

DRAFT Minutes of the Special Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, June 28, 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; John (“Jack”) Cushman; Linda Gray; Linda Cook; April Andrews

1. Welcome. Meeting was called to order at 6:39 PM by Calloway. She also reminded that anyone wishing to join via Zoom must present with both first and last names, which will help prevent unwanted intrusions, commonly known as “Zoom bombing.”

2. Agenda Review. Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to approve the agenda.
Passed unanimously.

In response to concerns expressed about changes having been made to the agenda prior to the meeting, Calloway said she considers an agenda to be a working document subject to revision via Google Docs by one or more of its authors prior to the meeting in question, but that from now on, she will make that status more evident by marking any preliminary versions “DRAFT”.

3. Minutes – June 21, 2023. Following discussion of potential corrections, in which it was noted that any revision(s) will require a formal motion, Smith moved, seconded by Layton to **Table** until the next meeting. **Passed unanimously.**

Duffy updated the Board on issues related to the DPW building, reporting that the structural engineer recommends a temporary measure with wooden columns added alongside the problematic metal supports until metal reinforcements can be added. Longer term, however, a more permanent solution will need to be discussed, including the capital-improvements budget implications.

4. Interim Town Manager contract discussion. Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to find that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage pursuant to 1. V.S.A. § 313(a)(1). **Passed unanimously.**

Layton moved, seconded by Vincent to enter Executive Session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A) to discuss the Interim Town Manager Contract, and to invite the Interim Town Manager. **Passed Unanimously.**

Time Entered Executive Session: 6:59 PM.

Arnold moved, seconded by Layton, to enter Public Session. **Passed unanimously.**

Time Entered Public Session: 7:05 PM.

Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to execute the Town of Norwich offer of employment and contract extension to Brennan Duffy. (Note that although not stated explicitly in the motion, the public discussion in relation to the motion made clear it concerned a period of one year.) Calloway, Arnold, Layton, Vincent Yes; Smith, Abstain. **Motion Passed.**

5. Tracy Hall Physical Plant Issues: Heating/Oil Burner, etc. Duffy reported on a site visit at Tracy Hall this same day with Will Mudge of Randall T. Mudge & Associates, an architecture firm in Lyme, NH., whom Vincent had recommended be consulted by the Board. Duffy went on to recommend the Board issue an RFP to replace the currently non-operational oil burner.

Arnold expressed concern any momentum for a longer-term renewable-energy solution might be lost should such an interim fix be employed. He suggested that while renewable energy options are pursued, greater use of work-from-home as well as relocating to trailers or other available office space might provide effective temporary solutions. Layton disagreed, saying it would continue to be important to have at least one operating oil burner during the necessary transition period.

Layton moved, seconded by Calloway, to solicit bids to replace one of the existing oil burners in Tracy Hall. Discussion followed, with Vincent saying she wanted to look fairly at all the long-term solutions, Smith saying she thought the motion was premature, and Arnold suggesting the Board review the virtues of proposals already received. Arnold also said the Board should further engage with Jeff Grout to assess those and other options.

Jack Cushman joined via Zoom, noting he was with Vincent and Smith earlier that day on the site visit with Mudge. It was his understanding that the non-operating burners could be repaired, which was confirmed by Duffy. Cushman said he would prefer that option because it would not commit the Town so definitely to continuing to rely on fossil fuels. Duffy responded that both of the existing burners are at the end of their useful lives and that no one would describe them as continuing to be safe and reliable. Calloway added that already this year there has been a “call out” to the fire department because of smoke at Tracy Hall coming from one of the oil burners. Linda Gray, via Zoom, reinforced Cushman’s comment that adopting biomass (wood pellets) technology—an option whose

consideration was suggested by Layton—would necessitate addressing a number of other issues as well. She said it should only be considered as part of a larger plan to get off fossil fuels.

The discussion came full circle to vote on the motion still pending. Layton, Calloway, Yes; Arnold, Smith, No; Vincent, Abstain. **Motion Failed.**

The conversation then turned to the possibility of repairing the existing burner, with Vincent mentioning that Ben Trussell, the custodian at Tracy Hall, has reviewed the availability of repair parts on eBay. Layton moved, seconded by Calloway, to repair the existing oil burner that needs repair. Vincent, Layton, Calloway, Yes; Arnold, No; Smith, Abstain. **Motion passed.**

Much of the ensuing discussion focused on the proper leadership role for an architect on the overarching renovation project for Tracy Hall as it may ultimately be defined.

Arnold moved, seconded by Smith, to direct the Interim Town Manager to investigate alternate space in the event Tracy Hall is not available this winter. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Yes; Calloway, No; Layton, Abstain. **Motion passed.**

6. Continued discussion of Agenda planning for the remainder of 2023.

The Board determined that on July 12 they will hold a regular meeting, to which Jeff Grout will be invited as well as an architect. In advance, Vincent will present in writing what she and Smith have learned relative to solving Tracy Hall's needs. The Town tax rate will also be determined at that meeting.

Issues enumerated by Arnold for consideration over the remaining meetings in 2023 include committee work, an RFP for the Interim Town Manager position, the Town budget, personnel policies and HR issues in general, and a boundary dispute with the neighboring community of Sharon.

Smith said they should schedule a joint meeting with the Sharon Selectboard, which Calloway asked Duffy to set up.

Duffy noted that the steps toward a financial audit are already underway and that there is now a contract in place for the audit itself. He said setting the budget is the most critical challenge at this time.

Calloway said the capital budget will be a major topic at the July 26 meeting. Duffy noted, however, that that is not within the scope of the current Interim Finance Director's contract.

Calloway concluded by saying that she will be developing a long-term agenda to share with the Board.

Adjournment. Layton moved to adjourn, seconded by Vincent. **Passed Unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned: 8:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ralph C. Hybels

Minutes Taker