

**Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, October 25, 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; Stuart (Stu) Richards; Chris Kaufman, Director of Public Works; Wayne Kniffin; Lilly Trajman, Town Clerk; Alexander Northern, Fire Chief

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 6:33 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. Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to approve the Agenda. **Passed Unanimously.**

2. Minutes. Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to accept the minutes of October 11, 2023, as amended with corrections as agreed at this meeting. **Passed Unanimously.**

3. Correspondence. In relation to Cheryl Lindberg’s citizen’s letter provided in the packet, Calloway said it is not the role of the Selectboard to answer questions of law, but rather to refer such inquiries to Town Counsel.

Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to accept the correspondence as submitted. Calloway, Vincent, Layton, Arnold, Yes; Smith, No. **Motion Passed.**

4. AP Warrants.

Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to approve the AP Warrant #1060 in the amount of \$246,199.50. **Passed Unanimously.**

Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to approve the AP Warrant #1061 in the amount of \$27,539.00 from Fund 53. **Passed Unanimously.** Smith said she had inquired about the balance remaining in that fund and when it was approved and that she received a satisfactory response.

Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to approve the AP Warrant #1062 in the amount of \$4,550.00 from Fund 24. **Passed Unanimously.**

Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to approve the AP Warrant #1065 in the amount of \$131,046.11. **Passed Unanimously.**

Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda.

Wayne Kniffin noted with interest that the ratings of priorities by Selectboard members given in the packet were not unanimous.

Vincent commented that there remains uncertainty concerning the town line between Norwich and Sharon. Duffy responded that the issue has been off the radar for some months and he's not certain what the concern even is. Calloway said it's waiting for the affected property owners to raise the issue before the Board.

Vincent asked about the current status of remaining issues in current collective bargaining negotiations. Arnold responded that as of September 9, they were waiting for a meeting to be set.

Arnold stated his broad objection to issues being raised as public comments that ought rightly be treated as potential agenda items.

Stu Richards, via Zoom, commented he has heard the Police Department might soon be back to just one officer because, in his words, starting pay in Norwich is \$5 to \$8 per hour less than in other municipalities. Calloway said the Board could not comment because of current collective bargaining negotiations.

Town Manager's Report.

Duffy reported there is a new Federal requirement for a financial audit at the end of each calendar rather than fiscal year.

He also said the budgeting process is underway and the Interim Finance Director, Joyce Hasbrouck, has developed a sophisticated spreadsheet she will present at the November 8 meeting. During budgeting, Hasbrouck will be compensated at time-and-a-half for evening work.

Duffy said he has been meeting with Miranda Bergmeier, Jaan Laaspere, and Jack Candon concerning the job description for the Planning Commission staff support role, hopefully to be filled before year end.

Speaking for Chief Romei, Duffy said mandatory training is underway.

Regarding DPW, Duffy reported that Sanborn Head has conducted borings on Hemlock Road and they are awaiting results.

For the Fire Department, Duffy noted again the installation of a new dry hydrant on New Boston Rd.

He said the Recreation Department wanted people to know the Norwitchy event would be held on October 29.

Duffy said the compensation study of similar municipalities is now underway.

Regarding Tracy Hall renovations, he said Studio Nexus architects were taking measurements earlier that day.

Duffy drew attention to the financial reports in the packet that had been provided by Hasbrouck.

5. Culvert Upgrade FEMA Opportunity.

Chris Kaufman, DPW Director, appearing via Zoom, said the present culvert issues date back to the major storm event in July of this year. He said Stantec will provide a relevant report in the next weeks. Five culverts were overtopped or damaged. He outlined the costs for their replacement, most of which are estimated to run into the hundreds of thousands. Kaufman said, however, that if FEMA accepts these as qualifying for reimbursement, the Town's outlay ultimately may be reduced to about \$160,000.

In response to Vincent, Kaufman said FEMA does now fund improvements, not simply replacements, having come since Irene to recognize the shortsightedness of doing otherwise.

Kaufman said the Department is also reviewing the status of many smaller culverts around town for possible replacement with their own resources.

6. Committee appointment for Recreation Council: youth member.

Tabled.

7 Request to expend Records Restoration Fund monies.

Lilly Trajman joined through Zoom to explain the Town Clerk's request for funding to offset the cost of services to digitally archive old marriage documents. Answering Calloway, she said while the State covers costs for births and deaths, they do not for marriage.

Layton moved second by Smith, to authorize the expenditure of \$16,365.50 from the Record Restoration Designated Fund # 45 for the restoration of eight marriage books. **Passed Unanimously.**

8. Request to expend Fire Equipment Fund monies for Fire Equipment.

Via Zoom, Chief Northern referenced his request for funds as outlined in the packet. Smith noted that as drafted in the motion to follow, the relevant fund had been misidentified.

Layton moved, seconded by Smith, to authorize the expenditure of up to \$31,100.00 from the Norwich Fire Department Equipment Designated Fund #26 for items designated in the Fire Chief's memorandum dated October 19, 2023, and included in the October 25, 2023 Selectboard packet. **Passed Unanimously.**

9. Family Place Alcohol Waiver. This request was rescinded by the Family Place.

10. Sullivan & Powers Amended Engagement Letter.

Vincent moved, seconded by Layton, to authorize the Town Manager to execute the engagement letter with Sullivan, Powers & Company to perform a Single Audit as required by the Town's expenditure of \$750,000 or more in Federal funds in the fiscal year currently under audit. **Passed Unanimously.**

General Discussion of Budgeting Process.

Smith reiterated her request that departmental reports when submitted always specify the full name of the author(s) as well as the full date, including year.

Layton asked to specify a start time for the meeting when Hasbrouck will present on the budget and the Board by consensus determined that will be 6:30 PM. At 8 they will turn to other business.

There was discussion of whether to set a fixed target for departmental budget increases, such as 6%, the position taken by Arnold. Calloway suggested aiming in each case for under 10%. Layton and Vincent agreed. Smith said she did not wish to specify a particular number.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Calloway mapped out future meetings, which she later formalized as follows:

Date	Day	Meeting Type	Time & Content	Time & Content
11/8/2023	Wednesday	Regular	6:30-8:00 Budget presentation & discussion	8:00-? Other business
11/15/2023	Wednesday	Special	6:30-8:00 Budget presentation & discussion	No other business
11/21/2023	Tuesday	Special (not Weds because of T-giving) & Regular (4th week of the month)	6:30-8:00 Budget presentation & discussion	8:00-? Other business
11/29/2023	Wednesday	Special	6:30-8:00 Budget only	No other business
12/6/2023	Wednesday	Special	6:30-8:00 Budget only	No other business
12/13/2023	Wednesday	Regular	6:30-8:00 Budget presentation & discussion	8:00-? Other business

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

Meeting Adjourned: 8:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
 Ralph C. Hybels
 Minutes Taker

Approved by the Selectboard on November 8, 2023

Marcia Calloway, Selectboard Chair

PLEASE NOTE: JUNCTION ARTS & MEDIA (formerly CATV) POSTS RECORDINGS OF ALL REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE NORWICH SELECTBOARD.