Circle Historic District National Register nomination. **Passed** unanimously.

17 Approve Liquor Licenses. Layton moved, seconded by Smith to recess the Selectboard meeting. Passed unanimously at 9 PM. Vincent moved, seconded by Layton, to convene as the Norwich Liquor Commission. **Passed** unanimously at 9 PM.

Layton moved, seconded by Smith, to approve liquor license applications for Carpenter & Main and Norwich Wines & Spirits. **Passed** unanimously.

Layton moved, seconded by Smith, to close the Norwich Liquor Commission session and reconvene the Selectboard meeting. **Passed** unanimously at 9:04 PM.

18 Prescription Opiate Litigation. Calloway noted that were the Town to not join the class-action opiate litigation, as Town counsel has advised, the Town would forfeit any opportunity to sue as an individual plaintiff. The vote in question was to authorize the interim Town Manager to act on the Town’s behalf to sign onto the class action.

Layton moved, seconded by Arnold, to join the new national opioid settlements and authorize the Interim Town Manager to execute the settlement documents. **Passed** with four members voting Yes, while Smith abstained.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting. These include the interim Town Manager’s contract, the Town Manager search, police issues, certificate of compliance regarding roads and bridges, committee appointments, job descriptions for the Recreation Director and the new assistant position to be filled.

Adjournment. Layton moved to adjourn, seconded by Smith. **Passed** unanimously at 9:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ralph C. Hybels, Minutes Taker

Approved by the Selectboard on April 26, 2023

Marcia Calloway, Selectboard Chair