

Town of Norwich, Vermont
Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Active Participants at Tracy Hall: Mary Layton (SB Chair), Marcia Calloway (SB member), Kimo Griggs (SB Vice Chair), Matt Swett (SB member), Brennan Duffy (Town Manager), Matt Romei (Police Chief)

Priscilla Vincent was not in attendance.

Active Participants on Zoom: Chris Kaufman (DPW Director)

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: 13:16

1. Agenda

Timestamp: 13:57

I move to approve the agenda as presented. – Swett moved (2nd Calloway) Vote: yes (Calloway, Griggs, Swett, Layton), Vincent not present

2. Chair's Report

Timestamp: 14:26

The Chair (1) met to draft the agenda, (2) worked with Town Administration on a plan for the upcoming budget hearings and agreed to hold a general overview and meet with the Police Department and DPW the night of Nov. 12th, meet with the other Department heads on Nov. 19th, meet with the Town Clerk and Listers on Dec. 10th, and hold a general discussion and wrap-up on Dec. 17th, (3) shared that she was asked to serve on a committee for the Unitarian Universalist Church on the proposed development that the church may be involved with, that she ultimately decided to leave the committee, that she will distance herself from Homes for Norwich, and that she will recuse herself if there is any perceived conflict of interest, noting that she advocates for affordable housing but does not want her views to be clouded by her participation in the church.

3. Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda

Timestamp: 17:50

Griggs complemented, thanked, and congratulated everyone involved in the Norwich Halloween. Griggs read prepared remarks highlighting the many participants and events of the evening.

4. FY27 Budget

Timestamp: 19:21

The Town Manager thanked the Finance Director, Finance Assistant, and Department Heads for their work on the draft budget. He shared that he would not speak in-depth but would touch on the highlights of the draft.

The Town Manager shared that the draft budget being presented that night had a 2% increase from FY26, lower than anticipated when beginning the process. He emphasized that this was a draft budget and that it would have minor adjustments to account for minor math errors or updates. He added that the meeting next week would have a revised draft budget.

The Town Manager noted that the draft budget was \$7,379,013, a 2.04% increase compared to last year's budget. He highlighted that they had double checked where employees should be on their step grade chart and that he was comfortable with the accuracy of the salary numbers in the budget.

The Town Manager highlighted that the Finance Director had separated out the employee wages and benefits to show how they factor into the departmental budgets.

Swett asked whether the statutory meeting expenditure consisted of the costs of recording and posting meetings, to which the Town Manager responded that the Town Clerk could answer better but that he believed so.

The Police Chief stated that the increase in wages and health insurance alone would lead to a 4.5% or 4.8% increase in budget, depending on whether capital was included in the number, before adding anything else.

He called attention to a significant decrease in overtime hours in the budget and shared that the intent is to initiate after-hours on-call service this year once he fills the fourth full-time position.

The Police Chief shared that he expected to lose the part-time officer, as he is a finalist for another role. He noted that they have increased the on-call wage and shared that

currently when a call comes in after-hours and no Norwich officers are on duty, the State Police receive the call when they are on duty, and the Norwich Police Chief receives the call when they are not.

The Police Chief pointed out an increase in the speed sign budget line, which would not be to put up more speed limit signs, but rather to purchase a variable message sign to communicate messages like upcoming road closures. He additionally noted a spending request for cruiser vehicle equipment for the new cruiser being built, an increased administration “catch-all” line, and a decreased dispatch services line. He explained that there is a two-year delay in dispatch costs, meaning that we are “still right now dealing with COVID time calls for service.”

The Police Chief noted that he had removed a request for tasers in an effort to get to the 6% target budget increase. He explained that officers are out by themselves and that tasers are “universally an equalizer in law enforcement.”

The Police Chief responded to Selectboard questions on taser costs, purchase options, lifespan, and usage.

Griggs asked about the success of cruiser video equipment, to which the Police Chief responded that it had been very helpful and significantly reduced the rate of complaints.

Griggs asked about a new line for an IT contract, to which the Police Chief responded that with the Windows upgrade and other federal requirements, it make sense to have an IT contract.

Swett noted that the on-call wages and overtime wages appeared to flip-flop in amounts and that it appeared they were looking to have more on-call hours. Swett asked for an explanation of the increase in part-time wages.

The Police Chief explained that the proposed number was based off what the part-time officer made this past year, and that the money came out of the open fourth full-time position.

The Town Manager shared that they were working with the auditing team and that they were hoping for a very firm number on the FY25 actuals before completing the budget season, which would fill in the empty FY25 Actual column in the draft budget included in the Selectboard packet.

Swett noted that in the revenues there had been a standing \$10,000 expected in police fines but that historical actuals were much lower. The Police Chief explained that there were not many traffic stops or tickets issued in the COVID period, but that they are coming back. He added that the Police Department had ended up with “a number of complex cases” and were working through how to balance handling cases versus speeding enforcement.

Calloway asked if the Police Chief thought there were enough electric speed signs across the Town. The Police Chief shared that there were signs everywhere that the traffic study recommended them to be and that he was hesitant to go beyond that without an engineer suggesting additional places.

Swett asked how many officers the police officer wage line was based off, to which the Police Chief responded that it was based off three full-time and that they currently have two full-time.

For the Public Safety Facility, the Police Chief noted that they had lowered the water estimate and increased the electricity line since he had met with the Fire Department and landed on what they considered to be more accurate estimates. He pointed out that the building is heated and cooled by electricity, except for the apparatus bay.

The Police Chief further highlighted that they had doubled the repair and maintenance line since the building was aging and increased the designated fund for the Police Station for similar reasons.

The Police Chief shared that the oldest active vehicle was seven years old, approximately the limit for an emergency vehicle, and that they are looking at an 18-month cycle for replacing vehicles. He added that the lease on the trucks is in the operational budget, not the capital budget, and that they are looking to maintain vehicles better to keep them serviceable for longer.

The Town Manager shared that the budget documents would be added to the next Selectboard packet.

Selectboard members, the Town Manager, and the Police Chief discussed the vehicle replacement schedule. The Police Chief noted that he hopes to have four full-time officers and one or two part-time officers, a vehicle for each, and a spare vehicle.

DPW Director Chris Kaufman highlighted that the FEMA projects have been completed on time and under budget and added that they were successful at receiving funds while the projects were ongoing, therefore avoiding depleting town funds.

Kaufman shared that the DPW currently consists of himself, a foreman, and three equipment operators with one position available, which total an expected 3.4% budget increase.

For materials, Kaufman shared that they listed a normal increase for salt and sand and an increase for road signs due to issues with them being stolen.

For contracted services, Kaufman highlighted that they had reduced the line for plowing and sanding based on increased staffing and experience.

For equipment, Kaufman noted that the costs of repairs and parts typically increase substantially every year with increased lead time.

For highway and garage items, Kaufman shared that there was a space problem at DPW and that they were slightly increasing the supplies line to purchase shelving.

Kaufman stated that the total proposed expenditures for the DPW, just the DPW itself, came to a reduction of 6%.

Swett asked about the decrease in wages for the road crew, to which Kaufman shared that wages fluctuate based on staff coming and going, and that new people often start at a lower rate depending on their level of experience.

Swett asked about the line for culverts versus the culvert designated fund. Kaufman explained that culvert and road supplies listed in the budget was for smaller culverts done internally while the culvert fund was for larger, more intense construction that requires a designated contractor to support the work.

For buildings and grounds, Kaufman shared that the DPW was looking at a 5% increase for the coming year.

For solid waste, Kaufman noted that contracted services had remained largely flat, with a small increase for recycling, and that the costs for phone service at the Transfer Station had increased significantly, likely related to internet service. The total expenditures, Kaufman concluded, would be a 2.9% increase.

The Chair asked about the status of internet at the Transfer Station, and Kaufman explained that there is now expanded ability to get internet further out in the yard, but that it is not perfect.

Kaufman stated that the change in total DPW expenditures, outside of Tracy Hall, was \$2.9 million to \$2.7 million, almost a 5% reduction.

The Town Manager explained that the Tracy Hall expenses are mostly level funded, with a slight increase to heat and elevator maintenance.

Griggs asked if Kaufman would like to have work done on the DPW building, to which the Town Manager responded that it would be discussed in the designated fund allocation.

Griggs noted that the transfer station “lacks comfort” and asked whether there was any plan to improve the facilities for employees and users. Kaufman responded that there is a portalet and that the matter is not actively being investigated.

Kaufman spoke to various highlights within the DPW designated funds, including that they are expecting to receive a new truck at the end of the month and that they don’t expect any expenditures in the equipment fund until 2028.

The Chair brought up that they had talked previously about a shed for storage, to which Kaufman responded that it would be covered in the garage fund.

Griggs asked if Kaufman thought this fixed list of equipment was the right list of equipment. Kaufman responded that they currently rent a small excavator for a few months annually, which is more affordable given the limited timeframe they use it for each year.

Kaufman explained that it is very helpful to have two graders to provide the opportunity for training and secondary support given the many gravel roads.

Calloway inquired as to whether the list was exhaustive, to which Kaufman responded that there are small things sitting around the property that were never disposed of.

Kaufman shared that he is looking to bring in an architect or engineer to assist with figuring out next steps for the DPW facility. Kaufman noted that there was an expansion built on the facility about ten years ago but that it was a rushed job and that issues noted in a report prior to the addition were not addressed in the project. He added that the doors

are challenging to fit today's sized plows through, there are leaks in the building, and there are drainage issues with oil.

Kaufman shared that he envisioned a process of bringing someone on, developing a thoughtful plan, and putting some money in the line item to begin the preparation.

The Chair stated that she thought it could be time to tear down the building, a sentiment that the Town Manager echoed.

Selectboard members, the Town Manager, and Kaufman discussed the importance of building upgrades to DPW.

Kaufman noted that there was not much money in the paving fund when he joined but that he has been working hard to put money away to build a capital budget that can be utilized. He stated that the Town can only get grants for class two roads, and that class three roads are "on us."

Kaufman responded to questions from the Chair and Swett on the status of culvert projects.

Kaufman shared that he does not anticipate that Vermont will receive a lot of money from the federal government in the near future and encouraged the Town to have a plan in place to access money in case of emergency.

The Town Manager encouraged the Selectboard to think about surplus over the past year and possibly explore setting up a reserve fund and appropriate some surplus into an emergency road repair fund.

Griggs pointed out that under recreation, employee-related expenses and program-related expenses did not total 100%, to which the Town Manager said that he would take a second look.

Calloway asked when the Selectboard should comment on budget numbers. The Town Manager shared that by the end of the December 10th meeting, they will have heard from all departments, which could be a time to explore "what ifs."

Swett asked if it would be possible to get the capital plans in the Selectboard packet ahead of the next department presentations, which Town Manager said should be possible.

5. The Family Place Gingerbread Festival Alcohol Waiver Request

Timestamp: 2:00:08

I move to approve The Family Place's request for a waiver of the Town of Norwich Alcohol Ordinance, to permit vinous and malt beverages in Tracy Hall during the Gingerbread Festival Preview Party on December 5, 2025. – Calloway moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (Calloway, Griggs, Swett, Layton), Vincent not present

6. NPD Spending Request: Cruiser Video Equipment

Timestamp: 2:00:56

The Police Chief reminded the Selectboard of the new police vehicle being constructed. He stated that this request would be an initial expenditure for the equipment to be purchased and installed, followed by a yearly expense of \$1,845, as included in the FY27 budget request.

Griggs asked how the equipment had paid for itself, to which the Police Chief explained that it was helpful to have video footage available when handling complaints.

Calloway asked if there were chain of custody issues with this equipment. The Police Chief stated that these are thoroughly audit-trailed.

I move to authorize the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$6,200.00 from Fund 11 Cruiser Fund for the purchase of police cruiser video equipment. – Griggs moved (2nd Swett) Vote: yes (Calloway, Griggs, Swett, Layton), Vincent not present

7. Opioid Fund Accounting

Timestamp: 2:06:24

The Town Manager referred to his memo in the packet and proposed that the Selectboard create a designated fund to accept payment through the settlement and distribute payment to allowable remediation purposes. He stated that the benefit of a designated fund would be that the purpose of the funds is already known and therefore the money still in the general fund for FY25 could be moved into the designated fund this month, as well as all the money collected so far for FY26 and any future money that comes in.

The Town Manager shared that there is an ongoing question with the VLCT on how to deal with the money that had been received in FY24 that went into the general fund and was not placed anywhere.

Selectboard members and the Town Manager discussed the laws for moving money, types of funds, and involvement of voters.

The Town Manager shared that the use of opioid settlement funds for uses other than its intended purposed is disfavored but not disallowed.

Griggs asked how “allowable” was being defined, and other Selectboard members confirmed had been defined in the settlement packet.

*I move to create a Designated Fund called the Opioid Settlement Fund for the purpose of accepting payments dispersed from the National Opioid Settlements and distributing such payments to allowable Opioid Remediation purposes. – Calloway moved (2nd Swett)
Vote: yes (Calloway, Griggs, Swett, Layton), Vincent not present*

8. Approve Minutes

Timestamp: 2:14:46

I move to approve the minutes for October 22nd, 2025 as presented. – Calloway moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (Calloway, Griggs, Swett, Layton), Vincent not present

9. AP Warrants

Timestamp: 2:15:42

I move to approve AP Warrant #1413 in the amount of \$720,968.76 to be paid from the General Fund; AP Warrant #1414 in the amount of \$39,666.41 to be paid from the Tracy Hall Fund; AP Warrant #1415 in the amount of \$133.50 to be paid from the General Fund; and AP Warrant #1416 in the amount of \$373.58 to be paid from the General Fund. – Calloway moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (Calloway, Griggs, Swett, Layton), Vincent not present

10. Receipt of Correspondence

Timestamp: 2:16:55

I move to receive all correspondence. – Griggs moved (2nd Swett) Vote: yes (Calloway, Griggs, Swett, Layton), Vincent not present

11. Plan Agenda for November 19, 2025 Meeting

Timestamp: 2:18:52

The Chair shared that she would like to have an item on opioid settlement funds to figure out what funds to distribute to the organizations discussed at the last meeting. She noted that the Selectboard would need to know how much is available as well as how much is needed by each organization.

The Town Manager shared that a delegate to the Regional Solid Waste Management District needs to be appointed.

The Town Manager suggested postponing the monthly Town Manager and Department reports until the December 10th meeting.

The Chair stated that she would like an agenda item on Calloway's memo regarding duties to present a budget to the public.

Calloway shared that she was concerned that without any jurisdiction to make a vote for their pay, the listers overpaid themselves and went into deficit funding.

Selectboard members and the Town Manager discussed the timing of upcoming agenda items.

The Chair gave a shoutout to Neil Fulton for his work on the issue of solid waste.

12. Adjournment

Timestamp: 2:27:00

I move to adjourn the meeting. – Griggs moved (2nd Swett) Vote: yes (Calloway, Griggs, Swett, Layton), Vincent not present

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Minutes taken by Jenny Tolman.