

Norwich Selectboard Policy on Requests for Statements of Support

Municipalities in Vermont are constrained by law to have no authority beyond that which is given by statute, or that which is necessarily implied by a statute to exercise those granted powers. Therefore, when a municipality is requested to act, it must identify the law that grants the authority and, further, may not conclude that an action is permissible simply because there is no law prohibiting the action. In addition to state law, federal law, including statutes, case law, administrative regulations promulgated by federal or state agencies, and the U.S. Constitution, also often impact the operation of a municipality.

In recognition of these constraints, as well as the purpose of a municipal legislative body to have general supervision of the affairs of the town which are not committed by law to the care of any particular officer, the Norwich Selectboard acknowledges their mandate to abide by the complexity of state and federal laws and to be answerable by vote to the electorate of the town. To that end, and as required by state law, the Selectboard will hear public opinion on matters considered by the public body during meetings, and will hear public comment on other topics as allowed by the Selectboard’s Rules of Procedure. To avoid violation of any protected rights, as well as the appearance of taking a position on any particular topic, the Selectboard will not issue statements of support on any matter not directly related to the work of the town. In cases where exemplary service has been allowed by, and provided to, the town by a citizen, employee or volunteer, the Selectboard may initiate or entertain a request to issue a commendation of thanks and/or acknowledgement for such service.

This policy does not restrict the right of citizens to have a particular issue voted on at an annual town meeting or a special meeting. For such issues, citizens may ask the Selectboard to place an article on the warning on the board’s own motion; or, if the Selectboard decides not to place such an article, it can be done by petition. Information about “Petitioning Your Local Government” for a binding or non-binding article can be found on the Vermont Secretary of State’s website.

Approved the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of May, 2024.

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