

Town of Norwich, Vermont
Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, July 23, 2025

Active Participants at Tracy Hall: Mary Layton (SB Chair), Priscilla Vincent (SB member), Marcia Calloway (SB member), Kimo Griggs (SB Vice Chair), Matt Swett (SB member), Brian Loeb (Town member), Steven True (Planning Director and Zoning Administrator), Cody Williams (Town member), Kathleen Shepherd (Town member), Barbara Landau (Town member), Jeff Lubell (Town member), Peggy Allen (Hartford resident), Andrew Winter (Executive Director of Twin Pines and Town member), Ernie Ciccotelli (Lister), Alexa Manning (Town member), Stephanie Wolf (Town member), Emily Myers (Town member), Steven Hepburn (Finance Committee), Cheryl Lindberg (Treasurer and Lister)

Active Participants on Zoom: Brennan Duffy (Town Manager), Jaan Laaspere (Town member), Irv Thomae (Town member), Linda Gray (Town member), Peter DeShazo (Town member), Leslie O'Hara (Owner of Hogwash Farm and Board President of Norwich Farmer's Market), Arline Rotman (Town member), Susan Barrett (Town member), Lily Trajman (Town Clerk), Rob Gere (Town member)

Key: *Motions noted in italics.*
[Public comment noted in blue.](#)

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mary Layton at 6:30 pm.

YouTube Timestamp: 37:19

1. Public Hearing to Solicit Testimony on the Proposed Amendments to the Town of Norwich Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Regulations
Timestamp: 38:07

[Jaan Laaspere shared that the set of proposed changes seeks to modernize zoning bylaws, mostly with changes to bring the town into accordance with state laws. Changes include laws relating to accessory dwelling units, duplexes, and on-farm businesses.](#)

[Brian Loeb, Norwich Representative to the Two Rivers, emphasized that most of these changes are “cleanup work,” the changes would help applicants in town know what the rules are for an ADU, and the changes are in line with the actions of other towns. Loeb added that the proposed amendments on ADUs would facilitate development in the town center.](#)

Irv Thomae stated that he did not see ornamental plants in the description of farmer's market items and shared concern that their exclusion from the official list could allow an enforcer to challenge their presence at markets.

Steven True clarified that ornamental plants originating from a farm recognized by the Department of Agriculture can participate in the retail component of an accessory on-farm business and an open-air market.

Linda Gray expressed her support for the proposed revisions, especially the elements that support more diverse housing. Gray continued that she thought components of the proposed changes would help the Development Review Board do its work.

Peter DeShazo spoke in favor of the proposed changes, which could encourage owners and developers to add affordable housing.

Cody Williams spoke in favor of the changes with provisions for open air markets, which promote small businesses and community engagement.

Kathleen Shepherd voiced appreciation for making laws of the state consistent with those of the town and making ADU regulations more understandable.

Barbara Landau expressed support for greater clarity in ADUs and updating rules to be in alignment with state laws.

Jeff Lubell spoke in support of the proposed changes and highlighted larger ambitious changes that were appropriately excluded from the proposed changes due to their breadth and possible need for broader input. Lubell encouraged the Selectboard to approve the proposed changes as opposed to deferring to a town vote to allow projects to move forward and to get into the habit of making the zoning code a "living document."

Arline Rotman spoke in favor of the changes and specifically noted the advantages of allowing the farmer's market to move across the street from its current outdoor location. Rotman further highlighted the environmental and employment benefits of allowing ADUs in town.

Steven True thanked supporters and highlighted the implementation of two new municipal permits in land use regulations, a certificate of occupancy and a certificate of compliance, which would allow his office to better manage building permits.

Leslie O'Hara, owner of Hogwash Farm and Board President of the Norwich Farmer's Market, spoke in favor of open-air markets and farm auxiliary businesses.

Calloway reminded town members that a bylaw amendment or repeal does not take effect if 5% of the voters of the town petition for a meeting of the town to consider the bylaw amendment or repeal and the petition is filed within 20 days of the vote of the legislative body.

The Chair spoke in favor of considering routine adoption at the next meeting and hypothesized that the next round of updates could require more public input. Selectboard members agreed to put the topic on the next meeting's agenda.

I move to close the Public Hearing to Solicit Testimony on the Proposed Amendments to the Town of Norwich Zoning Regulations & Subdivision Regulations. – Griggs moved (2nd Calloway) Vote: yes (unanimous)

2. Agenda

Timestamp: 1:05:05

The Chair listed future agenda items, including the zoning regulations vote, purchasing policy draft, plan for spending opioid fund, and Article 36.

The Chair highlighted an upcoming ad deadline for the Norwich Times and suggested possibilities for a Selectboard article.

Vincent requested a discussion of the Finance Department under Department Reports.

I move to approve the agenda as amended. – Swett moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (unanimous)

3. Chair's Report

Timestamp: 1:09:33

The Chair (1) met to set up the agenda and (2) reviewed signage about dogs while traveling in Washington and Colorado.

4. Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda

Timestamp: 1:11:18

Peggy Allen of the Upper Valley Agricultural Association shared that the organization engaged in the purchase of the 35-acre lot, with the prospect of relocating the farmer's market to the site.

Andrew Winter, Executive Director of Twin Pines, shared that the Unitarian Universalist Congregation reached out to the organization about potentially working together to create affordable housing on their seven-acre property. Winter explained that they had met with the Hartford Selectboard the day prior and were letting the Norwich Selectboard know as a courtesy.

Allen and Winter noted that the actions taken are the very first steps for potentially creating affordable housing in Norwich. Winter emphasized that water and sewer are important factors in discussions and stated that they don't have existing plans to share but that there will be many discussions to come.

Calloway highlighted that the site of the proposed farmer's market building is the end of the Blood Brook watershed, noted the need for a lot of parking, and shared her focus on liability as potential plans materialize.

Vincent shared her excitement about the project.

Ernie Ciccotelli gave an update that the Board of Listers had completed 100 of 195 grievances and would hopefully finish the grievance process next week.

Vincent shared her appreciation for the Listers' work.

Susan Barrett spoke in favor of the zoning changes that would allow the farmer's market to have a permanent location and encouraged the Selectboard to take steps towards creating more workforce housing.

5. Rules for Dogs

Timestamp: 1:25:58

Swett explained adjustments to the draft dog rules he developed, including revisions to Huntley Meadows off-leash timing and the addition of information about how to handle incidents with dogs. Swett highlighted the map included in the document, which would be updated in the kiosks at Huntley Meadows for guidance to residents.

Swett shared that Recreation Director Brie Swenson had ideas for a potential type of kiosk, and that they are thinking of installing three kiosks – one at each parking lot and one at the Kids’ Bridge.

Alexa Manning thanked Swett for his work on the dog rules. Manning asked for an adjustment to off-leash weekend hours and confirmation that the police would not pursue violations of playing field borders by dogs.

The Town Manager responded to Manning that he did not think excessive enforcement would be an issue.

Stephanie Wolf thanked the community and the Selectboard for their hard work on the dog matter. Wolf shared that she found the rules reasonable but thought it might be useful to add the year to the rules in the kiosks to let the public know they are up to date.

The Town Manager shared his appreciation for Swett engaging the community in drafting the dog rules.

Swett explained that the weekend off-leash hours were developed to be consistent across weekend days and to facilitate rentals of the pavilion for children’s parties.

I move to adopt the rules for the dogs as amended to include the current use date. – Vincent (2nd Swett) Vote: yes (unanimous)

6. Animal Control Ordinance

Timestamp: 1:46:39

Vincent asked why the Selectboard should pass an ordinance if it will not be enforced. Selectboard members, the Town Manager, and the Town Clerk discussed processes for enforcement of dog licensing, as well as fines, impoundment, and euthanasia for delinquent dogs.

The Town Clerk explained her efforts to enforce dog licensing and the potential for fines to encourage town members to follow vaccination requirements.

Manning shared that she understood the regulation to only include dogs who were licensed at one point but are now unlicensed, as a dog unlicensed from the beginning could remain under the radar of the town.

Selectboard members, the Town Clerk, and Manning discussed rabies vaccination documentation protocol in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Swett highlighted concerns from some town members that Section 13 could open the town up to greater liability and might put townspeople at odds with the Recreation Department. Swett explained that the language of Section 13 was approved by Town Counsel and that the flexibility of the rules is of value. Swett further spoke in favor of the Selectboard setting the off-leash/on-leash hours instead of the Recreation Department, because the Selectboard must warn townspeople ahead of changes to remain in accordance with open meeting rules.

Griggs referenced public comments that all other towns have adopted the VLCT guidance without adjustments and highlighted a range of town statutes that do not align with those statements. Griggs stated that he did not find Norwich to be inconsistent with other towns and noted that the town was possibly “gentler” on dog owners.

I move to adopt the animal control ordinance as presented. – Swett (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (unanimous)

7. Town Clerk Spending Request: Scanner Base
Timestamp: 2:05:10

The Town Clerk explained that this was one of few tables rated for the 300 lb. scanner and that it cost significantly less than the scanner base made by the scanner company.

I move to approve the expenditure of up to \$2,500 from Fund 45: Restoration and Preservation for the purchase of an electric adjustable height workstation. – Griggs moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (unanimous)

8. Spending Request: Main Street Flag Fund
Timestamp: 2:08:25

Emily Myers explained that the flags were within budget and that she was seeking reimbursement for their purchase.

I move to approve the expenditure of \$489.89 from Fund 37: Main Street Flags for the purchase of US flags. – Vincent moved (2nd Calloway) Vote: yes (unanimous)

9. Spending Request: DPW Winter Sand Screener
Timestamp: 2:11:11

The Town Manager referred to the memo from Chris Kaufman explaining this spending request.

I move to approve the expenditure of \$24,550 from Fund 7: DPW Equipment Reserve for the purchase of a new winter sand screener. – Griggs moved (2nd Swett) Vote: yes (unanimous)

10. Response to Finance Committee Requests

Timestamp: 2:12:50

The Chair highlighted the memo in the packet from Steven Hepburn on the Finance Committee's rules of procedure and voting structure.

Calloway shared numerous concerns about the document, including changing committee purpose, efforts to explain or define statutory requirements, citations to out of date ethics regulations, and potential engagement with town staff.

Griggs questioned Calloway's feedback and suggested the possible utility of an easy-access document on procedure for volunteer members.

Vincent shared that she found the Selectboard's feedback to the Finance Committee to be harsh and highlighted that there is no orientation or help for new committee members.

Swett noted his appreciation for the effort in the document but expressed concern about redundancy and redefinition with the handbook. Swett echoed Vincent's thanks for town members who volunteer their time to work for the town. Swett highlighted the negative end to the previous Finance Committee and the Selectboard's general concern with moving forward. He shared his preference as a new Selectboard member for running through the whole budget season before making informed requests of the Finance Committee.

The Chair highlighted that the Selectboard has its own rules of procedure and shared that she saw no harm in the document.

Hepburn stated that the Committee is not trying to paraphrase or supersede the law. Hepburn explained the thought behind the creation of the document, including the incorporation of logistical details for holding meetings.

Selectboard members and Hepburn debated where committees should look for guidance, the unusual occurrence of so many simultaneous new members, the risks and benefits of paraphrasing laws, potential upcoming requests from the Committee, forms of data available to the Committee, and the next steps of the Selectboard in relation to the document presented.

Vincent expressed regret at voting to take away the vote from the Treasurer at a previous meeting and her lack of understanding of the standard role of ex officio positions at the time of voting.

Griggs shared that he did not see any issue with an even number of voting members since they were an advisory committee, and a tied vote is a failed vote. Griggs further shared that he felt uncomfortable following the vote to remove the voting rights of the ex officio position.

Calloway cautioned the potential for conflicts of interest and incompatible roles under the code of ethics.

Selectboard members debated the validity of the vote to rescind the voting rights of the ex officio member on the advisory committee.

Cheryl Lindberg clarified that she is an elected official, not an employee of the town, and advocated for the ex officio role to be a voting member of the Committee.

Selectboard members and Lindberg discussed the relationship between voting rights and respect for a position, the reason for the matter to be raised now as opposed to in the past, and the history of the Finance Committee.

Lindberg emphasized that there is no conflict and that incompatible offices are identified by statute.

Griggs asked to table the matter until the next meeting to learn more about the information shared by Calloway and the importance of a vote.

Swett emphasized his desire to discuss the matter from a position perspective, not a personal perspective.

Hepburn shared that the Committee did not find the odd or even number of members to merit a change to the voting status of the ex officio member.

Calloway asked that the Selectboard have Town Counsel review whether the matter conflicts with incompatible offices or the new code of ethics.

Lindberg shared that it is a fast and common practice to export finance data from the existing system to Excel spreadsheets.

11. Affordable Housing Subcommittee Charge and Bylaws

Timestamp: 3:26:15

Calloway stated that she did not find basis in statute for a subcommittee of the Planning Commission to have bylaws. Calloway highlighted the intent for a grant proposal last year, which required buy-in from more people than just the Planning Commission.

Jeff Lubell clarified he had not seen the charge from the Selectboard handbook and that “we are just trying to be helpful.” Lubell explained that the group needed rules and guidance on how to conceptualize their role and who to go to for questions.

Calloway shared that she had sent out charges to the various commissions one or two years ago, and groups were scheduled to come to the Selectboard at one point, but that the Affordable Housing Subcommittee was never scheduled. Calloway clarified that the Subcommittee should report to the Planning Commission.

Lubell shared that he had just seen the charge on page 100 of the Selectboard packet and that it looked fine to him. He stated that he thought the Planning Commission was also simply seeking guidance.

Calloway stated that subcommittees can set up their own individual method of operation but that she did not feel especially comfortable with the subcommittee developing bylaws, though instruction would come down to the subcommittee and their parent group.

Calloway asked for clarification on Homes for Norwich and the potential for conflict of interest. Lubell clarified that Homes for Norwich is a nonprofit group that cares about affordable housing and promotes it through education. Lubell questioned why it might be considered a conflict of interest. The Chair hypothesized that a developer could have a conflict of interest due to a financial benefit, but that she did not see an issue with advocacy.

Griggs highlighted the breadth of the charge listed on page 100 of the Selectboard packet and suggested tightening it to work with just the Planning Commission.

12. Selectboard Handbook

Timestamp: 3:52:17

Selectboard members discussed whether the Land Management Council is still in effect, whether there should be definitions for terms like Fire District, next steps for temporary committees, and responsibility and expectations for updating the handbook.

Rob Gere suggested reviewing a committee a year after the production of their final report to reflect on the response to the final report.

The Town Manager advocated for adopting and publishing the Selectboard Handbook, rather than requesting further feedback, as the topic had been discussed for a year and a half.

Selectboard members agreed to review the final version of the document at the following meeting and plan to adopt it at that time.

13. Town Manager Report

Timestamp: 4:18:34

The Town Manager advocated for a cultural change to expedite topics and shorten meetings.

The Town Manager highlighted that (1) the Hemlock Road project has been completed and the requisition process for reimbursement from FEMA via the state has begun, (2) the Kate Wallace culvert project is underway, (3) Recreation Department camps are underway and fall sports programming registration is underway, (4) the agreement to proceed with ARC for the boilers has been signed and a chimney inspection will take place next week, (5) Studio Nexus is open to discussing Tracy Hall initiatives, (6) progress has been made on the roof inspections and elevator costs, and (7) Michele Ilich-Daubas is retiring and an offer has been made for a replacement Administrative Assistant for the Police Department.

14. Department Reports

Timestamp: 4:23:35

Vincent expressed frustration about waiting until the end of meetings to discuss finances.

Selectboard members discussed correspondence from a member of the public about finances, the publishing date of financial numbers, and deadlines for comments.

15. Approve Minutes

Timestamp: 4:30:38

Vincent clarified that the following sentence included in the minutes refers to the Finance Committee: “The Chair noted the topic of Town Treasurer as a non-voting member for a future agenda item.”

I move to approve the minutes for July 9, 2025 as amended. – Calloway moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (unanimous)

16. AP Warrants

Timestamp: 4:33:00

Vincent noted her realization that one check is written when there are multiple invoices from one vendor.

I move to approve AP Warrant #1357 in the amount of \$425,177.06 to be paid from the General Fund and AP Warrant #1358 in the amount of \$40,000.00 to be paid from Fund 50. – Calloway moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (unanimous)

17. Receipt of Correspondence

Timestamp: 4:36:02

I move to receive all correspondence. – Calloway moved (2nd Swett) Vote: yes (unanimous)

18. Adjournment

Timestamp: 4:37:35

I move to adjourn the meeting. – Calloway moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (unanimous)

Meeting adjourned at 10:30.

Minutes taken by Jenny Tolman.

Minutes approved on August 13, 2025

Mary Layton, Selectboard Chair