

Minutes of the Norwich Selectboard Meeting of Tuesday, November 21, 2023

This special meeting was held in Hybrid format with Selectboard members Marcia Calloway and Priscilla Vincent physically present in Tracy Hall, Selectboard members Mary Layton, Pamela Smith and Roger Arnold on Zoom, and with JAM broadcasting.

All members of the public body present¹: Marcia Calloway, Chair; Mary Layton, Vice Chair; Roger Arnold; Pamela Smith; and Priscilla Vincent.

All other active participants in the meeting²: Brennan T.M. Duffy, Town Manager; Joyce Hasbrouck, Interim Finance Director; Chris Kaufman; Chief Matt Romeii; Chief Alex Northern; Demo Sofronas; Wayne Kniffin; Sarah Rooker; Nancy Osgood; Cheryl Lindberg.

Welcome. Meeting was called to order by Calloway at 6:31 p.m. She reminded everyone that there was a different order of process due to the Selectboard's focus on budget preparation.

1. Agenda. Calloway requested re-ordering the agenda to take Public Comments after Item #2, the Executive Session with Counsel. Smith requested adding a new Item #9 for consideration of a CD Renewal. Layton moved to approve the agenda as amended to move the Public Comments section to follow Item #2 and to add an Item #9; seconded by Smith. Layton, Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

The following minutes reflect

“all motions, proposals, and resolutions made, offered, and considered, and what disposition is made of same.”³

“the results of any votes, with a record of the individual vote of each member if a roll

Budget Presentation. Interim Finance Director Hasbrouck reviewed FY25 Budget Department Presentation, Part I, for the Departments of Public Works, Police, and Fire, found in the packet for this meeting on pages 2 through 37, here: <http://norwich.vt.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/00-Selectboard-Packet-11-21-2023-indexed-1.pdf> Hasbrouck also reviewed the process by which surplus or deficit fund balances happen each year as well as the increase in surplus created by the use of ARPA money to offset Salaries in FY23; reference her presentation slide on page 7 of the packet.

Chris Kaufman explained the DPW requests in context of unavoidable overtime hours, aging equipment, increased demands for bridge and culvert repairs, the need to fund the various designated funds for those repairs and replacements, and the insufficient numbers of licensed staff to provide plowing for the town. Selectboard members indicated an interest the suggestion of leasing equipment when possible. See DPW slides on packet pages 13 through 26.

Chief Matt Romeii explained the Police Department requests including protective equipment and the need for earlier replacement of police cruisers. In general, the life cycle of cars is 5 to 7 years or 100,000 miles. He also explained the need for 3 new computers, secure broadband, and training. The issue of leasing was again discussed with Selectboard members indicating an interest in more information. See Police Department slides on packet pages 27 through 32. Demo Sofronas spoke in support of using surplus monies f fund departments and bonds for building projects. Wayne Kniffin asked a question about collective bargaining

Chief Alex Northern explained See Fire Department and Emergency Management slides, pointing out their new copier expense and on-going equipment which will require designated fund allocations to safe for various fire apparatus needs. See Fire Department slides on packet pages 33 through 37.

¹ 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(1)(A)

² 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(1)(B)

³ 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(1)(C)

2. Katucki v. Town of Norwich Executive Session. Layton moved 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); seconded by Smith. Layton, Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

Layton moved 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; seconded by Vincent. Layton, Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.** Entered Executive Session at 8:06 p.m.

Layton moved to enter public session; seconded by Vincent. Layton, Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.** Entered Public Session at 8:33 p.m.

Layton moved to approve the form of the Settlement Agreement and the form of the Stipulation regarding dismissal of the Katucki litigation as recommended by legal counsel for the Town; seconded by Vincent. Layton, Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

Layton moved authorize execution of the approved form of the Settlement Agreement, provided that the Settlement Agreement as approved is signed by Mr. Katucki, approved as to form by his counsel, and returned to counsel for the Town; seconded by Vincent. authorize execution of the approved form of the Settlement Layton, Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

3. Kids' Bridge expenditure request for Designated Fund #53. T.M. Duffy explained this expense was for work toward completion of the "Kids' Bridge" project. See page 38 of the packet. Layton moved to authorize the Town Manager to expend up to \$ 5,000.00 from the Kids' Bridge Fund # 53 for completion of the Kids' Bridge project; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

4. Hydro Quebec FERC relicensing application comment. Calloway reviewed the memo describing information received from the Connecticut River Conservancy regarding opportunity to comment and asked the Selectboard if they were willing to authorize the chair to convene a group to discuss the need for comment if any. See page 39 of the packet. Layton moved to authorize the Selectboard chair to convene a meeting of the of appropriate individuals and/or appointed town groups such as the Planning and Conservation Commissions to discuss the need for a Town of Norwich comment on the pending Hydro Quebec FERC relicensing application; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

5. Historic Preservation Commission request to apply for CLG '24 Grant for Grange Hall. Nancy Osgood, Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, explained the importance of the grant for a architectural plan, and which can only be applied for by a municipality. See page 40 of the packet. She and Sarah Rooker confirmed that the application is made by the town but names the Norwich Community Collaborative ("NCC") as third-party administrator; if the grant is awarded, NCC becomes the grantee and the town is no longer involved. Layton moved to authorize the Town Manager to sign the grant application evidencing the Town's support of the Upper Valley Community Grange Hall rehabilitation project. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

6. Minutes 11/8 and 11/15/2023. As to the minutes of 11/8/2023, Smith pointed out Cheryl Lindberg's email request to change the minutes to indicate that the Listers' office did not request another assistant but rather replaced the assessor with a new person to do some of that work. See page 46 of the packet. Lindberg also spoke to changing her identification as Lister rather than Listers Clerk. Layton moved to approve the minutes of November 8, 2023; seconded by Arnold. Smith offered a friendly amendment to which was not accepted by Layton. Calloway, Layton, Arnold: Yes; Vincent, Smith: No. **Motion Passed.**

As to the minutes of 11/15/2023, Layton moved to approve the minutes of November 15, 2023; seconded by Arnold. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

7. Correspondence. Calloway read the names and topics of each correspondence. See pages 48 through 61 of the packet. Layton moved to accept the correspondence submitted; seconded by Arnold. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

8. AP Warrants

Layton moved to approve AP Warrant number 1072 in the amount of \$ 454,557.05 from the General Fund; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

Layton moved to approve AP Warrant number 1073 in the amount of \$ 1,625.50 from the Records Restoration Fund #45; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

Layton moved to approve AP Warrant number 1074 in the amount of \$ 20,499.74 from the Fire Equipment Fund #26; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

Layton moved to approve AP Warrant number 1075 in the amount of \$ 7,166.35 from the Town Reappraisal Fund #12; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

Layton moved to approve AP Warrant number 1076 in the amount of \$ 3,864.88 from the Expense/Emergency Reserve Fund #50; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

T.M. Duffy explained that Warrant number 1077 was corrected and the new number is 1079. Layton moved to approve AP Warrant number 1079 in the amount of \$ 287,141.00 from the Fire Apparatus Fund #6; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

9. CD Renewal. Regarding the \$2,000,000.00 CD which the Selectboard authorized 6 months ago, Smith referred to a memorandum from Lindberg regarding renewal. Calloway asked about penalties for early withdrawal if the money were required, Lindberg did not have that information; Lindberg confirmed this would be another 6-month CD. Smith moved to reinvest the \$2,000,000.00 with accumulated interest from the CD maturing with Mascoma Savings Bank at 4.4 percent, 4.5 percent APY for 6 months; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Smith, Vincent, Layton, Calloway: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

9:35 p.m. Smith left the meeting.

Informational Items.

Town Managers Report: T.M. Duffy confirmed that the temporary position of police chief is coming to an end and a permanent position has been advertised with a deadline of December 15. The Planning Direction/Zoning Administrator position has also been posted with a mid-December deadline. Hemlock Road will be fitted with “Jersey Barriers” next week as temporary traffic management so that the road can be opened to one-lane traffic. In continued discussions with Stantec, we are asking for some further options and working with FEMA for reimbursement and on other specific questions.

The Finance Report begins on page 76 of the packet. As always, any questions should be sent to T.M. Duffy for investigation and any necessary response.

Route 5 Bike Corridor Survey. Calloway provided response on behalf of the Selectboard with input from Vincent; see pages 74-75 of the packet.

Reports Submitted. Fire Department, IREC, Police Department, and Recreation Department filed reports beginning on page 88 of the packet. Town Clerk’s 3rd Quarter Report is on pages 94-95 of the packet.

Discussion Items. As to remaining budget work:

- 11/29/2023 meeting will focus on remaining departments not already discussed.

- Arnold had concerns about Gile Mountain Parking lot, Fire Tower and Trails; T.M. Duffy confirmed they would be covered by the Conservation Commission segment at the 11/29/2023 budget session.
 - Concerns about how to manage the surplus were discussed. Calloway referred to the need for voter approval and recommended setting two public meetings early in January to discuss focused options to be presented by the Selectboard. It was decided that the Selectboard meeting on December 6 will be extended to review options. In advance Selectboard members are asked to submit responses to the following:
 - (1) Would you be in favor of an injection of surplus money into the budget to reduce the monetary allocation? If yes, how much?
 - (2) What would you recommend for use of the remaining surplus? E.g. all of it for one thing or certain amounts in Reserve Funds.
- On December 6, the Selectboard will discuss these responses and what will be presented in the budget and in public meetings.
- T.M. Duffy will request that Hasbrouck make a slide for leasing versus purchasing options.

Adjourn

Vincent moved to adjourn; seconded by Layton. Calloway, Layton, Vincent, Arnold: Yes. Smith absent. **Motion Passed.** Meeting adjourned at 10:09 p.m.

Minutes approved 12/13/2023

Marcia Calloway, Selectboard Chair