

Town of Norwich
Finance Committee Special Meeting
May 19, 2025, 7:30 – 9:00 pm
Multi-purpose Room, Tracy Hall

Committee Members Present: Cheryl Lindberg, Tricia Spellman, Nicholas Wood, Steven Hepburn and Christie James.

Committee Members Absent: Russell North

1. Call meeting to order
 - At 7:30 pm, Cheryl Lindberg called the Finance Committee meeting to order.
2. Selection of Committee Chair – nominations/motion
 - There was a brief discussion of the role of the Committee Chair.
 - Cheryl Lindberg made a motion to nominate Steven Hepburn as Committee Chair. Nicholas Wood seconded the motion. The Committee approved the motion with unanimous consent.
3. Selection of Vice-Chair – nominations/motion
 - Cheryl Lindberg made a motion to nominate Christie James as Committee Vice Chair. Steven Hepburn seconded the motion. The Committee approved the motion with unanimous consent.
4. Selection of Secretary – nominations/motion
 - Cheryl Lindberg made a motion to nominate Tricia Spellman as Committee Secretary. Nicholas Wood seconded the motion. The Committee approved the motion with unanimous consent.
5. Review and approval of agenda – discussion/motion
 - Cheryl Lindberg made a motion to approve the draft agenda as provided prior to the meeting. Christie James seconded the motion. The Committee approved the motion with unanimous consent.
6. Review of Finance Committee charge and role - discussion
 - It was noted that the Finance Committee did have a charge previously that was about 2 pages long. There was also a summary of the Finance Committee charge. Recently, the Norwich Selectboard amended only the summary of the Finance Committee charge, not the longer version.
 - The previous Finance Committee charge included rules of procedures. Since that version has been revised by the Selectboard to only include the summary charge, Steven Hepburn drafted a proposed revision of the Finance Committee rules of procedure. The Committee will review that document and discuss it at the next Committee meeting.
 - There was a discussion about the updated Finance Committee summary charge. Cheryl Lindberg noted that at least two corrections need to be made: 1) change “Marion Cross Elementary” to “Norwich School District” and 2) change “together

with the Hanover Finance Committee” to “together with Hanover as part of the Dresden Finance Committee.”

- Cheryl Lindberg provided some history of the Norwich Finance Committee. In the past, the Committee independently reviewed budgets and rendered opinions on budgets. Current Finance Committee members can go back and review annual reports to see what prior Finance Committees accomplished. The Finance Committee has not met in several years.
- There was a discussion about going to the Selectboard to ask questions to better understand their expectations for the Finance Committee.
- The Committee members noted the following as possible roles for the Committee: getting a better understanding of the town budget, adding additional expertise to budget discussions, providing “another set of eyes” to requests/budgets, reviewing budgets, providing insights and opinions, asking questions, serving in advisory role to the Selectboard, helping to explain the budget to others, providing statements on the budget and budget process, and reviewing internal controls and procedures.
- There was a discussion about how the Town of Hanover operates – the Hanover Finance Committee has Selectboard member and a School Board member on their committee and they have monthly meetings through the year. Additionally, the town Finance Director regularly attends their meetings.
- Tricia Spellman made a motion for the Chair, Steven Hepburn, to draft a memo with questions related to the Finance Committee charge for the Norwich Selectboard and to request discussion at an upcoming Selectboard meeting. Nicholas Wood seconded the motion. The Committee approved the motion with unanimous consent.

7. Review of the Audit Committee charge and role - discussion

- There was a discussion about the role of an audit committees as well as the history of the Norwich Audit Committee charge that was provided to the Finance Committee members at the meeting. Cheryl Lindberg noted that she is not aware of an Audit Committee ever being formed.
- The Committee decided that, before having further discussions, we should go back to Selectboard and review the need for an Audit Committee. Nicholas Wood made a motion to include questions about the Audit Committee charge in the Finance Committee memo to the Selectboard and Christie James seconded the motion. The Committee approved the motion with unanimous consent.

8. Budget Timeline

- The Committee discussed the past year’s annual budget process, which generally begins in the fall. A request for clarity on the timing of the budget process and the Finance Committee role will be included in the memo to the Selectboard.
- There was a discussion about the open meeting law as it relates to the memo that the Chair will draft for the Selectboard. There should be no discussion of the Committee work among group outside of meetings except for agenda setting. When the Chair sends a draft memo, the Committee members can write back individually to the Chair but there should not be a group email discussion. If there needs to be a discussion about the memo, the Chair will wait to send it until after the next Committee meeting.

9. Meeting schedule

- There was a discussion about the frequency of Finance Committee meetings. The Committee agreed to hold monthly meetings throughout the year and to meet more frequently during budget season.
- Cheryl Lindberg noted that she attends Selectboard meetings regularly and she encouraged other Finance Committee members to attend the meetings.
- At a future meeting, the Committee will discuss how to cover the Selectboard and School Board meetings.
- Steven Hepburn will reach out to Miranda Bergmeier and get suggestions on available Finance Committee meeting times. The Committee will decide via email on the next meeting in June and then decide on a regular meeting time at the next meeting.
- There is an available Zoom account with the Board of Listers. Interested parties can request the Zoom link if they want to participate in the Finance Committee meetings.
- The group will discuss whether to hold in person or hybrid meetings at the next meeting and will formalize that in the rules of procedure.

10. Public Comment

- The Chair of the Selectboard, Mary Layton, noted that there is a tremendous amount that could be done by the Finance Committee. She asked if there was an appetite for doing research to support the budget process. She also noted that the town support for the last budget was the lowest in a decade.
- The Committee members discussed that research will be a likely part of the role of the members and that the Selectboard could ask the Committee to help with anything.

11. Adjournment

- Cheryl Lindberg made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Nicholas Wood seconded the motion. The Committee approved the motion with unanimous consent.
- The meeting adjourned at 8:51 pm.