

**Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, October 11, 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, Town Manager; Matthew Romei, Police Chief; Jaan Laaspere; Stuart (Stu) Richards; Cheryl Lindberg, Treasurer; Ernest (Ernie) Ciccotelli; Peter Orner; Donald (Don) McCabe; David Krimmel

Note that sections are presented here in the order they were addressed at the meeting, which may occasionally differ from their sequential item numbering.

Welcome. Meeting was called to order by Calloway at 6:35 PM. She reminded anyone wishing to join via Zoom® to present with both first and last names to help prevent unwelcome intrusions, commonly known as “Zoom-bombing.”

1. Agenda. Prior to agenda approval, Duffy announced that the Kids Bridge Project has received sufficient funding to justify its being on the agenda as Item #11, for which there was ready consensus. Layton moved, seconded by Arnold, to approve the Agenda. **Passed Unanimously.**

2. Minutes – September 21 and 27, 2023. Smith pointed out that in the minutes of both September 20 and 21 the meetings should be described as “emergency” not “special” and moved to make that change for September 20, which was seconded by Layton–**Passed Unanimously.** Smith moved, seconded by Layton to approve the Minutes of September 21 with the same change and to indicate that Smith and Arnold left at approximately 6:30 PM that evening. **Passed Unanimously.**

Smith moved approval, seconded by Layton, of the September 27 minutes with corrections she will submit to Debi Wade, including that it was a “regular” rather than a “special” meeting. **Passed Unanimously.**

3. Correspondence. Stu Richards, speaking as a private citizen via Zoom, echoed his comments at the last meeting as well as his recent email to the Board, urging it to settle the Katucki lawsuit immediately, saying “Norwich unfortunately has a long history of violating the Open Meeting Law.”

Smith moved, seconded by Layton, to accept the correspondence as submitted.
Passed Unanimously.

4. AP Warrants. Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to approve AP Warrant number 1055 in the amount of \$250,139.38. Calloway, Arnold, Vincent, Layton, Yes; Smith, Abstain. **Motion Passed.**

Layton moved, seconded by Arnold, to approve AP Warrant number 1056 in the amount of \$14,000.00. Smith asked what was the current balance in the Girard Fund, which no one there knew. Smith attributed that to its having been commingled with other funds, with which Lindberg, as Town Treasurer, agreed. Lindberg further agreed with Smith it would be best to table the motion to a later date. Calloway, Arnold, Layton, Yes; Smith, Vincent, No. **Motion Passed.**

Layton moved, seconded by Smith, to approve AP Warrant number 1057 in the amount of \$6,400.00. **Passed Unanimously.**

5. Katucki v. Town of Norwich, 7:00 p.m. Executive Session under 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(E) regarding pending civil litigation to which the public body is a party.

Vincent moved, seconded by Layton, 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.**

Vincent moved, seconded by Layton, to enter Executive Session under 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(E) to discuss pending civil litigation to which the public body is a party, and to invite the Town Manager and Town Counsel. **Passed Unanimously.**

TIME ENTERED EXECUTIVE SESSION: 7:03 PM.

Layton moved, seconded by Arnold, to enter public session. **Passed Unanimously.**

TIME ENTERED PUBLIC SESSION: 8:19 PM.

Smith moved, seconded by Arnold, to endorse the substantive direction of the Selectboard and Town Counsel toward settlement of the suit between Katucki and the Town of Norwich. **Passed Unanimously.**

Public Comments. Via Zoom, Peter Orner wondered why the several new electronic signs still were not operational, particularly since traffic has only gotten worse since the passage of Ballot Measure 10. He also said residents are concerned about the recently painted “double-barreled” line striping on a number of roads, including Huntley, Hazen, and Hopson, as well as Moore Lane, where Orner lives, which he said tends to increase speeds and push drivers to the edges, where pedestrians are likely to be. Calloway noted that Orner and Duffy have been meeting regarding these issues. Smith added, “We don’t line stripe roads based on walkability, we line stripe roads for the safe passage of vehicles.”

Don McCabe said the Kids Bridge Project has benefitted from Duffy’s leadership. He asked that the issue be bumped up from Item #11 for immediate consideration instead, to which the Board agreed. Smith moved, seconded by Layton, to expend \$27,539 from Fund 53 for the purpose of the Kids Bridge. **Passed Unanimously.** As Duffy noted, however, fundraising will continue with McCabe’s continued oversight.

Cheryl Lindberg came forward as a citizen of Norwich requesting answers to several questions, primarily of the Chair. These included why there were emergency meetings, why the normal search process for a town manager was eliminated, who had responded to the RFQ whose deadline was September 8, and why there was never an SB agenda item to review those results. She further inquired what the job description is for the Assistant Town Manager position and why the contract recently approved is approximately \$40,000 over budget and where those funds will be drawn from. Calloway asked Lindberg to specify these questions in writing.

David Krimmel, a resident of Norwich, expressed concern about the emergency meetings.

Police Chief Romei came forward in his first appearance before the Board. He said the three new speed signs were scheduled for installation the next day. These will be solar rather than powered by GMP. He recommended that the Board also approve the purchase of a “speed tracker,” which can be much more easily moved from one location to another for detailed data collection, which he assured would not include license plate readings, but rather vehicle size and type.

Chief Romei also spoke to the aging of the current fleet of police vehicles. He said one would require at least \$5,000 just to remain in service and that Lebanon Ford had advised it is not currently safe to drive. Of the other three marked vehicles, he said one, a hybrid Ford Interceptor, has had major electrical problems, including a fire.

He also noted that one vehicle cannot be locked with the engine running, which greatly reduces its utility, including at the recent fire at Hemlock Road.

Duffy endorsed Romei's request to dispose of the one inoperable vehicle for whatever is possible on www.govdeals.com. Arnold moved, seconded by Layton, to authorize the Town Manager to dispose of the 2013 Ford Taurus police vehicle in as efficient a manner as possible. **Passed Unanimously.**

7. Norwich/Hanover Police Department reciprocal agreement. Romei said this is a routine document executed up and down the Connecticut River by neighboring municipalities that does not obligate the Town in any way but enables its Police Department in Hanover as necessary and for Hanover to do the same in Norwich. He said it is especially important because of the interstate school district. However, he had not found any evidence it was ever formally approved by the Norwich Selectboard.

Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to approve the current, signed, Norwich/Hanover Police Department reciprocal agreement. **Passed Unanimously.**

6. DPW bid recommendations for contracts:

a. Winter snow plowing. Layton moved, seconded by Arnold, to approve the winter snow plowing contract with Chase Site Service, Inc. for the period October 2023 through April 2024 in the amount of \$95,575.00. **Passed Unanimously.**

b. Road salt. Layton moved, seconded by Arnold, to approve the road salt contract with American Rock Salt Company for the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 through 05/31/2024 in the amount of \$86.10 per ton including delivery. Layton, Calloway, Arnold, Vincent, Yes; Smith, No. **Motion Passed.**

Smith explained she voted no because she wanted to stay within budgetary parameters.

8. Listers' Office Personnel, Executive Session under 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(F) for the purpose of discussing confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body.

Layton moved, seconded by Smith, 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 Smith, to enter Executive Session under 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(F) for the purpose of discussing confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to this body, and to invite the Town Manager (and Town Counsel). **Passed Unanimously.**

TIME ENTERED EXECUTIVE SESSION: 9:38 PM

Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, moved to enter public session.

TIME ENTERED PUBLIC SESSION: 10:07 PM

9. Planning Commission discussion. Duffy reported he's been meeting with Jaan Laaspere, Chair of the Planning Commission, for about a month, focused largely on how its staffing requirements may best be met. Laaspere added via Zoom that currently they're surveying the various Town committees on what should be the Commission's priorities. They need also to review current Zoning in light of changes in State law. He also said they are setting up subcommittees to address various issues, solar siting, for example, and how that relates to ridgelines and scenic resources. Other topics for subcommittees include land use and multi-modal transportation, including along the Rte. 5 corridor.

Laaspere said he particularly welcomed Jack Candon's input, who has volunteered his involvement from the DRB.

In response to a question from Arnold, Duffy said they have received applications from two qualified candidates for the open position for a Zoning Director/Planning Administrator. He said they have suspended advertising pending a better-defined job description. Laaspere commented that the lapse in advertising is a significant concern for the PC.

In the context of a larger discussion of how best to structure support for the PC, Ernie Ciccotelli, one of its members, advocated for returning to having only a zoning administrator and no longer a higher-level professional in the role of director. Stu Richards, through Zoom, voiced agreement.

10. Selectboard guidance for appointed groups and development of oversight protocols. Following general discussion of how best to address these issues, no firm actions were taken.

Duffy summarized the upcoming SB meeting schedule as: October 25 and November 8, 15 (for a possible special meeting), 21, and 29, as well as probably December 6 and 13 to tie up loose ends. He suggested they make all their meetings on budgetary matters fully remote rather than hybrid, to which there was general agreement. This will better facilitate individual members' use of spreadsheets and other materials.

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

Meeting Adjourned: 11:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Ralph C. Hybels

Minutes Taker

Approved by the Selectboard on

Marcia Calloway, Selectboard Chair

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