

Final Minutes of the Norwich Selectboard Regular Meeting
Wednesday, March 27, 2024

Members: Roger Arnold, Marcia Calloway, and Mary Layton (via Zoom), Pamela Smith and Priscilla Vincent in person at Tracy Hall

Others Participating: Brennan Duffy, Town Manager; Katy Yee of GovHR; Cheryl Lindberg, Treasurer; Lily Trajman, Town Clerk; Chris Kaufman, DPW Director; Will Smith; Jeff Lubell; Brian Loeb; Lynnwood Andrews; Craig Layne all via Zoom; Jess Phelps and Emily Myers in person.

1. Agenda

Layton moved (2nd Vincent) to combine Items 11 and 12 into one agenda item as 11 (a) (b) and (c) to discuss SB goals, Town Manager goals as prioritized by the SB; and TM goals as prioritized by the TM; and pull the draft letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and make it item 15(a). Layton, Arnold, Vincent and Smith – yes; Calloway – no.

2. Chair's Report

Smith stated that she has met with the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager to discuss upcoming committee openings; met with the Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, and Vice-Chair to review the agenda; and she met with Jaan Laaspere, Chair of the Planning Commission who shared the goals of the Planning Commission over the next year to include development of a Capital Plan & Budget.

3. Public Comments

Lily Trajman, Town Clerk reminded everyone that dog licenses are due by end of day on Monday, April 1.

4. Olcott Road Bridge Replacement

Kaufman gave a brief summary of the bridge on Olcott Road, a class 4 road near New Boston Road. A structural engineer has determined that this bridge is structurally inadequate for vehicle traffic. Calloway raised the question of whether this road would need to be reclassified if there is proposed development of a parcel that abuts this road. An interim solution of a steel plate has been implemented, however, no action was taken on this item. The Town Manager will keep the SB informed at each meeting to continue the discussion of the best solution and the associated cost estimates.

5. Fire Department Requests for Funds #25 and #26

Smith stated that the request for Fund #25 is an operational expense that should be charged to the Public Safety Facility Repairs & Maintenance account 01-5-485302.10 and not a reserve fund. Duffy indicated that Chief Northern agreed with this change. Smith also noted that the request for Fund #26 was approved on October 25, 2023

and asked if the SB wanted to rely on that motion to approve or make a new motion. By consensus, the SB agreed that another motion was not necessary.

6. Fire Hydrant Rental Invoice

Smith cited an email from July 21, 2022 and the December 7, 2022 minutes showing the Fire District indicating that the hydrant rental would increase. Vincent said she would like the Town Manager and the Fire Chief to negotiate with the Prudential Committee. Layton asked what is the statutory authority of the Fire District to charge hydrant rental fees and should we consult legal counsel. Calloway cited 20 VSA 2602 “Matters subject to regulation by bylaws” does not mention this authority. Arnold suggested that mediation may be a good way to have a productive process. Motion by Vincent (2nd Calloway) to request the Town Manager, Fire Chief and the Prudential Committee to start meeting to resolve this issue and to call in legal counsel as required. Unanimous.

7. GovHR Compensation Study Presentation @ 6:45pm

Duffy introduced Katy Yee who gave a PowerPoint presentation of the GovHR compensation study draft report. Vincent moved (2nd Calloway) to accept the compensation study from GovHR with thanks. Unanimous.

8. Town Manager’s Compensation Recommendation

The Town Manager has requested that non-CBA positions be given an across-the-board increase of 6.4% which he proposed as maintaining parity with the CBA wages recently ratified. The financial impacts would be: (1) wage impact (increase) of \$37,145 in FY24 and \$83,021 in FY25; (2) health care contribution impact (increase) of \$0 in FY24 and \$8,698 in FY25; and, (3) a “true up” impact (increase) of making wage changes retroactive to July 1, 2023 of \$41,046 in FY24 and \$0 in FY25. Duffy recommended the adoption of recommendations (1) and (2). Calloway moved (2nd Layton) to approve continuing the policy of wage parity between CBA and non-CBA employees and adopt the updated FY24 wage chart as presented thereby increasing the wages by 6.4% across the board for all Town employees who were not already impacted by the CBA ratification to become effective upon approval. Calloway and Layton – yes; Arnold, Vincent and Smith – no. Motion failed.

Moved by Calloway (2nd Arnold) to approve moving all non-CBA employees to match the CBA’s newly adopted health insurance premium formula effective upon the next change in insurance determination of January 1, 2025. Unanimous.

Lily Trajman asked the SB to remember that the Town Clerk is an elected official and must be a resident of the Town and not subject to performance reviews. She asked that there be some sort of agreement between the Clerk and the Town to codify the relationship.

9. VCDP Planning Grant Application

Brian Loeb and Jeff Lubell submitted a request to have the Town pass two resolutions to move this planning grant application from the Affordable Housing Subcommittee of the Planning Commission to the next step. The public hearing held on March 19 yielded several very positive comments for the project. Calloway suggested that the Affordable Housing Subcommittee should be renamed the Affordable Housing Commission and that the members be appointed by the SB. Vincent moved (2nd Layton) to adopt the Resolution for VCDP Grant Application Authority (attached to these minutes) on behalf of the Affordable Housing Subcommittee for \$60,000. Layton, Arnold, Vincent, Smith – yes; Calloway – no.

Motion by Vincent (2nd Layton) to adopt the following resolution: Whereas the Town of Norwich must include a cash or cash-in-kind contribution of goods and/or services of at least 10% of the funds requested through the VCDP Planning Grant application; and that the Town is applying for \$60,000 in VCDP funds. Be it resolved that the Selectboard commits the use of \$6,000 in municipal funds from Fund 51 the Operational Performance and Development Fund to be used toward the costs of services described in the grant application on the condition that the application is successful and the town enters into a grant agreement for the awarded funds. Layton, Arnold, Vincent and Smith – yes; Calloway – no.

10. Community Collaborative – Letter of Support for VHCB grant

Jess Phelps requested a letter of endorsement for a grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. Phelps requested that this endorsement be changed to “The Norwich Selectboard support historic preservation grants...” Motion by Layton (2nd Calloway) to authorize the Chair to issue a letter of support for a potential Vermont Housing and Conservation Board grant and other historic preservation grants to the Norwich Community Collaborative’s Norwich Grange Hall project. Unanimous.

11. Goals for Selectboard

Amended under “Agenda” to combine items #11 and #12 to #11 (a) (b) and (c). By consensus, the SB tabled this item to the April 10, 2024 to be a one-hour segment at the beginning of the meeting. Committee interviews will be held after goals setting discussion at approximately 7:30pm on April 10, 2024.

12. Goals for the Town Manager

See #11 above.

13. Approval of Minutes – February 28, March 6 and March 13, 2024

Motion by Vincent (2nd Layton) to approve February 28 minutes as amended by Smith’s memo and any misspellings. Unanimous.

March 6 minutes – Duffy asked that the words “or the agenda” be removed from Item #10. Calloway expressed concern about the content of the minutes....should they contain just motions or context and motions. Motion by Arnold (2nd Calloway) that the Town record motions and their votes as their minutes until a minute taker can be hired. Calloway and Arnold – yes; Layton, Vincent and Smith – no. Motion by Vincent (2nd Layton) to approve the March 6 with the requested amendment by Duffy. Layton, Arnold, Vincent, and Smith – yes; Calloway – no.

March 13, 2024 Minutes – amendments requested include correcting misspelled names, amount of the AP warrant, indicate which attendees were in-person or by Zoom, Calloway asked that the minutes under #10 include: “Calloway disagreed with the lack of statutory procedure proposed by the Chair.” Motion by Vincent (2nd Calloway) to approve the March 13 minutes as amended. Unanimous.

14. Approval of the AP Warrant

Motion by Layton (2nd Calloway) to approve the AP Warrant number 1107 in the amount of \$129,817.50 to be paid from the General Fund. Unanimous.

15. Receipt of Correspondence

Smith summarized the emails in the packet with brief responses to each and thanks to everyone who submitted correspondence. Lindberg’s email asked if Town Meeting minutes would be in the FY2024 report because they were not in the FY2023 Town Report. Calloway cited 24 VSA 1152 stating that the minutes of Town Meeting are the responsibility of the Town Clerk. Duffy and Calloway agreed that the ultimate Town Meeting minutes are the disposition of the Articles. Mr. Harnish has asked to be on the agenda to discuss a resolution of inclusion. Calloway agreed to draft a policy on what kinds of support the SB would consider in terms of policy for the April 10, 2024 meeting. Motion by Layton (2nd Calloway) to receive all correspondence as presented in the packet with the exception of the FERC letter. Unanimous.

15. a. Draft letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Lynnwood Andrews and Craig Layne spoke to this draft letter. The deadline for submission is April 22 for the Town to submit a comment on the Great River Hydro relicensing application. Lindberg noted that Great River Hydro is on the Grand List. Motion by Arnold (2nd Calloway) to endorse in form and content of the draft letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on relicensing Great River Hydro’s Wilder Dam. Unanimous. Lynnwood was asked to submit a copy of the final letter submitted to the Town Manager’s office for inclusion in the next packet.

16. Extension of the Contract with TRORC for the services of Kyle Katz.

Motion by Layton (2nd Vincent) to authorize the Town Manager to execute a contract extension with TRORC for the services of Kyle Katz up to 8 hours per week up to a maximum of \$46,400 through the period ending June 30, 2024. Unanimous.

17. Norwich Inn Liquor License Application

Motion by Layton at 10:24pm (2nd Vincent) to recess the meeting of the Selectboard for the purpose of executing the duties of the local liquor control commissioners under authority of 7 VSA 167 et seq. Unanimous.

Motion by Layton (2nd Vincent) to approve the First Class License, application number 39586, for Green Visions, LLC, doing business as the Norwich Inn. Unanimous.

Motion by Layton at 10:26pm (2nd Vincent) to close the Norwich Liquor Commission session and reconvene the Selectboard meeting. Unanimous.

18. Town Manager's Report

Duffy gave additional context to the items contained in his written report in the packet. Duffy noted that the cost quote of the planning for the Beaver Meadow walkability corridor was significantly higher than anticipated. Duffy recommended issuing an RFP to seek additional quotes for the planning phase.

19. Committee and Department Head Reports

Smith noted reports were received from the Finance Office, the Police, Fire and Recreation Departments. Vincent spoke to the Recreation Director's report that the school may not be available for summer camps. The Board asked the Town Manager to pursue a possible rebate of the rental fee the Town pays if the school is not available for summer camps. Motion by Vincent (2nd Layton) to receive all committee and department head reports as presented in the packet. Unanimous.

20. Adjournment

Layton moved (2nd Vincent) to adjourn at 10:52pm. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela T. Smith
Selectboard Chair

Approved April 10, 2024