

Norwich Selectboard Special Meeting
Minutes
November 22, 2022

1. Welcome and Chair's remarks: The Chair is pleased to see public participation. A reordering of future agendas inspired by input from John Carroll will be used starting with the next meeting.
2. Agenda Review: Layton moved, second by Arnold to add Public Participation as Agenda Item #3 and to approve the agenda as amended. Vote: Yes-Unanimous
3. Public Participation: Manu Tesone regarding a Holiday Party with Stand Up For Norwich on 12/8 from 7 to 10 at the Norwich Inn. Chris Verges is concerned about the recent resignation of Planning Coordinator Aaron DeNamur, as it leaves the permitting process in limbo. The Chair redirected him to the Planning Commission. Linda Cook asked for a Special Meeting to discuss the Moore Lane bridge. Cheryl Lindberg wanted to know if the Financial Statements in the packet would be discussed. Jaci Allen, Chair of the Planning Commission expressed sadness about losing Aaron and announced two special meetings to address how to move forward. Susan Barrett echoed the sadness and about the "toxic environment." Arline Rotman also sad about Aaron and noted that the Developmental Review Board is greatly affected by this event. The Planning Commission can hire an acting Zoning Administrator which would allow building permits to be granted. Stuart Richards supported the letter in the packet by Jaan Laaspere and Amy Stringer.
4. Consent Agenda. Layton moved, second by Gere, to approve the consent agenda and to pull correspondence by Peter Orner, Jaan Laaspere, and Peter Gregory. Vote: Yes-Unanimous. The Orner and Laaspere letters are to be forwarded to DPW Director Chris Kaufman. The letter from Peter Gregory of TRROC is relevant to agenda item number 7(b)(i).
5. Executive Session regarding Rosenbloom v. Town of Norwich. Layton moved to find that premature public knowledge of privileged attorney-client communications for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the Norwich Select board would clearly place the Town and a substantial disadvantage by disclosing privileged communications and possibly waiving privilege, and to invite counsel. Vote: Yes-Unanimous. Layton moved to enter executive session to consider privileged attorney-client communications under 1V.S.A section 313(a)(1)(F). Vote: Yes-Unanimous. Time entered executive session: 6:58 pm. Arnold moved, second by Lamperti to enter public session. Vote: Yes-Unanimous. Time entered public session 7:18 pm.
6. Former Town Manager List of Priorities: Aaron Lamperti met with former Town Manager Rod Francis three times for two hours per meeting. The first meeting covered the daily, weekly, monthly, yearly routine tasks such as payroll review, Accounts Payable review,

budget preparation, Town Report, Town Meeting, and the Audit. Several important dates were listed: January 11th (Final Budget and Audit if available), January 18th (warrant articles including moving the summer property tax payment to early September), February 9th (Town Report finalized), and March 7th Town Meeting Day. The subsequent meetings covered projects. The Beaver Meadow Sidewalk study and the Waste Water study are not moving forward due to lack of staffing. There are funds coming from a Federal Opioid settlement. An inspection is required for the ABA trail at the Milton Frye Area. Applications are needed for paving and other roadway grants. A fund dedicated to ARPA funds needs to be established and an administrator hired. Collective bargaining is ongoing with Roger Arnold and Mary Layton working with Town Counsel to represent the town. Staff evaluations are due on the anniversary of the date of hire. Huntley Meadow will need renovations (already approved by the Selectboard). The Moore Lane bridge issue needs a long term solution. The Town wide reappraisal is needed. The pedestrian bridge planned for Huntley meadow needs a design update although has had conditional review by the DRB. There needs to be an emergency plan for Tracy Hall. Rod is finishing the transition report and will return the town's computer at that point. He is available for 10 hours per week consultation through January.

7. Budget Preparation:

The Chair noted that the accounts for the current fiscal year are being corrected to show the actual levels of the general fund and the designated funds. This work should be completed by the end of November.

Bonnie Munday expressed concern about the vault being flooded during an emergency at Tracy Hall. Susan Barrett concerned about the "Town Manager To Do List." Charlotte Metcalfe reiterated her stance regarding leaving Tracy Hall in a vulnerable position until more long term solutions can be found.

Police Chief Wade Cochran spoke regarding the proposed Police Department budget. He is concerned about the ten year replacement schedule for the cruisers and stated that industry standard is 3.5 years. The fleet includes a 2022 Toyota RAV with 1000 miles, 2020 Ford Explorer Hybrid with 20,000 miles, 2017 Ford Explorer with 90,000 miles, 2013 Ford Taurus with 90,000 miles, and a 2013 Ford Taurus with 124,000 miles (slated for auction). A new Hybrid Ford Explorer is on order but delivery may be delayed to July 2024. Chief Cochran would like to see a significant increase in pay rates to offer to officer candidates in order to compete in the current market. He estimated that an increase of \$161,350 would cover this. There was wide spread discussion of what positions are available to be filled versus how many have been funded in recent years. Three patrol officers, a sergeant, the Chief, a Community Service Officer, and an administrative assistant/dispatcher were mentioned by the Chief. Layton, Arnold, and Lamperti's understanding is that "three officers" could mean three patrol officers or two

patrol officers and a sergeant. There are currently three applicants in the background check process. Hartford Dispatch cost has increased from \$75,258 to \$95,800.

Manu Tesone pleased with the hire of Chief Cochran, thinks the police budget should reflect the current reality of the market, and looks forward to having the department “rebuilt.” Susan Barrett asked for comparable figures from other towns of similar size. Charlotte Metcalfe would like to have full staffing, 24/7 coverage, and wants the town to “listen to their Chief.”

Fire Chief Alex Northern and Deputy Chief Matt Swett spoke about the Fire Department budget. There are no big changes. The department needs to replace breathing apparatus, bunker gear, portable radios from its Equipment Fund. It also will purchase an extrication tool (Jaws of Life.) The Fire District Prudential Committee has proposed to increase hydrant rental expense from \$36,440 to \$120,000. This item has been flagged as a future agenda item.

The Selectboard agreed by consensus to continue to fund the TRORC Regional Energy Coordinator cost.

The creation of an Assistant Manager position was discussed. The tasks that could be expected ranged from administrative support, Human Resources, and website maintenance. An advantage of creating this position could be creating a line of succession and sharing institutional knowledge. Disadvantages are cost of salary and benefits, need for additional office space, and a goal of trying to maintain the status quo for this budget cycle. The idea is still under consideration.

8. Appointments to the Reappraisal Review Committee: Arnold moved, second by Gere, to amend the composition of the Reappraisal Review Committee to include a member of the School Board and a member of the public. Vote: Yes-Unanimous. Arnold moved, second by Gere, to appoint Neal Odell and Arline Rotman to the Reappraisal Review Committee. Vote: Yes-Unanimous.
9. Interim and Fulltime Town Manager positions. Layton moved, second by Lamperti, to enter executive session to consider appointment of public employee under 1 V.S.A. section 313(a)(3). Vote: Yes-Unanimous. Time entered executive session: 9:30 pm. Arnold moved, second by Lamperti to enter public session. Vote: Yes-Unanimous. Time entered public session: 10:11 pm. Layton moved, second by Lamperti that the Selectboard proceed with interviewing for the Interim Town Manager position. Vote: Yes-Unanimous.
10. Consideration of and response to Open Meeting Law violations. Layton moved, second by Gere, to deny the Notice of Violation as to the Executive Session held on October 24, 2022. Vote: Yes-Unanimous. Layton moved, second by Lamperti, to deny the Notice of Violation as to the Executive Session held on November 7, 2022. Vote: Yes-Unanimous.

11. Board minutes and remuneration. Miranda Bergmeier is no longer able to record the Selectboard minutes. The minutes of this meeting were taken by Mary Layton on a temporary basis. Lamperti moved, second by Layton, to authorize the advertisement in the Valley News, the listserv, and on Indeed for a person to take the minutes of the Selectboard offering a base salary of \$25 per hour depending on experience or other qualifications. Vote: Yes-Unanimous.
12. Possible Affordable Housing Subcommittee grant proposal. The proposal was presented by Jeff Lubell. The 24 acre parcel is owned by the Town and includes the Transfer Station and Department of Public Works facility. Uncertainty about the exact location of an uncapped landfill on the north side of the DPW access road, as well as uncertainty about the level of administrative support available caused Lubell to withdraw the proposal. Neil Fulton stated that when the radio tower was installed evidence of an uncapped landfill was evident. Lubell welcomes information about available land for affordable housing.
13. Emergency work location for officials and staff at Tracy Hall. Discussion centered on what accommodations could be made for staff displaced by an emergency closure of Tracy Hall. Suggestions were rented office space and using the conference room at the Public Safety building. Bonnie Munday expressed concern about documents in the vault being damaged by the sprinkler system. Neil Fulton commented that the sprinklers are dry with special adjustments for the vault.
14. Board review of future agenda items: Hydrant rental, Budget, Town Manager Search, ARPA deadlines, Elected Officials and Town Staff, ABA trail inspection.
15. Adjournment. Layton moved to adjourn, second by Gere. Time motion made: 10:59. Time adjourned 11:00 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on December 14, 2022

Marcia Calloway, Selectboard Chair

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