Town of Norwich, Vermont
Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, October 8th, 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), Brennan Duffy (Town Manager), Doug Sonsalla (Studio Nexus Architects), Steven True (Planning Director and Zoning Administrator), Marga Rahmann (Hemlock Ridge Board), Carolyn Andrews (Hemlock Ridge Board), Cheryl Lindberg (Lister and Town Treasurer), Mary Erdei (Hartford resident)

Active Participants on Zoom: Kit Burgin (Town resident)

Key: *Motions noted in italics.*
Public comment noted in blue.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mary Layton at 6:31 pm.

YouTube Timestamp: 35:38

1. **Agenda**
   Timestamp: 35:36

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

2. **Chair's Report**
   Timestamp: 36:31

   The Chair (1) met to work on the agenda and (2) wrote up a synopsis of the Town Manager's evaluation materials.

3. **Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda**
   Timestamp: 37:07

   Vincent shared her appreciation for the Police Chief, who arranged the gifting of an American flag to the Town's crossing guard on the date he gained US citizenship.

   The Town Manager shared that the Town Clerk had received the designation of Certified Municipal Clerk, awarded by the International Institute of Municipal Clerks.

4. **Tracy Hall Visioning/Studio Nexus**
   Timestamp: 38:26

Doug Sonsalla reviewed his past engagement with the Selectboard, including the three stages presented at a February Selectboard meeting. These included (1) immediate action items for utilities and the site, including heating system improvements, (2) building envelope updates, (3) and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing system upgrades.

The Town Manager shared that some bids had come in for the chimney and roof projects. He highlighted that a functioning chimney is not needed for exhaust, which could influence next steps for that project.

The Town Manager shared that the estimate to modernize the elevator is approximately $150,000 but is likely a critical update.

Selectboard members and the Town Manager discussed repair longevity and the evolution of Tracy Hall's use.

Sonsalla described option one short-term improvements, which would include the existing building in its current configuration, option two improvements to meet energy code and programming requirements, and option three improvements to reach net zero and long-term programmatic needs.

Sonsalla suggested the possibility of a programming exercise to understand the needs of the Town, understand who is using the space, and inform space layout, all of which could create a baseline for the updates.

When asked about the cost of the exercise, Sonsalla stated that he would speak with the Town Manager to develop a list of a la carte activity options but would also need more information about what the Selectboard wants.

Steven True shared that they were in the early stages of applying for a municipal planning grant for Town of Norwich Master Plan. True added that the location of Tracy Hall would mean that it would be included in the master plan concept.

Sonsalla shared that looking at site planning or master planning would likely require a civil engineer for permitting, depending on how granular the Selectboard would like the conversation to be.

True and Sonsalla responded to Selectboard questions about the possible planning exercises.

Selectboard members debated next steps for the project, whose input to prioritize, and possible meeting spaces beyond Tracy Hall. Griggs recommended that an advisory committee be formed. The group agreed that the next step would be for Sonsalla to compile a list of options for the Town Manager to review and distribute to the Selectboard.

The Selectboard agreed to allow public comment on the Hemlock Ridge matter ahead of the agenda item on correspondence.

Marga Rahmann and Carolyn Andrews, both on the Leadership Boards of Hemlock Ridge, explained the letter included in the Selectboard packet about the encampment near the Hemlock Ridge community. Rahmann specifically noted that the landowners of the property on which the encampment sits had not responded to the community's concerns.

The Chair noted that the topic could not be an agenda item that night but voiced appreciation for bringing the concern to the Selectboard.

Rahmann noted her hope that the letter would spark internal discussion about the Town's response, specifically given multiple rebuffs by the Norwich Police Department.

Calloway pondered the legal components of the issue, specifically the inability to legislate against homelessness and the various statutes within the criminal code for assault and fires.

Swett raised that it could be helpful to have a future agenda item for the Police Chief to briefly explain jurisdiction on different forms of property.

True shared that there might be a zoning remedy to the matter.

5. DPW Gravel/Ledge and Winter Sand Bid Recommendations
Timestamp: 1:28:56

I move to approve a contract with Twin State Sand and Gravel to supply and deliver gravel/ledge product for fiscal year 2026. – Griggs moved (2nd Calloway) Vote: yes (unanimous)

I move to approve a contract with Pike Industries to supply and deliver winter sand for fiscal year 2026. – Griggs moved (2nd Calloway) Vote: yes (unanimous)

6. **Burgin Powerline Request**
   Timestamp: 1:30:31

   The Town Manager outlined the documents in the packet relating to the request.

   Kit Burgin shared that he had no comments or concerns.

   Calloway wondered whether this decision would create a precedent, to which the Town Manager responded that requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

   I move to authorize the Town Manager to execute the License Agreement, as included in the Selectboard meeting packet. – Griggs moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (unanimous)

7. **DRB Memo re: Updates to the Town's Codified Ordinances**
   Timestamp: 1:33:38

   True distributed a memo with greater detail of the requests.

   True noted that in reviewing the Town of Norwich codified ordinance document, the section referenced in the memo referred to the Planning Commission as the judicial body but should have been the Development Review Board.

   True further noted that part two of the codified ordinance document contained the land use regulations and requested to update that section with the newly adopted regulations.

   I move to authorize the Planning Director to make changes to correct mechanical deficiencies in the Codified Ordinance and to update Part II of the Codified Ordinance with the updated regulations, as requested by the Development Review Board and the Planning Director. – Griggs moved (2nd Swett) Vote: yes (unanimous)

8. **Purchasing Policy (2nd Read)**
   Timestamp: 1:36:00

   The Town Manager shared that the document was reviewed at the last meeting and that he had made a few changes based on comments from the discussion, specifically the descriptions of designated and reserve fund purview. He noted the distinction between a designated fund and a reserve fund and his interest in working with the Finance Director to review fund types and update accordingly in reporting.

The Town Manager offered to clean up the draft one more time and bring it back for a final review at the next meeting or adopt at this meeting.

Swett highlighted the language that gives the Town Manager unlimited purchasing power in emergency situations, revised from the 2019 version that gave the ability to purchase up to $25,000.

Griggs questioned the instructive language under general procurement requirements for purchasing with federal funds.

The Town Manager explained that this was model VLCT language.

Calloway spoke in favor of retaining the model VLCT language and highlighted that emergency situations would be for a short-term, immediate matter as opposed to an exigent matter.

Cheryl Lindberg asked for confirmation that when department heads are discussed in the policy, the Listers are included in the designation. Lindberg added that the Listers seem in limbo as to whether they are a department of the town or not, and that they are elected officials while department heads are employees of the Town Manager.

Selectboard members discussed and agreed that the Listers would be included under the Policy.

I move to adopt the Town of Norwich Procurement Policy as presented. – Calloway moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (unanimous)

9. Town Manager Employment Evaluation
Timestamp: 1:49:26

I move to enter Executive Session under 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) to discuss the evaluation of the Town Manager and to invite the Town Manager. – Calloway moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (unanimous)

Time entered executive session: 7:45

I move to enter public session. – *Vincent moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (unanimous)*

Time entered public session: 8:33

At the request of the Selectboard, the Chair shared a statement that the Town Manager had a very positive evaluation from all Selectboard members and very strong support from all department heads.

10. Approve Minutes
Timestamp: 2:39:01

Vincent requested increased specificity on the MOU referenced in the Chair's report, specifically that it was regarding the Finance Committee.

I move to approve the minutes for September 24, 2025 as amended. – Vincent moved (2nd Swett) Vote: yes (unanimous)

11. AP Warrants
Timestamp: 2:41:07

Vincent wondered whether special appropriations were being paid in installments when above a certain amount. The Town Manager responded that he would look into the matter.

Griggs asked about the payment timeline to the school. The Town Manager shared that there would be an upcoming off-cycle payment in the next week to make them whole for the first installment.

I move to approve AP Warrant #1403 in the amount of $45.55 to be paid from the General Fund; AP Warrant #1404 in the amount of $1,566,914.76 to be paid from the General Fund. – Griggs moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (unanimous)

12. Receipt of Correspondence
Timestamp: 2:45:34

Mary Erdei spoke to her engagement with and observations of the individuals in the encampment by Hemlock Ridge. Erdei highlighted yelling, unsafe driving, and various forms of debris left behind.

Calloway noted that Chris Katucki's correspondence suggested a vote at Town Meeting might be needed to put money into a fund from the opioid settlement, which Calloway thought might be incorrect. The Town Manager suggested discussing the matter further at the next meeting.

Swett shared that he thought it might be beneficial to publicize the opioid fund discussion on the Listserv. The Town Manager countered that it would be an unprecedented decision.

I move to receive all correspondence. – Griggs moved (2^{nd} Vincent) Vote: yes (unanimous)

13. Adjournment
Timestamp: 2:57:59

I move to adjourn the meeting. – Vincent moved (2^{nd} Calloway) Vote: yes (unanimous)

Meeting adjourned at 8:53 pm.

Minutes taken by Jenny Tolman.

Minutes approved on October 22, 2025

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Mary Layton, Selectboard Chair