

Town of Norwich, Vermont
Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, February 11th, 2026

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), Robert Gere (Town resident), Jenny Tolman (Town resident)

Active Participants on Zoom: Jaan Laaspere (Planning Commission), Pam Smith (Town resident), Lily Trajman (Town Clerk), Rick Brigham (Sullivan Powers & Co.), Tricia Spellman (Finance Committee), Steven True (Planning Director and Zoning Administrator)

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: N/A (sound issues)

1. Agenda

Timestamp: N/A (sound issues)

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

2. Chair's Report

Timestamp: 8:21

The Chair (1) put the Tier 1B discussion on the Selectboard agenda for February 25th in coordination with the Town Manager and Planning Director, (2) suggested awarding money from the opioid settlement after Town Meeting, (3) wrote an article for the spring edition of the Norwich Times, (4) asked the Selectboard to review the board's "parking lot" of outstanding topics and received the following suggestions: Article 36, energy strategies for the town, communications, website infrastructure improvement, goals for the Town Manager, development of a town charter, draft Selectboard policies for tax exempt properties, Finance request for studying the surplus and deficit, Tracy Hall renovation scope and timeline, examination of next year's informational town meeting date, and (5) highlighted a correspondence from Will Smith to the Selectboard that he and his wife both then asked the Chair to remove.

Calloway asked about the status of PVR317 and handed the Chair a physical document that she explained was discussed in executive session.

The Chair asked if she should be sent out again because she did not ask questions based on the document being shared.

Vincent asked why the item was being discussed because it was not on the agenda.

Calloway explained that they had talked with the Chair about doing a request and that she would like an update.

Griggs shared that he was lost and that it needs to be on the agenda to be discussed.

The Town Manager clarified that the document might include separate properties that possibly went through the process.

3. Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda

Timestamp: 18:51

Robert Gere announced that he is running for the open Selectboard position to be vacated by Vincent. Gere thanked Vincent and Calloway for their work on the Selectboard.

Laaspere reported that the Planning Commission had confirmed that Kyle of Two Rivers would attend the Selectboard meeting on February 25th. Laaspere additionally shared that the Commission approved the motion to recommend to the Selectboard to ask for Tier 1B designation.

Pam Smith suggested that the first meeting of the new Selectboard, the organizational meeting, be included on the agendas.

Town Clerk Lily Trajman shared that absentee ballots had been sent out and early voting had started.

Griggs thanked Sandy Anderson for providing cookies for the meeting.

4. FY25 Review with Auditor

Timestamp: 22:47

Rick Brigham, the town's lead auditor from Sullivan Powers & Co., gave an overview of the audit report. Brigham highlighted page seven, the balance sheet of Norwich on June 30, 2025, which gave a snapshot in time of assets and liabilities. Brigham noted the unassigned fund balance of \$1,389,551, which he noted was fairly in line with last year's balance.

Brigham shared that he had heard about some confusion regarding the town having a deficit or a surplus, and that page eight should provide clarity. He noted the net change in fund balance under the general fund of negative \$930,466, representing the deficit for the year. Much of the deficit, he stated, was planned, with some transfers out of the general fund into specific funds based on article votes.

Brigham highlighted that some changes to policies and procedures had been made to the transfer station during the year that would hopefully allow future audits to look at completeness of revenue at the transfer station moving forward.

Brigham suggested reviewing pages 12-38 of the audit for a deeper dive on anything in the financial statements. He explained that pages 39-55 provided budget actuals, pages 59-64 provided capital projects and special revenue funds, and page 69 included communications to the Selectboard on material weaknesses and significant deficiencies.

Brigham noted no difficulties or disagreements in dealing with staff or management, no consultations with other auditors, and that all entries his team proposed were posted by management.

The Chair asked if cash interactions at the transfer station would need to be eliminated in order to ensure adequate internal control.

Brigham shared that other clients went cashless at their transfer stations but that the primary objective was to minimize risk through ensuring customers take receipts, monitoring voided transactions, and reconciling between revenues generated in the cash register and revenues posted to the NEMRC system.

The Chair shared her confusion about the surplus that was described and the description of diverting funds as a deficit.

Brigham encouraged people to view the general fund as its own pot of money and the movement of money to other funds like the fire apparatus fund or highway garage fund as income for the other funds but expense and deficit for the general fund. Brigham added that page eight showed the revenues and expenses of the general fund and highlighted the

section “Other Financing Sources,” which included budgeted transfers and appropriations to send to reserves, as well as special articles.

The Chair asked how the audit and general fund would be affected if voters had voted the articles down.

Brigham explained that if the three items that totaled approximately \$1M had been voted down, the general fund would be almost a break-even instead of a \$930,000 deficit. He noted that when the money is spent from a reserve fund, it would affect the bottom line of the reserve fund but would not affect the bottom line of the general fund.

Griggs highlighted that the contract signed with the auditors described the product as being sent to the Selectboard, including the draft.

Brigham stated that drafts were not usually sent to the Selectboard but instead to the Finance Department and Management. Brigham stated that the Finance Department and Management need to be able to take full responsibility for a draft, and that the finalized version goes to the Selectboard.

Griggs stated that the language in the contract suggests that the auditors would issue the draft to the Selectboard and that he had expected to see the draft.

Brigham explained that he did not want the Selectboard to get bogged down in the initial drafts but rather involve the Selectboard at an upper level with the final product, though he could issue or present a draft to the Selectboard.

Griggs stated that the Finance Department was being audited and that providing them with an audit before the audit comes out struck him as a potential liability.

The Chair shared that she viewed it more as a research project to ensure that the resulting audit was accurate. She noted that she did not think it would be productive for the Selectboard to receive a draft and review all of the technical aspects of it.

Brigham offered to change the wording next year to provide a draft to the Finance Department and the Manager for review prior to being finalized at the Selectboard level.

Calloway stated that it would not serve a purpose for the Selectboard to get preliminary information that they have been receiving all along when it is put into the draft of an audit, as they are a “higher level body.” Calloway stated that it is not the Selectboard’s job to check what cells money is put into but to see the bottom line.

Tricia Spellman of the Finance Committee shared that it would be useful for the Finance Committee or an Audit Committee to review the audit before it goes to the Selectboard. Spellman pointed out that Finance Director Barrie Rosalinda referenced a million dollar mispost in a December 2025 Selectboard meeting that she did not see reflected in the audit.

Brigham responded that he did not know what mispost was being discussed.

The Town Manager suggested that Rosalinda provide an answer to Spellman's question in the next packet.

Spellman highlighted that capital items were mixed in with operating items, which made it difficult to understand the operating budget. Spellman asked if Brigham had suggestions for making the budget clearer.

Brigham shared that he had seen towns do an operating budget and then capital subcategory for each department, or something at the end for all capital-related items to not bog down the normal operational budget. Brigham added that he thought it would be a great idea to put the Treasurer and Finance Committee together with Rosalinda to explore a way to restructure the budget to make it more understandable to the layman.

[Pam Smith asked about the \\$700,000 surplus infusion that was in the budget for the fiscal year and how it plays into the audit.](#)

Brigham explained that the town was already planning on having a negative \$700,000 deficit "even walking in the door." Brigham referred Pam Smith to page 55 and the \$654,672 being budgeted to lose because of the \$700,000; he noted that there were additional "little bits and pieces" related to some revenues that might have changed that would account for the remaining difference.

Pam Smith and Brigham discussed pages five and six of the report and the transfer of the \$700,000 between funds.

5. Town Clerk Spending Request

Timestamp: 57:08

I move to approve the expenditure of up to \$110 from the Restoration Fund #45 for the purchase of archival paper. – Griggs moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (unanimous)

6. Recreation Department Spending Request

Timestamp: 57:45

I move to approve the expenditure of \$300 from the Scholarship Fund #40 to offset recreation program fees for two families. – Griggs moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (unanimous)

7. UVAA Request for Letter of Support for Northern Border Regional Commission Catalyst Grant

Timestamp: 58:16

The Town Manager shared that the letter of support in this agenda item would be for the significant grant, whereas the previous letter of support was for help with writing the grant application.

Vincent questioned the verb tense of the letter of support.

Selectboard members discussed the relation of this grant to the grant discussed at the previous meeting and the language of the letter of support.

Planning Director and Zoning Administrator Steven True clarified that the REDI grant that was discussed at a prior meeting was for an assistance grant to write material for the Catalyst grant.

Jenny Tolman stated that she interpreted the first paragraph of the letter as thanking the Commission for its support to the community in general, as opposed to preemptively expecting to receive the funds.

I move to approve the draft letter in support of the Upper Valley Agricultural Association's application for a Northern Border Regional Commission Catalyst grant and authorize the Chair of the Norwich Selectboard to sign on behalf of the town. – Griggs moved (2nd Swett) Vote: yes (unanimous)

8. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Committee Creation

Timestamp: 1:07:14

The Town Manager explained that this agenda item was for the approval of the creation of a steering committee that would likely take at least several months to complete.

The Chair questioned whether it would be a working group as it seemed to be all internal employees.

The Town Manager responded that all of the meetings would be public and warned and additionally questioned how working groups would be documented in the Selectboard Handbook.

Calloway responded that it would be good historical knowledge to have in the Handbook.

Calloway asked if it would need to be approved by the state.

True stated that it would go through the state FEMA representation and then to federal FEMA representation for review of the application.

I move to appoint a Steering Committee to update the Norwich LHMP consisting of the Town Manager, Planning Director, Fire Chief, Police Chief, DPW Director, and Norwich Health Officer. – Calloway moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (unanimous)

9. Planning for 2026 Public Informational Hearing

Timestamp: 1:12:00

The Town Manager shared that last year's slide deck included (1) an update on staffing, (2) current elected officials and staff, (3) budget goals and challenges, (4) a budget summary, (5) an exploration of the tax rate and \$700,000 buy-down, (6) an overview of Tracy Hall, DPW, and Emerald Ash Borer funds, and (7) completed initiatives and ongoing work of the Selectboard, Town Manager, and staff.

The Town Manager suggested including photos of the heating system upgrade in this year's slide deck.

The Town Manager offered to put together updated slides for the next Selectboard packet and finalize the material in the February 25th meeting ahead of the March 2nd informational hearing.

10. Proposal of Formation of Working Groups for (1) Change of date for 2027 Public Informational Hearing; (2) Development of SB Process for Property Tax Exemptions on Warrant

Timestamp: 1:18:52

The Chair explained that she wanted to explore the timelines and permissions involved with holding an informational meeting on a weekend. She asked whether the Selectboard thought it would be worth pursuing and whether the endeavor would be considered a query or a working group.

Calloway and Griggs stated that it sounded like a query. Selectboard members voiced support for the endeavor.

I move to authorize the current Selectboard Chair to explore changing the date of the 2027 Town of Norwich Informational Meeting. She will consult with the Town Manager, the Town Clerk, and others deemed essential to the presentation of the town and school budgets and warrant articles and bring that information back to the Selectboard for a decision. – Calloway moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (unanimous)

The Chair shared that she did not remember the different materials being requested the last time the schoolhouses were put on the ballot. The Chair explained that she wanted to compile the list of information that voters would want to know about, like whether the schoolhouses' organizations were in good standing with the Secretary of State.

Calloway stated that much of tax exemption was statutory and suggested discussing the matter with counsel.

The Chair clarified that she was thinking more of the routine requirements for getting a property on the ballot, such as the required number of days for giving notice to the Selectboard.

Calloway suggested developing a template with a checklist. Calloway highlighted an upcoming change in law that could affect existing municipal exemptions and those going forward. She further suggested understanding what happens to the PVR 317, how it gets approved by the state, and whether it should be approved by counsel due to the loss of tax dollars upon approval.

Swett highlighted that the PVR 317 form that he sent outlined a number of relevant statutes and guardrails. Swett stated that this was a great idea.

Griggs asked if the Selectboard should review a broader focus that includes other entities beyond the Chair's area of focus to avoid the perception of a conflict of interest.

The Chair shared that the process "seemed ragged" and appeared overwhelming to the Root District Schoolhouse representatives, which led to her desire to ease the process.

I move to authorize the current Selectboard Chair to draft a policy governing both Selectboard approval of warrant articles requesting property tax exemption for particular properties and the property tax exemption options and effects in general. – Calloway moved (2nd Swett) Vote: yes (unanimous)

11. Tracy Hall Roof Repair (10 mins)

Timestamp: 1:34:21

The Town Manager explained that the town had begun exploring the repair at the end of the summer and received quotes from three companies. The final quote made the most sense to the Town Manager given the specification of slates to repair and the estimated costs.

The Chair noted the variation in absorption rates across types of slate and wondered what type of slate this company would use.

Griggs quoted the 2024 feasibility study and noted that there was not a specification for bidding and there was a wide range of bids. Griggs further advocated for engaging Studio Nexus before moving forward with building, especially given a lack of roof leaks, and combining roof work with chimney work.

The Chair shared that she thought the Selectboard was “drifting” and advocated for refining the scope and timeline of the Tracy Hall project while simultaneously moving forward with the roof repair due to potential leaks.

Calloway stated that faulty tiles could cause leaks or harm and viewed this expenditure as a “stitch in time.”

Vincent voiced concern at the wide range in quotes for roof repair. She shared ongoing frustration at the lack of a sense of urgency on the Selectboard for updating the building.

Swett shared concern at the pace of work on items that need repair. He suggested that work like painting the building could be viewed as building maintenance projects that have been kicked forward in an effort to incorporate them into a larger plan for the building.

Griggs shared that there is time to get a consultant to put together a bid package and get bids on the same scope for the roof well before springtime.

The Town Manager reminded Selectboard of the discussion last summer of projects to fast-track, followed by another discussion to return to scoping and visioning. The Town Manager emphasized that there had not been action but that it was not for lack of trying.

The Town Manager stated that hiring a consultant to bid a \$3,500 contract would lead to more money being spent on the consultant than the contract and shared that he had gotten recommendations from Doug Sonsalla of Studio Nexus on how to go about the roof repairs and had reached out to the companies that Sonsalla had suggested. The Town Manager added that it was difficult to be told things were not moving fast enough when he brought things in only to be told to move back to visioning.

The Chair suggested that the roof repair could be viewed as a preventative maintenance project whereas the larger-scale roof work could be considered separately. She suggested the Selectboard “wake up” and start dealing with the building updates after the new board is in place. The Chair wondered if it would make sense to have three or four architectural firms create an idea for a renovation and then have the Selectboard pick one.

Calloway shared that she was not surprised by the roof repair quote from Jancewicz & Son as she had grown up in the same town and she never heard any negative feedback.

Griggs reminded the Selectboard that he had written to the Chair in May 2025 asking to be assigned to head up a working group on the upgrade of Tracy Hall and recommended in October that an advisory committee be formed. Griggs voiced frustration at not being allowed to lead a group focused on Tracy Hall upgrades.

Swett advocated for prioritizing Tracy Hall upgrades in future agendas and considering what Griggs had offered to do.

I move to approve the expenditure of up to \$3,500 from the Tracy Hall Fund #13 for the Tracy Hall roof repair. – Calloway moved (2nd Swett) Vote: yes (Calloway, Vincent, Swett, Calloway), no (Griggs)

12. Approve Minutes - January 28, 2026

Timestamp: 1:54:20

Calloway stated that the last thing she had said under item seven in the meeting was that “it is the law.” She explained that she copy-and-pasted the statutes of Vermont into the Selectboard Handbook.

Selectboard members discussed the penultimate sentence of agenda item seven in the minutes:

“Griggs expressed concern that people would take this document to be the law for Norwich and wanted to emphasize that it is a reference document, not the law.”

Calloway suggested removing the sentence about Griggs’ concern or adding that Calloway “clarified that it is the law and that Norwich is, the Norwich Selectboard, is subject to the law.”

Griggs objected to removing the sentence that reflected his concern.

Swett shared that he understood what Griggs was saying about it being a reference document that refers to multiple things, including statute, and that the minutes are a record of what was said, not necessarily the accuracy of the statements.

Vincent shared that it seemed inappropriate that the discussion was happening again and that if they want to have another discussion, they should warn it and have the discussion.

I move to approve the minutes for January 28th, 2026 as amended. – Calloway moved (2nd Swett) Vote: yes (unanimous)

Item seven of the minutes for January 28th did not include Calloway’s clarification that the Selectboard Handbook is the law and that the Norwich Selectboard is subject to the law.

13. AP Warrants

Timestamp: 2:02:57

Selectboard members noted a typo in the number of the second warrant being presented for approval.

I move to approve AP Warrant #1452 in the amount of \$113,550.72 to be paid from the General Fund. – Griggs moved (2nd Calloway) Vote: yes (unanimous)

[Pam Smith noted that the Chair is authorized to sign for any off-cycle payments.](#)

The Chair and Calloway responded that it would be clearer to have a motion.

*I move to authorize the Selectboard chair to sign the AP Warrant in the amount of \$511.83 to be paid from the Records Restoration Fund. – Calloway moved (2nd Griggs)
Vote: yes (unanimous)*

14. Receipt of Correspondence

Timestamp: 2:12:02

The Town Manager voiced his surprise at Pam Smith asking the Chair to remove Will Smith's letter from the packet. The Town Manager and the Chair asked if Pam Smith would like to speak to that request.

[Pam Smith responded that she thought she had spoken to that request in her text to the Chair.](#)

The Chair read the text sent on February 10th at 7:49 am:

“Please ask the TM's office to remove pages 128 and 129 from the 2/11/26 packet. This was a misunderstanding of how the Vermont Public Record Act works. If I had known in advance this was being sent, this error would have been avoided. Thanks for your help with this.”

The Chair shared that she was unsure how to “sort it out,” so she texted back:

“Thanks for your message.”

The Town Manager stated that he was still curious as to why Pam Smith would write to the Chair asking to remove her husband's message. The Town Manager reflected that it was disheartening to be “the target of this most recent defamation and potentially libelous attack from Mr. Smith.” He noted recurrent allegations of incompetence, overpay, improper hiring, and residence outside of Norwich by a “very small group of people” regularly throughout his time as Town Manager.

The Town Manager read the definitions of “libel” and “rigged” from the Merriam-Webster dictionary.

The Town Manager highlighted Will Smith's claims that the Town Manager's position had not been advertised. The Town Manager stated that he learned about the job opportunity through the Vermont League of Cities and Towns website, he submitted a resume and cover letter, was interviewed through a formal process, was hired in an interim capacity for approximately a year, and was then hired to take on the full-time

role. He shared that both of his performance evaluations were positive and satisfactory and that he had been supported by three different Selectboards over the three years he had served the town.

The Town Manager shared that he thought the letter was “somehow motivated with Pam Smith announcing that she was going to be a write-in candidate for the Selectboard a day before this thing gets published into a written packet and posted on the ListServ.”

The Town Manager stated that this sort of treatment trickles down to attacks on department heads. He gave the example of a meeting on March 27th, 2024, during which Will Smith made “false and derogatory statements” about Chris Kaufman’s performance as DPW Director, and Pam Smith in her role as Selectboard Chair allowed him to make those statements but did not give Kaufman the opportunity to refute them.

The Town Manager shared that instances like those referenced above make it difficult to change the Town’s culture and reputation and that moving forward will require the election of thoughtful and ethical individuals looking to serve the town without “bias and personal alliances and personal agendas.”

Calloway stated that Will Smith has “a history of this type of inflammatory behavior and emails, which does nothing to encourage, as Brennan was saying, people to serve Norwich in any capacity.” Calloway emphasized that the law does not authorize Selectboard members to act on their own and that the Selectboard must authorize anything that is done by an individual board member. Calloway highlighted there was no conspiracy in the hiring and retention of the Town Manager, only decisions by a majority of the Selectboard carried out in a confidential executive session, as required for personnel matters.

The Chair noted concern about the post by Will Smith but stated that it should not reflect so heavily on Pam Smith. The Chair stated that Pam Smith has served the town in many capacities and is a qualified candidate for the Selectboard.

Pam Smith shared that Will Smith thought he was doing a records request for an HR Happens document. She noted that if she had not been elsewhere at the time, she might have been able to prevent it from being sent or softened the tone. Pam Smith stated that they have “had many discussions on this since this happened” and that they “will just move forward as a couple.” Pam Smith noted that she does not always agree with Will Smith’s opinions but that he is his own person.

Pam Smith stated that she would like to continue serving the town and would continue on with her write-in campaign.

The Chair read the email that Will Smith sent her on February 7th:

“Greetings Mary, Please remove my correspondence from the current Selectboard packet. It was not my intent to have my ListServ posts included as correspondence. I will submit a formal public records request, per PRA, at a later date. Thank you in advance for your willingness to help me correct the situation, Will Smith.”

Pam Smith stated that she would like to apologize to the Town Manager “if he feels that he has been defamed or those comments are libelous.” She stated that she does not share her husband’s viewpoints and that she hopes she and the Town Manager can have a good working relationship going forward.

Calloway stated that she thought the Chair made the correct decision in keeping the letter in the Selectboard packet since the letter was sent to the Selectboard.

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

15. Adjournment

Timestamp: 2:34:52

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:59.

Minutes taken by Jenny Tolman.