

**DRAFT Minutes of the Norwich Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, January 8, 2025**

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

All members of the public body present in Tracy Hall¹: Pam Smith, Chair; Mary Layton, Vice Chair; Priscilla Vincent.

All members of the public body present via Zoom: Roger Arnold; Marcia Calloway.

All other active participants in the meeting²: Town Manager Brennan Duffy; Lily Trajman; Peter Orner; Bruce Genereaux.

Meeting was called to order by Smith at 6:44 p.m.

Item 1 Agenda (packet page 1)

- Layton request to add two agenda items: Norwich Times due date 01/17/2025, new Item #8; and reconsideration of the 12/18/2025 motion to schedule an information meeting this year on the Sunday before the annual meeting, new Item #9.
 - Layton moved to approve the agenda as amended. Second by Vincent. Yes: Arnold, Layton, Smith, Vincent; No: Calloway as to Item 2. **Motion Passed.**

Item 2 Chair's Report

- Smith talked with Town Manager Duffy about the agenda and packet, attended a Board of Abatement meeting and a webinar about town meeting.

Item 3 Public Comments

- Lily Trajman, Town Clerk – Deadline for petitions in general is January 16, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. Deadline for candidate petitions for elected offices is January 27, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

Item 4 FY 26 Budget and Capital Plan Review (packet pages 3 – 21)

- Town Manager Duffy reviewed the materials in the packet and explained the request for a \$10,000.00 increase for the Administrative Assistant position serving the Town Manager's office and DPW. Barrie Rosalinda, Finance Director, was unable to attend due to a personal issue; she requested individual budget motions for clarity. Board members discussed their concerns, the process, and emails not in the packet.
- Public comments included:
 - Bruce Genereaux asked if comments would be allowed after motions, and suggested returning the budget to the Town Manager to reach 6 percent increase.
 - Lily Trajman asked for consideration of a website upgrade to alleviate some of the Administrative Assistant work.
 - Peter Orner agreed with Arnold's comments about salary and retention.
- Layton moved to add \$5,000.00 to DPW budget and \$5,000.00 to Town Administration budget to increase the wage of the Administrative Assistant in the in the Town Manager's office and the DPW. Second by Calloway. Yes: Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent. **Motion Passed.**
- Layton moved to reduce the legal budget line item to \$80,000. Second by Vincent. Yes: Arnold, Layton, Smith, Vincent; No: Calloway. **Motion Passed.**
- Calloway moved to accept the budget as presented and ensure that the budget included sufficient funding to meet the 12 percent requirement of Fund 50. Discussion but no second.

¹ 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(1)(A)

² 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(1)(B)

- Smith moved eliminate from the DPW, contracted services budget, \$55,000.00 for Bridges, \$10,000.00 for Culverts, and \$3,000.00 for Public and Road Safety. Seconded by Vincent. Yes: Smith, Vincent; No: Arnold, Calloway, Layton. **Motion Failed.**
- Calloway withdrew her prior motion which was not seconded.
- Calloway moved to accept the budget as presented and amended. Second by Arnold. Yes: Arnold, Calloway, Layton; No: Smith, Vincent. **Motion Passed.**
- Calloway moved to amend the approved budget when the data is finalized and the Fund 50 amount is known, so that the minimum required amount, being 12 percent, is satisfied. Second by Layton. Yes: Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Vincent; No: Smith, because the amount of funding is not yet known. **Motion Passed.**

Item 5 Review of Town Warrant Articles Draft (pages 22 – 30)

- Discussion of Articles 9, 10, 11 versus use of surplus for tax relief, possible addition of an article to authorize use of surplus for Fund 50 minimum requirements. Calloway concerned about Draft Article 37 and whether the 4 percent tax penalty approved by voters in 2023 includes by statute the Homestead Declaration penalty.
- Bruce Genereaux noted that the public was not given opportunity to comment before the budget vote.
- Warrant articles will be discussed again at the next meeting.
- Town Manager Duffy will seek a legal opinion from VLCT about the tax penalty vote vis-à-vis the Homestead Declaration penalty.
- Discussion jumped to Item 9.

Item 6 Town Manager Goals (packet pages 31 – 35)

- Smith wants a meeting in February to suggest changes to the evaluation document. Calloway disagrees as premature as it should be done annually and by the new selectboard. Limited discussion.

Item 7 Receipt of Correspondence (packet pages 36 – 106)

- Brennan – surplus should be used to offset taxes; if not, then TH/Bridge/EAB funds
- Derek Walker – in favor of Town Meeting Informational Session on a weekend.
- Information from Town Clerk about Australian ballot vote, informational meeting, etc.
- Dan French – opposed to spending any money on Moore Lane Bridge.
- Doug Britton – opposed to pedestrian-only Moore Lane Bridge.
- Doug Hardy – correction as to the two state highways in Norwich.
- Pam Smith – questioning \$235,000.00 for reserve funds.
- Priscilla Vincent – requesting actual and budgeted FY2024 data.
- TRORC – Regional Plan Public Hearing Notice
- Folger Tuggle – recommending reduced budget and application of surplus to reduce taxes.
- Chris Moore – requesting SB policy compliance, enclosing Pam Smith response.
- Marcia Calloway – re budget issues, citing VLCT guidance and Norwich policy.
- Norwich Road and Bridge Standards adopted July 2019.
- Vermont Department of Taxes 2024 Equalization Study Results for Norwich.
- Chris Verges – re condition of Willey Hill Road.
- Marcia Calloway – re selectboard email.

- Accounts Payable Check Warrant Report for the period 12/19/2024 to 01/02/2025
- Layton moved to accept all correspondence. Second by Vincent. Yes: Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent. **Motion Passed.**

Item 8 Norwich Times Selectboard contribution

- Layton discussed her idea for an article about meetings, new requirements, hybrid/electronic changes and people’s preferences. Calloway suggested including the proposed spring Annual Town Meeting changes. Selectboard agreed with the topic.

Item 9 Reconsideration of 12/18/2024 Motion to reschedule 2025 Information Meeting

- Arnold noted Robert’s Rules requirement to address this at the next meeting.
- Discussion about Layton’s concerns that there is insufficient planning and time to set up Tracy Hall the Sunday before the first Tuesday in March 2025, and her request to withdraw her second of the motion to schedule a new informational meeting time for 2025.
- Town Clerk Trajman offered information from a VLCT session she attended.
 - Calloway moved to reconsider her motion at the 12/18/2024 Selectboard meeting to set an Informational Meeting date in advance of Town Meeting as March 2, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. and also to set March 3, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. as the Annual Norwich Town Meeting Information Hearing. Second by Layton. Yes: Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent; No: Arnold. **Motion Passed.**
 - Layton moved to set an Information Meeting date in advance of Town Meeting as Monday, March 3, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. Second by Vincent. Yes: Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent; No: Arnold. **Motion Passed.**

Item 10 Approval of December 18, 2024 Minutes (packet pages 107 - 108)

- Duffy noted error in Item 4 as to a representations about percentages of the Town budget.
 - Layton moved to approve the December 18, 2024 minutes as amended to strict two sentences as agreed in Item 4. Second by Vincent. Yes: Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent. **Motion Passed.**

Item 11 Budget Status Report (packet pages 109 – 177)

- No discussion.

Item 12 Adjournment

- Vincent moved to adjourn the meeting. Second by Layton. Yes: Yes: Arnold, Calloway, Layton, Smith, Vincent. **Motion Passed.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia S. Calloway, Selectboard