

**Minutes of the Norwich Selectboard Regular Meeting
Wednesday, May 22, 2024**

This meeting was via Zoom only.

Attending: Pam Smith, Chair; Mary Layton, Vice-Chair; Roger Arnold, Marcia Calloway, and Priscilla Vincent.

Others Participating: Brennan Duffy, Town Manager; Cheryl Lindberg, Treasurer and Chair of the Board of Listers; Fire Chief Alex Northern; Craig Layne, Chris Rimmer, Douglas Hardy and Sheldon Novick.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

1. Agenda

Layton moved (2nd Arnold) to approve the agenda as amended to add 3 Liquor Commission applications from King Arthur Flour. Yes – Arnold, Layton, Vincent and Smith; No – Calloway.

2. Chair's Report

Smith stated that she has submitted a written report for this meeting. She emphasized that residents want the SB to conduct in-person meetings. Smith further stated that the SB would return to in-person meetings beginning June 12 and urged all SB members and the TM to return to in-person attendance.

3. Public Comments – Craig Layne and Chris Rimmer, members of the Norwich Conservation Commission spoke about the urgent need to address the Emerald Ash Borer problem. Douglas Hardy also spoke about this issue.

4. CD Renewal

The CD at Mascoma bank matures on May 30, 2024. Cheryl Lindberg, Treasurer, has asked the SB to consider rolling the CD principal and interest for at least 6-9 months. Layton moved (2nd Vincent) to reinvest the principal and the earned interest of the CD at Mascoma Bank for a period of nine (9) months at a rate of 4.70% with an APY of 4.80%. Unanimous.

5. Listers Request for Extension to File the Abstract

For towns with a population under 5,000, State statute requires the filing of the Abstract of the Grand List no later than June 4 of each year. Due to the reappraisal currently under way, the Board of Listers has requested SB approval to request a 30-day extension of this deadline with the Director of Property Valuation and Review. This extension is necessary to complete the work of the reappraisal to include continuing to conduct interior inspections, creation of neighborhood codes, sales analysis, development of land valuation tables and updating current use information.

Layton, Calloway, Arnold and Duffy questioned how this extension would impact setting the tax rate and mailing of tax bills and whether this extension would result in the work being completed within the time granted by an extension. Lindberg explained that a great deal of work begins once the Abstract is filed: Change of Assessment (COA) letters will be mailed to every property owner with their new assessment; the contractor must develop and mail a booklet containing the new assessment of all parcels to every property owner; informal hearings will be held; grievance hearings will be held; and, grievance result letters must be mailed. Once the grievance result letters have been mailed, the Grand List can be lodged with the Town Clerk. Because we are under a State mandate to complete a reappraisal this year, Lindberg stated that it is imperative that the reappraisal be accurate and complete as possible. Taxpayers must receive their tax bill no less than thirty (30) days prior to the due date. Lindberg said the due date could be somewhat delayed, which is not unusual in a reappraisal year. Lindberg has requested that the Town Manager and the Chair of the SB meet with the Listers to discuss the current status and the various options to completing a reappraisal that can meet the 3-prong test for approval by the State. As the Contract Officer, the SB expects the Town Manager to work with the SB Chair, the Listers and the contractor to facilitate the completion of the reappraisal work. Vincent moved (2nd Smith) to authorize the Chair to sign a request to the Director of Property Valuation and Review to request a thirty (30) day extension to file the Abstract under 32 VSA § 4342. Yes: Smith, Vincent and Arnold; No: Layton and Calloway.

6. Committee Appointments

Layton moved (2nd Calloway) to appoint Sheldon Novick to the Historic Preservation Commission for a one-year term ending April 30, 2025. Unanimous.

Layton moved (2nd Vincent) to appoint Loretta Pearson to the Solid Waste Committee for a 3-year term ending April 30, 2027. Unanimous

Smith drew attention to the number of positions that remain unfilled and asked SB members to reach out to members of the community to encourage them to apply.

Calloway drew attention to the recent resignation of our Town Health Officer and the requirement to fill the position within thirty (30) days or the State will appoint a replacement. Smith asked all SB members to think about who might be qualified and willing to serve and Vincent was asked to speak with Kathy Watson, Town Nurse, to see if she can suggest someone who might be willing to serve.

7. Fire Department Request to Sell Firetruck

The packet included a request from Chief Northern to conduct a sealed bid sale of Engine 2. TM Duffy said that it is possible that a minimum bid will be established in order to get a fair price. The proceeds from the sale will be deposited in the General

Fund, with a future request to the SB to transfer these funds to the Fire Apparatus Reserve Fund. Chief Northern hopes that Engine 2 will be purchased by a smaller town that will keep the firetruck in service. Motion by Layton (2nd Calloway) to authorize the Town Manager to sell Engine 2 via sealed bid to the highest bidder. Unanimous.

8. DPW Bids for Engineering Services on 3 Town Roads

The packet included a request from DPW Director Kaufman to accept the bid from Hammond Engineering to conduct engineering services. Layton moved (2nd Vincent) to accept the bid from Hammond Engineering for engineering services for culverts on Norford Lake, Kate Wallace, and Illsley Roads in the amount of \$60,744.00, with the understanding that FEMA will reimburse 75% of costs and the State of Vermont will reimburse 12.5% of the costs as outlined in the request from the Director of the Department of Public Works. Unanimous.

9. DPW Change Order for Additional Culvert Repair

The packet included a request from DPW Director Kaufman to authorize a change order to the contract with Daniels Construction due to a new problem that has developed with a culvert on Route 132 near the Sweetland Farm. Motion by Layton (2nd Calloway) to authorize the change order with Daniels Construction for an additional \$21,300 for the culvert work on Route 132 to be funded by the Culvert Reserve Fund to be created on July 1, 2024, with the understanding that this cost will be partially offset by funding from the Better Roads Grant as outlined in the request from the Director of the Department of Public Works. Unanimous.

10. Request to Change Tracy Hall Telecommunications Provider

The packet included a request from TM Duffy to change the telecommunication provider for Tracy Hall. This change is requested due to an unexpected and exorbitant increase in the fees charged by the current provider. Motion by Layton (2nd Vincent) to authorize the Town Manager to enter into a contract with Key Communications to replace Windstream as a telecommunications provider for Tracy Hall. Unanimous.

11. Draft Policy – Resolutions and Letters of Support

Motion by Layton (2nd Calloway) to accept the Norwich Selectboard Policy on Requests for Resolutions and Letters of Support as presented in the packet on May 8. Yes: Layton, Calloway, Vincent and Smith. No: Arnold

12. Approval of May 8, 2024 Minutes

Smith requested amendments to the attendance to reflect remote vs. in-person attendance, Arnold was not able to attend, and that Smith had noted 2 questions on the SB Handbook regarding non-Town websites and how the SB would monitor compliance with the OML. Motion by Layton (2nd Vincent) to approve the May 8, 2024 minutes as amended. Yes: Calloway, Layton, Vincent and Smith. Abstain: Arnold.

13. Approval of AP Warrants

- Layton moved (2nd Calloway) to approve AP Warrant #1124 in the amount of \$223,780.76 to be paid from the General Fund. Unanimous.
- Layton moved (2nd Calloway) to approve AP Warrant #1126 in the amount of \$1,121.16 to be paid from the General Fund. Unanimous.

14. Receipt of Correspondence

Correspondence was received from Rachel Cohen regarding a charitable biking event with part of the route being in Norwich on June 9; Cheryl Asa has submitted her resignation from the Conservation Commission; and Marcia Calloway submitted the final version of the Town Manager Annual Performance Evaluation. Smith thanked Cheryl Asa for her service and asked the TM to add this opening to the list of positions to be filled. Smith also reiterated her request to SB members to try to enlist residents to apply for these open positions.

15. Request for Legal Opinion on Subcommittee Formation

The packet included a memorandum from Calloway requesting advice of counsel on the formation of subcommittees, task forces and other subgroups of subcommittees. The question is whether these subgroups must be comprised of individuals appointed by the SB. Layton, Vincent and Arnold raised concerns about whether requiring SB appointments would be too bureaucratic and would discourage residents from volunteering. Smith asked whether existing subcommittees would be grandfathered. Motion by Layton (2nd Vincent) to authorize the Town Manager to seek advice of counsel, as outlined in the May 16, 2024 memorandum from Marcia Calloway regarding the formation of subcommittees.

16. Town Manager's Report

The packet included an outline of the report from Duffy. A draft of the Personnel Policies has not been submitted to town counsel pending an estimate of the cost of the review. The draft may not be presented for SB consideration before the end of the fiscal year. The MERP energy audit has not been received. The SB expressed the need to re-engage with the architectural firm without the energy audit to complete their recommendations for Tracy Hall improvements. The Beaver Meadow Road pedestrian improvements RFP for engineering/design work received no responses. Duffy has spoken with a local contractor who can improve the shoulder along BMR to improve walkability. This would be completed in two phases. Each phase would be under \$10,000, and would not require putting these projects out to bid. Duffy will work with the contractor to complete the work hopefully by the end of summer with an estimated combined cost of both phases of \$12,000. SB members had several questions regarding the Hemlock Road situation and the Moore Lane bridge. Duffy will provide further updates on both situations at the June 12, 2024 SB meeting.

17. Committee and Department Head Reports

Reports were submitted by the Finance office, the Fire Chief, Police Chief, Recreation Director, the IREC Quarterly Report and the IREC Police Cruiser Report.

18. Liquor License Renewal Applications

Motion by Layton (2nd Vincent) to recess the meeting of the Selectboard for the purpose of executing the duties of the local liquor control commission under authority of 7 VSA § 167 et seq. Unanimous. Meeting recessed at 9:41 pm.

Motion by Layton (2nd Vincent) to approve the Second Class License application #43983 for Uncle Jam Industries doing business as Half-Step Beer and Wine. Unanimous.

Motion by Layton (2nd Vincent) to approve the First Class License application #44435 for King Arthur Flour Co., Inc. Unanimous.

Motion by Layton (2nd Vincent) to approve the Outside Consumption Permit application #44434 for King Arthur Flour Co., Inc. Unanimous.

Motion by Layton (2nd Vincent) to approve the Outside Consumption Permit application #44433 for King Arthur Flour Co., Inc. Unanimous.

The 3 applications from King Arthur Flour were received after the packet deadline and will appear in the June 12, 2024 packet.

Motion by Layton (2nd Vincent) to close the Norwich Liquor Commission session and reconvene the Selectboard meeting. Unanimous. The Selectboard reconvened at 9:44pm.

19. Adjournment

Layton moved (2nd Calloway) to adjourn at 9:45pm. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela T. Smith
Selectboard Chair

Approved by the Selectboard on June 13, 2024

Pamela T. Smith, Chair