

Norwich Selectboard Special Meeting

December 21, 2022

Start time: 6:31 pm

1. **Chairs remarks and welcome.**
2. **Agenda Review. Layton moved, second by Gere, to approve the agenda. Vote: Yes-Unanimous**
 - a. Informational Items
3. **Presentation by Interim Finance Director Joyce Hasbrouck.** The presentation included data and analysis for sections regarding salaries, the “Job Roster,” expenses compared to CPI, Designated Fund Appropriations, FY24 Expense, and FY24 Revenue. Topics for further discussion include proposed changes to personnel, added expense for Tracy Hall boiler and DPW generator, clarification of how to structure the Listers Office expense, surplus/deficit amounts, FY24 revenue offset for FY24 expense, Emergency Fund level within guidelines, consistent use of the term “Reserve Funds” not “Designated Funds.” As Union negotiations are in progress, salaries were listed according to the levels in the current contract, so that the Town adheres to negotiation guidelines.
 - a. Action Items for motions
4. **Consent Agenda. Layton moved to approve the Consent Agenda, second by Gere. Vote: Yes-Unanimous.**
 - a. Approve draft meeting minutes from 12/14/2022
 - b. Consider AP Warrant
 - c. Correspondence
5. **“Second Pass” Budget Discussions. Calloway** noted there was a lot to process. **Lamperti** would like to see certain items pulled out of the “baseline” budget, such as the tennis court and the 5th position in the Police Department. He asked how to discuss the “exceptional things and wants to know the cost of including them.” **Arnold** appreciated the COLA and step analysis for a baseline 5.46% increase for current staffing. He asked

for agreement on “what those positions are” as it seemed there are additional positions framed in this draft budget. He asked that the vacant positions that normally have been funded be included. He noted that Thetford has been able to obtain current health care costs and would like that information included in Pass #3. He asked for a wider conversation including assumptions about revenue for Pass #3. **Gere** agreed with Arnold that current staffing including vacancies should be included, and said it was important to consider total costs and what the taxpayers are willing to bear. **Arnold** asked to have the Capital Plan included to compare with the Designated Fund levels. **Lamperti** agreed that this is important for context. **Calloway** said the public should have input on how the ARPA money is spent. **Lamperti** noted that the Selectboard had come up with a list of capital improvements. **Layton** said the bulk of the budget is salaries and wants to understand the management rationale for added positions. **Lister Cheryl Lindberg** mentioned that the job description reference for the assistant was outdated. **Town Clerk Bonnie Munday** did not think eliminating hours or an assistant position was prudent and that 1.5% staffing “just won’t work,” especially in election years. The records restoration line of \$5000 should be put into the budget as she had requested. She would appreciate a conversation with management. **Public comments: Stuart Richards** asked if there would be a 10% rise in taxes and wanted to know about salaries not paid out because of unfilled positions, what amount and where is this information in the accounts. **Marshall Heinberg** stated that there are assumptions about a 12-month basis for vacant positions including whether the start date is January first. He wanted to know the references for “competitive, market-based salaries.” **Omer Trajman**, thanked DPW for their tireless efforts, wants full staffing and funding for DPW. He noted as to the disruption of Town services is due to “underlying issues not to do with funding, that is “not linked to specific policy changes”, that “common goals” are important; that he is concerned that the Selectboard not include representatives with “specific agendas.” He stated support for the Police Department and referenced the 2007 Police Study. **Pam Smith** stated on behalf of the Listers that there was not a conversation with the Interim Finance Director prior to this budget presentation. She advocated for line-item changes

for the Lister Department that would create flexibility for the completion of work. She noted that 1% of the Grand List is about 76K, which has been referenced as “a penny on the tax rate.” **Jaan Laaspere** found it helpful to have the breakdown of Police Department options in the packet. He supports competitive wages and four officers plus a Community Safety Officer. The latter is the “delta” to be considered to enhance community policing. **John Felde** objected to the statement by **Omer Trajman** that “some people have made up their minds and are not listening,” and that “those are the people who have made up their minds.” **Chief Cochran** replied to a letter from Jon Felde regarding the report, stating that “it was not a fair assessment to refer to a study made in 2007.” **Felde** said it is time for a current analysis. **Manu Tesone** advocated for three officers plus a Community Safety Officer to enable a reasonable workload for the Police Department. He perceives among Selectboard members a disconnect between “reality as they wish it” and “how it really is.” He related an incident to show why full police staffing is needed. He stated that this month a neighbor noticed mail piling up at residence and police were contacted, with a response 48 hours after the call. It was found that the resident had passed away “weeks before” along with a pet dog. **Leslie Wells** asked if \$200K not spent on this fiscal year to date, and if unspent funds could be used for bonuses, and advocates for the Police Chief’s recommended budget. **Demo Sofronas** noted that initiation of recommendations of the Police Services Committee was done by former Chief Doug Robinson. He stated that the Town voted to stay with the 2007 model. Lots of changes of employment have happened because of lack of resources. He likes that the cruiser replacement schedule is on track and would like to see unanimous SB support of funding and staffing for the Police Department including the Community Safety Officer. Chief Cochran advocated for four officers, one CSO and the Chief so that there is one officer per shift plus on call, and “civilian support”. He perceived “inaccuracies” with Pass Two, will work with the Interim Finance Director to correct these errors before Pass Three. **Marcia Calloway** noted that upon review of 9 years of Town Reports the average police staffing was 4.3 officers. **Rachel Coombs** would like to see respectful body language from public officials. **Charlotte Metcalfe**

would like to see respectful body language from public officials and agrees with **Demo Sofronas**. **Marshall Heinberg** thanked Rachel **Coombs** for her comments and said the Selectboard should think about non-verbal communication as there is lots of upset over losing a beloved Police Chief. He commended the SB for hiring the new Chief and would like to have the Chief's requests supported. **Roger Arnold** asked when can the SB talk about the budget? **Stuart Richards** stated that the current force cannot handle the number of incidents and is underpaid. He wants the Selectboard to follow the Chief's recommendations. **Rachel Waters** did not see the negative vote on funding a police study as a "proxy" position of the public regarding information about public safety, but more as not a good use of \$50K. She said to remember fiscal responsibility. **Leslie Wells** said respectful behavior is appreciated and likes the professional tone of the Chief. **Elliot Harik** said to not judge the Selectboard according to "on camera" behavior. **Aaron Lamperti**: Apologized for "not facing the camera."

6. **Executive Session. Layton moved, second by Gere to enter executive session to consider the appointment or employment of a public officer or employee under 1 V.S.A. section 313(a)(3) and invite the Town Manager. Vote: Yes-Unanimous. Time executive session entered was 8:50 pm. Arnold moved, second by Lamperti, to enter public session. Vote: Yes-Unanimous. Time public session entered was 11:23 PM.**
7. **Adjournment: Layton moved, second by Gere, to adjourn. Vote: Yes Unanimous
Time adjourned 11:23 pm**

Approved by the Selectboard on January 4, 2023

Marcia Calloway, Selectboard Chair