

Town of Norwich Regular Selectboard Meeting
12/14/2022

Start time: 6:31 pm

1. Welcome, Chairs comments, Introduction of new Interim Town Manager

The Chair introduced and welcomed Brennan Duffy, Norwich Interim Town Manager. Public comment by Omer Trajman, welcome and would like to know about the process to hire the new Interim Town Manager. Stuart Richards, welcome and good luck to new ITM.

2. Agenda Review

The agenda was amended to move item #8 Kids Bridge out of Action Items and into Discussion. The Solid Waste Committee budget discussion was added as 10(e). Layton moved, second by Gere, to approve the agenda as amended. Vote: Yes - Unanimous

3. Consent Agenda

- a. Consider and approve the draft minutes of 11/22, 11/29, 12/6 and 12/7/2022. The minutes of 11/22 were pulled to discuss whether to amend the phrase "The Planning Commission can *hire* an acting Zoning Administrator..." to "can *appoint*..." There was discussion about whether these minutes had been approved. There has been a lot of confusion about the minutes of 11/22 and 11/29. The minutes of 11/29 contain no factual errors, though they were tabled until this meeting pending amendment. The minutes of 11/22 contained an incorrect vote count on item number 7 Appointments to the Reappraisal Review Committee. The motion as corrected reads: "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, Arnold, Calloway, Gere, Lamperti, and No, Layton.*" The 11/22 minutes had been approved at the 12/6/22 meeting. Layton moved, second by Arnold, to approve the consent agenda including amended minutes of 11/22/2022. Vote: Yes - Unanimous.
- b. Consider AP Warrant (removed)
- c. Correspondence

4. Announcement of Interim Town Manager appointment. Layton moved, second by Gere, to accept the announcement of Interim Town Manager, Brennan Duffy, to be posted on the Town of Norwich website, the Vital Communities listserv, and released to the Valley News. Vote: Yes - Unanimous.
5. Contract for Town-wide reappraisal. Layton moved, second by Calloway, to approve the contract for town-wide reappraisal and to direct the Interim Town Manager to sign the contract and direct the Listers to submit the contract with or further to submission of required form RA-308 by December 16, 2022. Vote: Yes, Calloway, Gere, Layton, Lamperti No, Arnold. Discussion: Roger Arnold expressed concern about several aspects

of the contract, including lack of specificity about software, dates, deliverables, scope of work. Calloway described the contract as “middle of the road” and noted a 30-day cancellation clause. Arnold asked about how payments will be made. Cheryl Lindberg stated that invoices will be sent monthly. Arnold said as payment is not due on signing, he is ok to move forward.

6. Renewal of Interim Finance Director contract. Lamperti moved, second by Gere, to renew the contract with Robert Half for the services of Joyce Hasbrouck for the period 12/22/22 to 4/30/22, to include the same travel provisions. Discussion: Cheryl Lindberg wanted to know if travel costs were covered by the original contract. The ITM was asked to review this.
7. Permanent Finance Director position. Layton moved, second by Calloway to authorize the Interim Town Manager to search for and hire a permanent Finance Director. Vote: Yes-Calloway, Gere, Layton No-Arnold, Lamperti. Discussion: The Chair asked the SB to consider what direction to give our Interim Town Manager as to whether to search for a new Permanent Finance Director, to consider the Job Description and the duration of the Interim Finance Director’s new contract. Arnold stated that “We cannot ethically hire anyone in this position until the interactions in that office are considered in an HR discussion.” Layton does not perceive conflict at the moment and wonders if the nature of past conflict was due to the presence of a permanent Finance Director, or not. Calloway suggested moving ahead with a search while improving HR practice and job descriptions. The Interim position is costly and subject to change. Lamperti stated this is a thorny question at a difficult time, so we should not be making any decisions right now. The reasons for the resignation of the last Finance Director have not been addressed, we have to get our heads around the functions of our government before we start bringing new people in. Arnold expressed disappointment in Layton’s position. Layton thanked Arnold for his comment, and said that the HR concerns are not trivial, not resolved; but she does not perceive the same level of rancor with the Interim Finance Director and does not know if there is something “threatening” in the position of a Permanent Finance Director. Gere noted that it may take quite some time to fill the position and that in the interim we could work on the “hazards” of the position. Although it puts a lot on the Interim Town Manager to hire with these concerns in the background it makes sense to Gere to “get going.” Calloway stated that there needs to be more collaboration and consultation between elected and hired officials and that it is natural for everyone to seek a sense of “agency and respect in their piece of the puzzle.” She stated that everyone needs to understand their role in the organization. Arnold stated the need for the Selectboard to take up the “legitimate workplace disagreements that have plagued the Finance Office in particular.” Lamperti suggested putting off the hiring process until January/February to concentrate on the HR issues. Calloway stated

that we must get the structure back in place with a hire and strengthen the job descriptions and organizational chart to make roles and responsibilities clear to everyone. Arnold asked when we would address the latter. Calloway said January. Layton stated that DPW and the Police Department also experienced “HR Trauma” but that we did not hold back on seeking to fill those positions.

8. Kid’s Bridge over Huntley Meadow moved to discussion. The Kid’s bridge has a pass-through account with the Town. All funds have been raised outside of the Town budget. A task remains to design the abutments and to determine how much the span will cost due to inflation.
9. Applications for Selectboard Minutes takers. Lamperti moved, second by Gere, to extend an offer of employment on an at will basis, and as most appropriate; to a candidate selected by the Town Manager’s office. Vote: Yes - Unanimous.
10. Budget Presentations
 - a. Town clerk: It has been difficult for the Town Clerk to put together a budget without Year-to-Date figures. There will be new expenses because the voting machines and software will be updated. A time of transition is coming up as the Town Clerk will end her tenure in March. Public comment: Charlotte Metcalfe states that the retirement of the Town Clerk will be a huge adjustment for the Town. Thanks to Bonnie Munday for her service. Stuart Richards: Huge Thanks to Bonnie Munday! Stuart will speak to the Police Department budget at the December 21st meeting.
 - b. Listers: The Listers Department “ask” is \$117,734, the same as last year. The difference is that the Listers ask that the stipend amount for three Listers plus the amount asked for the Assistant position are combined into a new line item. A wide-ranging discussion ensued. The Listers have gotten a lot more training in preparation for the Town Wide Reappraisal. They have worked many more hours in the absence of an assistant and a third Lister. Calloway questioned how the “combined expenses” would be delineated according to statute. What would an appropriate structure be? She also stressed the need to support our elected officials. Layton wondered whether the Lister Stipend could be increased by the suggested amount. Arnold and Lamperti did not want the existing structure including the funding mechanisms to be changed. Layton wondered whether the lack of an assistant and the third Lister was creating an untenable position both for the existing Listers, and for the Town, and whether the Town would be better served by a professional assessor hired by the Town. Lamperti said we should be having a conversation about that topic. Arnold asked why an assistant, or third Lister have not been hired. Lindberg answered that the part time

position is technical and has more hours around the time when the Grand List must be lodged. Smith said she has asked around quite a bit to try to garner interest in the third Lister position. Both Listers said the Town should be more supportive with advertising and recruitment for the Lister's office. Smith expressed apprehension and dismay about a transition to a professional appraiser in a reappraisal year. Arnold described a decision point which would involve either a better faith effort with the current structure or a structural change which would involve asking the voters to abolish the Board of Listers, and subsequently the Town would hire a professional assessor.

- c. Energy Committee: Charlie Lindner, Chair of the Energy Committee said that the committee is asking for the same amount as last year in the amount of \$1760. When asked about the Energy Committee website, Lindner said it was maintained by volunteer effort and was important for outreach including answering questions.
- d. Conservation Commission: Chair Craig Layne represented the Conservation Commission. They are asking for 8.6% less than FY/23 for education, consultation, and management of natural resources. The commissioners will attend workshops and trainings, there will be public speakers and exhibitions as well as trails upkeep. As to the website, it is maintained by volunteers, is easily shared, not easy to integrate with the Town website.
- e. Solid Waste Committee: Chair Jack Cushman represented the Solid Waste Committee, which "does all of its work by consensus." The ask is \$3000 of which \$1500 is for a town wide license for the software, "Better Bin," which is designed to educate consumers about how and when to recycle different products. The remainder is for printing educational pamphlets and for creating signs which will better guide recycling efforts. Improved sorting efforts will help the Town save money via less contamination of the recycling portion of the waste stream. Arnold pointed out that the Better Bin app could not be used on site, and that education efforts should not impose new burdens on staff.

- 11. Zoom Assistance: The Chair received an offer of volunteer assistance to host the Zoom meetings. Gere said he does not mind hosting. Lamperti said it was important that the Chair not be the Zoom person, but that a volunteer or other person might be needed more when we transition to hybrid meetings. Arnold stated that JAM could help by admitting people but then a SB member would need to take over so that JAM does not lose objectivity. Lamperti said that a second person to work with the SB member to spot

hands up would help make the Zoom meetings more functional. Calloway suggested that Gere talk to the volunteer. Arnold said the budget for Zoom needs to be reviewed so that irrelevant licenses are winnowed out. Arnold has been the contact, now it is the Finance Office. The expense is billed as “business cards,” and is on the Town’s credit card which still lists Roberta Robinson. Calloway asked ITM Duffy to look into this.

12. Future Agenda items for December 21, 2022. Excel spreadsheets for draft budget, ASAP. Lamperti asked if the Capital Plan should be in the Town report. It was decided not to include it but to refer to the plan in conjunction with reviewing the draft budget. An update on Tracy Hall by Living Buildings is overdue and sorely needed. Lamperti was recently in touch with Linda Gray, who said that a video presentation was causing delays. Lamperti urged her to ask for a written document as soon as possible
13. Other future agenda items: Town Clerk transition conversation in January. Review and update Capital Plan. Consider ARPA fund projects. Living Buildings report if not at the 12/21/22 meeting.
14. Adjourn. Layton moved, second by Gere, to adjourn. Vote: Yes – Unanimous. Time: 10:07 pm.

Approved by the Selectboard on December 21, 2022

Marcia Calloway, Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting December 21, 2022

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