

## **Minutes of the Norwich Selectboard Meeting of Wednesday, January 24, 2024**

This regular meeting was held in person in Tracy Hall and via Zoom with JAM broadcasting on You-Tube.

All members of the public body present in Tracy Hall<sup>1</sup>: Marcia Calloway, Chair; and Priscilla Vincent.

All members of the public body present via Zoom: Mary Layton, Vice Chair; Roger Arnold; Pamela Smith.

All other active participants in the meeting<sup>2</sup>: Brennan Duffy, Town Manager; Barrie Rosalinda, Finance Director.

People in Tracy Hall: Matt Swett, Alex Northern, Chris Rimmer.

People on Zoom: Fred Carter, Emily Scherer, Colleen Fox, Nan Carroll, Demo Sofronas, Doug Wilberding, Chris Kaufman, Alberto Paniagua, Cheryl Lindberg, Matt Romei, Jaan Laaspere, Peter Orner, Elliot Harik, Lily Trajman, Katie Crouch, C.E. Spencer.

**Welcome.** The meeting was called to order by Calloway at 6:30 p.m. Calloway reminded everyone that full names are required for admission to the Zoom platform to eliminate “Zoom bomb” interruptions and delays in the meetings; and people trying to get admitted to meetings may contact Selectboard members to be identified for admission.

### **1. Agenda.**

- Vincent moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Layton. Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent: Yes. **Motion Passed.**
- Smith asked if the agenda could be amended to discuss whether the Town Manager report should be written instead of verbal. The Selectboard agreed to put the topic on the February 14, 2024, agenda but not amend the current agenda.
- Smith stated that the SELECTBOARD received a request from the Listers on January 10, 2024, regarding the Norwich/Sharon boundary dispute. Smith asked if this could be added to the agenda to discuss next steps. Calloway reiterated that, as posted on the agenda, the SELECTBOARD is waiting for the landowners to tell the SELECTBOARD what they want and why; and, if Listers are holding any additional information, it should be forwarded to the SELECTBOARD as well. Lister Lindberg indicated she did not realize that the landowner needed to correspond directly with the SELECTBOARD rather than asking the Listers to forward their request. She will inform the landowner.

*The following minutes reflect*

*“all motions, proposals, and resolutions made, offered, and considered, and what disposition is made of same.”<sup>3</sup>*

*“the results of any votes, with a record of the individual vote of each member if a roll call is taken.”<sup>4</sup>*

### **Public Comments.**

- Lister Lindberg asked about the Listers’ wage request; Lindberg asked if the SELECTBOARD had received advice of counsel. Town Manager Duffy indicated that he has not heard from counsel and will reach out to counsel again this week.
- Chris Rimmer spoke to the request of the Conservation Commission, forwarded April 28, 2023, requesting the name of the nature area adjacent to Marion Cross School be officially designated “The Milton Frye Nature Area.” SELECTBOARD agreed to put the issue on the next agenda. In preparation, Duffy will consult counsel to ensure there are no issues of which the SELECTBOARD should be aware.
- Matt Swett pointed out that three-quarters of the Fire Department members attended the first public meeting on January 17, 2024, in support of the Fire Department request for \$300,000 of surplus to be

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<sup>1</sup> 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(1)(A)

<sup>2</sup> 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(1)(B)

<sup>3</sup> 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(1)(C)

<sup>4</sup> 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(1)(D)

included as a warrant article for Fund 6 Fire Apparatus. He read the names of 22 members of the Department who submitted a supporting letter.

## 2. Minutes.

- Layton moved to approve the minutes of January 10, 2024; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent: Yes. **Motion Passed.**
- Layton moved to approve the minutes of January 17, 2024; seconded by Vincent. Calloway noted she made a typographical error on page 3 in the grid showing public comments: Jeff Lubell requested support in the amount of \$100,000.000 for Affordable Housing, not \$10,000.00. Layton withdrew her motion and moved to approve the minutes of January 17, 2024, as amended; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

## 3. AP Warrants.

- Layton moved to approve AP Warrant # 1093 in the amount of \$ 97,766.62 paid from the General Fund; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Vincent: Yes. Smith abstained. **Motion Passed.**
- Layton moved to approve AP Warrant # 1094 in the amount of \$ 2,873.75 paid from Operational Performance Fund #51 for the Tracy Hall Improvement Study; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent: Yes. **Motion Passed.**
- Layton moved to approve AP Warrant # 1095 in the amount of \$ 450.87 paid from Kids' Bridge Fund#53; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

**4. Correspondence.** Layton moved to approve the correspondence as submitted; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

**5. DPW Request for approval to expend funds from Highway Equipment Fund #7 for a DPW tractor.** DPW Director Chris Kaufman explained the need to replace an existing tractor. Packet materials included quotes for repairing the existing tractor, trading it in, purchasing a new one. Layton moved to approve funds not to exceed \$167,000.00 from Highway Equipment Fund #7 for a new tractor mower; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Vincent: Yes. Smith abstained. **Motion Passed.**

**6. Update on Affordable Housing Subcommittee proposed grant application.** Calloway reminded the SELECTBOARD that, at the January 10, 2024, SELECTBOARD meeting, Jeff Lubell agreed to get a specific writing from TRORC to confirm their willingness to provide administration for the proposed grant to study land owned by Norwich for potential housing. No document was provided in the packet. Calloway also referenced new information from Duffy that no public meeting warning has to be done until March 20, 2024. Lubell offered that there were other options identified and that warning the public meeting implied no commitment; Jaan Laaspere, Chair of Planning Commission, supported the request for SELECTBOARD approval of an earlier public meeting and noted there were multiple options for contractors/grant management. Lily Trajman asked about Miranda Bergmeier's ability to take on this grant manager. Duffy explained that the Town Manager's office has lost a staff member, and he cannot assign this additional work to Miranda. Layton and Calloway agreed that no action was required at this meeting; Arnold reiterated continuing concern about staff ability to manage this grant with no Planning Director in place, and Duffy's capacity to manage a consultant. Duffy stated his preference to get to the next stage to choose a consultant before taking action and so revisit the topic in February as to administration and project management. He noted the April 9 application deadline and the March warning deadline. Vincent was concerned the SELECTBOARD was going in circles. Smith noted the apparent confusion about February 21 being a SELECTBOARD meeting. SELECTBOARD agreed to put the topic on the February 14, 2024, meeting agenda; Smith adding a caveat about getting enough information before the meeting.

**7. FY25 Warrant Articles.** Smith stated that, as the SELECTBOARD liaison to the Norwich School Board, she forwarded a request for information from the School Board to the TM. Smith asked if the study requested by the School Board had been conducted on the efficacy of extending the first tax due date to August 30, as stated in the proposed warrant article. The TM stated that no study has been done.

Calloway explained the two documents in the packet: the draft warrant, and an Excel spreadsheet with articles that have been proposed and organized to show the provenance of each. Calloway suggested the SELECTBOARD review the articles not proposed for use of surplus monies, and then choose the article(s) they would support and in what amount of surplus money. The proposal for use of \$90,000.00 of the surplus to fund Sidewalk Fund #27 for a pedestrian corridor was discussed at length. The majority of the SELECTBOARD favored using the existing Sidewalk Fund monies for such a project once more specific details were known, including a further study. Peter Orner, Demo Sofronas, Elliot Harik, Colleen Fox expressed disappointment and encouraged the warrant article as written. Jaan Laasphere suggested adding \$90,000 to the fund and changing the definition of it to include maintenance.

Smith requested discussion about her email to SELECTBOARD members regarding the \$100,000 of surplus being set aside for the Police Department. Finance Director Barrie Rosalinda explained how the surplus was calculated from the totality of revenue and expenditures from all funds, the difference between the General Fund and Reserve Funds, the supply chain delays that caused FY23 approved expenditures to be paid in FY24, the auditors' confirmation of how this should be handled, and the reliance of that information when the Police Department made FY24 budget requests. Smith disagreed with the calculation and analysis noting that \$34,000 of the proposed "set aside" funds were to be paid from reserve funds, not the general fund. Lindberg concurred with Smith. Arnold asked for clarification that the auditors had checked this. Rosalinda confirmed. Vincent acknowledged Smith's valuable accounting experience. The majority of the Selectboard agreed that no further action was required based on staff and auditor recommendations.

- Layton moved to approve the following Articles for the FY25 Warrant from the Possible Warrant Articles enclosure in the 01/24/2024 Selectboard packet:
  - Article from line 3;
  - Article from line 4;
  - Article from line 5;
  - Article from line 6;
  - Article from line 8, amended as to the title;
  - Article from line 9;
  - Article from line 11;
  - Article from line 12;
  - Article from line 13.

Seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Vincent: Yes. Smith No. **Motion Passed.**

## **Informational Items.**

- **Town Manager Report.**
  - Duffy holds Department Head meetings between the SELECTBOARD's first and second meeting of the month. Some topics from those meetings included:
    - DPW crew is working very hard to keep streets and sidewalks clear. Duffy is aware people are concerned.
    - General Department Head request for an additional holiday for Juneteenth. Duffy said this would be a SELECTBOARD decision. Calloway asked about the need to confirm with counsel vis-à-vis union negotiations. Arnold suggested this would be an item for the Personnel Policies; it was agreed those could be reviewed by SELECTBOARD and counsel. Duffy will enquire of counsel and have something for a future SELECTBOARD meeting.
    - Recreation Department multiple activities were listing including the skating rink which was open as of January 15, 2024; cross-country skiing trails at Huntley Field; summer camp registrations about to begin for next summer; etc.

- Human Resources work continues with conditional offers having been made for Chief of Police and Planning Director positions. More information will be forthcoming when allowed.
- The Conservation Commission has sent an email confirming the Emerald Ash Borer has been found in Norwich.
- Town Report materials must be submitted to the printer by February 8, 2024.
- The Auditors have been asked to be present at the SELECTBOARD meeting on February 14, 2024; the SELECTBOARD agreed to that idea.
- The architects are continuing work on the study of Tracy Hall and have completed the first of their three-phase project.
- The Compensation Study has now produced a draft which is in the final stages of discussions.
- **Financial Reports.** As per the practice, monthly Financial Reports are in the packet. Questions about any of them should be directed to Duffy for appropriate investigation and/or response.

**Reports Submitted** included Fire Department, IREC, and Police Department. Calloway asked about a new IREC representative; Duffy said an interim person is in place. Vincent reported hearing a concern from people in the community about the low level of police response and noted the on-going effort to hire for vacant positions.

**Discussion Items.** Nothing further.

**Future Meeting Dates.** Calloway noted the expectation of SELECTBOARD meetings on February 14 and 28, 2024.

**Adjournment.** Layton moved to adjourn; seconded by Vincent. Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent: Yes. **Motion Passed.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Marcia S. Calloway, Chair  
Norwich Selectboard

Approved by the Selectboard on February 28, 2024

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Marcia S. Calloway, Chair