

Town of Norwich, Vermont
Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, August 13th, 2025

Active Participants at Tracy Hall: Mary Layton (SB Chair), Priscilla Vincent (SB member), Kimo Griggs (SB Vice Chair), Irv Thomae (Town member), Steven True (Planning Director and Zoning Administrator)

Active Participants on Zoom: Marcia Calloway (SB member), Brennan Duffy (Town Manager), Jaan Laaspere (Town member), Lily Trajman (Town Clerk), Alex Northern (Fire Chief)

Matt Swett was not in attendance.

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: 50:03

1. Agenda

Timestamp: 50:26

I move to approve the agenda as presented. – Vincent moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (Griggs, Vincent, Layton, Calloway)

2. Chair's Report

Timestamp: 51:38

The Chair (1) met to set up the agenda, (2) met with the Town Manager to discuss the purchasing policy, and (3) brainstormed with the Town Manager ways to reduce the length of meetings.

3. Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda

Timestamp: 52:41

[Irv Thomae, representing Norwich on the governing board of the East Central Vermont Telecommunications District, ECFiber, offered reassurance that they are taking all appropriate steps to maintain service to customers. Thomae gave context to the funding](#)

of ECFiber, recent contract negotiations, and efforts to organize a new nonprofit with a paid board of directors.

Vincent shared appreciation for the newly repainted crosswalks and the new fog lines along the Beaver Meadow pedestrian corridor.

Vincent requested permission to ask the Town Manager whether bookkeeping errors had been corrected. The Chair suggested discussing the matter at the next meeting with a dedicated agenda item.

Jaan Laaspere highlighted his memo about the capital planning decision made in the last Planning Commission meeting, requested Planning Commission members have time with Town staff to begin the inventory process, and noted an eventual request for time on a future Selectboard agenda to discuss the topic.

Calloway expressed confusion around the scope of the project and highlighted the need for goals in the plan.

The Chair suggested making the topic an agenda item due to the complexity of the matter.

4. Zoning Bylaws/Regulations

Timestamp: 1:08:16

The Chair noted a positive public hearing at the last meeting.

Griggs asked whether there were any accompanying maps, questioned language of exempted vs. prohibited, asked for clarification on permitting for clearing land, and highlighted a syntax error.

Steven True clarified that there is a “very minimal change” to the zoning districts stemming from two property owner requests during the 2009 adoption. True noted that forestry falls under the Department of Agriculture’s required agricultural practices.

Calloway shared concern that broad authority given to the DRB to grant special exceptions or variances for planned unit developments defeats the point of having zoning districts. Calloway noted that governmental immunity is not necessarily absolute and advocated for counsel to review the language. Calloway further questioned whether the Private Highway Specifications are sufficient given the changing climate and increasing flooding. She advocated for allowing residents to vote on by-laws given the possibility for them to change the liability and complexion of the town.

Laaspere noted that the items Calloway highlighted were pieces of the bylaws that were not addressed or changed in this set of adjustments, and that the current set of changes is the first bundle of multiple sets of reviews and changes. Laaspere agreed that significant policy changes would warrant a public vote.

Calloway, True, and Laaspere discussed the difference between a variance and a waiver and the order of steps for updating bylaws.

Vincent and Griggs spoke in favor of the document.

I move to adopt the Town of Norwich Land Use Regulations and the Norwich Subdivision Regulations as presented – Griggs moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (Griggs, Vincent, Layton), no (Calloway)

Calloway clarified that she is not against the work but is conflicted about approving something that still has problems.

Laaspere noted that the changes, not the remainder of the existing document, are being approved.

5. Selectboard Handbook

Timestamp: 1:29:27

The Chair highlighted a correspondence not in the packet due to timing from the Planning Commission relating to the Solar Siting Subcommittee charge and Affordable Housing Subcommittee charge. Laaspere read the following into the record relating to the Solar Siting Subcommittee –

This committee will work to:

- Ensure that the town plan provides clear, accurate guidance regarding the development of solar energy projects in the Town of Norwich, guided by the laws of the State of Vermont, bearing in mind the town's character, topography, location of critical utilities, and desires of all its residents. The Solar Siting Subcommittee will define in the town plan clear criteria for any solar project requiring Public Utility Commission Section 248 process review.
- The Solar Siting Subcommittee will engage with other town groups, such as the Energy Committee, the Conservation Committee, and will continue to welcome input during its meetings to hear feedback from the members of the public.
- The Solar Siting Subcommittee will provide input to the efforts of the Planning Commission to develop an enhanced energy plan for the Town of Norwich.

Laaspere read the following into the record relating to the Affordable Housing Subcommittee –

Under the umbrella of the Planning Commission statutory duties, it is the charge of the Affordable Housing Subcommittee to provide recommendations and guidance to, and work with, the Planning Commission, Town Planner, Selectboard, and Town Manager on the issues relating to affordable housing in Norwich.

Calloway emphasized the importance of dialogue between groups.

The Chair, Vincent, and Griggs shared support for the language that Laaspere presented.

Griggs asked for clarification on what it means to adopt the Selectboard Handbook and shared concern that it could become a reference that people point to rather than referring to statute or other town documents.

The Chair shared her view that it is a guide that explains how things work in town.

Calloway clarified that this document collates the information that people often wonder about and is an organic document.

Selectboard members discussed the specific language for the motion of approval vs. adoption.

I move to approve the Selectboard Handbook as an organic reference document. – Vincent moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (Griggs, Vincent, Layton, Calloway)

6. Town Clerk Spending Request: Land Record Books

Timestamp: 1:48:18

I move to approve the expenditure of up to \$1,405 from Fund 45: Restoration and Preservation for the purchase of five blank Land Records books and paper. – Griggs moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (Griggs, Vincent, Layton, Calloway)

7. NFD Spending Request

Timestamp: 1:50:15

I move to approve the expenditure of \$372.16 from Fund 26: Fire Equipment to cover the additional cost for Fire Department gear. – Griggs moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (Griggs, Vincent, Layton, Calloway)

The Town Manager noted that neither he nor the Finance Director found any requirement in statute for expenditures from designated funds to come before the Selectboard for approval. The Town Manager shared that a cap to not go through the process currently used could help expedite small expenses like that just approved.

The Chair stated that this should be considered when the purchasing policy is on the agenda.

8. Tracy Hall Initiatives Update

Timestamp: 1:56:12

The Chair noted that the Town Manager was in the middle of receiving quotes and doing research and requested an interim update.

The Town Manager shared that they are moving forward with decommissioning the existing boiler equipment in the next week. He noted that ARC, the contractor for the project, asked a regional chimney company to do an inspection of the chimney ahead of beginning work. The inspection found that the existing chimney is not suitable for continued use due to broad deterioration, which would postpone the boiler replacement timeline if pursuing the original exhaust pipe plan. The quote for the chimney repair was roughly \$71,000.

The Town Manager shared an updated side venting plan for the boiler replacement, which would not require the chimney to be a key phase of the project and would provide some cost savings.

Selectboard members and the Town Manager discussed carbon monoxide detection and aesthetic consequences of the updated venting placement.

The Town Manager shared that he had contacted three slate roofing companies, one of which found that the slate roof was lying flat and posed no immediate concern. The second company found some immediate concern and provided a quote for basic maintenance and a comprehensive maintenance plan. The third company did not have availability until October, which informed the Town Manager's preference to wait to pursue further action.

Selectboard members and the Town manager discussed the roof quotes, components of a roof maintenance plan, and the possible significance of a slate roof to townspeople.

The Town Manager shared that the service provider for the existing elevator did an inspection of the current conditions but did not provide a quote in time for this meeting.

The Town Manager asked whether the Selectboard would prefer to have Doug Sonsalla of Studio Nexus to come in two weeks to discuss Tracy Hall next steps or wait and draft memos on their vision for the building first.

Selectboard members discussed the sequence of next steps and general goals for the Tracy Hall project and agreed to write memos and organize a special meeting as next steps.

9. Approve Minutes

Timestamp: 2:32:57

Ernie Ciccotelli spoke on behalf of the Listers, not the Finance Committee.

The full name of the retiring Police Administrative Assistant is Michele Ilich-Daubas.

I move to approve the minutes for July 23, 2025 as amended. – Griggs moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (Griggs, Vincent, Layton, Calloway)

10. AP Warrants

Timestamp: 2:36:07

Griggs shared that context for larger expenditures could be helpful.

I move to approve AP Warrant #1371 in the amount of \$329.00 to be paid from the Tracy Hall Fund; AP Warrant #1376 in the amount of \$447.83 to be paid from the General Fund; AP Warrant #1372 in the amount of \$24,550 to be paid from the Highway Equipment Fund; AP Warrant #1374 in the amount of \$419.49 to be paid from the Records Restoration Fund; and AP Warrant #1377 in the amount of \$579,081.11 to be paid from the General Fund. – Griggs moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (Griggs, Vincent, Layton, Calloway)

11. Receipt of Correspondence

Timestamp: 2:38:39

Vincent highlighted that many townspeople have expressed confusion about the tax rate and payment deadline. The Chair and Vincent discussed this year's long tax rate determination timeline.

I move to receive all correspondence. – Vincent moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (Griggs, Vincent, Layton, Calloway)

12. Adjournment

Timestamp: 2:45:42

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:26 pm.

Minutes taken by Jenny Tolman.

Minutes approved on August 27, 2025

Mary Layton, Selectboard Chair