

Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Monday, September 28, 2022, at 6:30 pm

This meeting was conducted via teleconference using ZOOM according to Open Meeting Law requirements. Members present: Roger Arnold, Chair; Mary Layton, Vice Chair; Marcia Calloway; Robert Gere; Aaron Lamperti, Rod Francis, Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

Also participating: Stuart Richards, Demo Sofronas, Fielding Essensa, Mary Gorman, Jaan Laaspere, Cheryl Lindberg.

1. Convene Meeting. Meeting convened at 6:30 PM
2. Agenda Review. Layton moved (2nd Gere) to approve the agenda to include discussion of Route 132 culvert replacement. Motion approved unanimously.
3. Public participation. Stuart Richards expressed concern about DPW and police department staffing; he requested a public question-and-answer meeting. Demo Sofronas requested that the SB conduct a question-and-answer period in a meeting.
4. Follow-up Discussion on Tax Payments, Rebates and Town Refunds. Rod Francis introduced the topic and handed over to Fielding Essensa (Finance Director), who explained there has been a disconnect between mortgage escrow agents and the town over payment of tax bills. Because the town's first tax due date is as early as it is, the town has to mail out tax bills before we have all relevant information from the state. Essensa and Francis discussed frequently asked questions, which were shown onscreen. [these FAQs will be posted on the Norwich website] After some discussion, SB members agreed to table the issue of whether to place an article on the warrant to move the tax due date.
5. Town Manager's Report. Francis announced that Fielding Essensa is leaving the Finance Director position effective October 5, 2022. SB members thanked Essensa for his service and praised his work. Mary Gorman asked about how many employees have left town employ and whether we would conduct an exit interview with Essensa. Arnold said yes, we would, and there is a document on the town's website that shows the employees who have left and which were seasonal/temporary and which were permanent.
6. Authorize Replacement/Purchase of a Sidewalk Snowplow Tractor. After some discussion, Layton moved (2nd Gere) to approve the purchase of a John Deere 1025R tractor with attachments from United Ag and Turf South Royalton for an amount not to exceed \$44,777.00 to be paid from the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund. Motion approved unanimously.
7. Authorize Gravel & Salt Bid. After some discussion, Layton moved (2nd Gere) to authorize the Town Manager to accept the bid submitted by Twin State Sand and Gravel for \$15.64/ton delivered. Motion approved unanimously.

**Additional agenda item re: VTrans FY23 Environmental Mitigation Grant. Francis said that we need to do paving and drainage work on Route 132; this grant would help the town with that work. The SB needs to give approval in order to apply for the grant. After some discussion, Layton moved (2nd Gere) to approve submitting an application to the 2023 Environmental Mitigation Grant program to replace an existing culvert (#20) on Route 132 with a 12ft x 7ft box culvert (or similar) with a town contribution of approximately \$115,000. Motion approved unanimously.

8. Executive Session: Town Manager Contract. Layton moved (2nd Gere) to enter executive session pursuant to 1 VSA §313(a)(3), for the purposes of the employment of a public employee and to invite the Town Manager and Finance Director. Motion approved (4- yes; Calloway- no).

The SB entered executive session at 8:02 pm.

Layton moved (2nd Gere) to enter public session. Motion approved unanimously. The SB entered public session at 9:00 pm.

9. Consent Agenda. Layton moved (2nd Lamperti) to approve the consent agenda. Motion approved unanimously.

10. Future Agenda Items. Layton volunteered to summarize the town committees' report to the SB for presentation at a future SB meeting. Arnold said he needs to step back from serving as SB Chair and asked the SB how they'd like to proceed. Arnold said he thinks the SB should reorganize by the second meeting in October. SB members agreed to take up the issue of reorganization at a future meeting. SB members discussed future meeting agenda items, including: Moore Lane Bridge; SB calendar; staffing needs; question-and-answer meeting; transition to in-person meetings; personnel policies; town's website.

11. Public Participation. Jaan Laaspere said he supports having a question-and-answer session; asked a question about how the SB handles correspondence. Cheryl Lindberg asked about the plan for the upcoming professional audit.

12. Adjourn. Layton moved (2nd Lamperti) to adjourn. Motion approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:39 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on October 12, 2022

Marcia Calloway, Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – October 12, 2022 – Meeting at 6:30

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