

Town of Norwich, Vermont
Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, Feb 25, 2026

Active Participants at Tracy Hall: Mary Layton (SB Chair), Priscilla Vincent (SB member), Marcia Calloway (SB member), Kimo Griggs (SB Vice Chair), Steven True (Planning Director and Zoning Administrator), Kyle Katz (Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission), John Farrell (Town resident), Worth Parker (Town resident), David Macaulay (Town resident), Brendan Classon (Town resident), Doug Hardy (Emerald Ash Borer Subcommittee), Peg Merrens (Emerald Ash Borer Subcommittee), Steve Long (Emerald Ash Borer Subcommittee), Lucinda Walker (Norwich Public Library)

Matt Swett was not in attendance.

Active Participants on Zoom: Brennan Duffy (Town Manager), Jaan Laaspere (Planning Commission), Jeff Lubell (Affordable Housing Subcommittee), Linda Gray (Town resident), Nan Carroll (Town resident), Matthew Romei (Police Chief), Brian Riordan (Town resident), Christian Spalding (Town resident), Emily Scherer (Town resident), Peter Orner (Town resident), Jen Shepherd (Town resident), Andy Scherer (Town resident)

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

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mary Layton at 6:32 pm.

YouTube Timestamp: 0:00

1. Agenda

Timestamp: 0:58

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

2. Chair's Report

Timestamp: 1:26

The Chair (1) thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve as Chair over the past year, (2) met with town staff to put together the agenda, and (3) worked on a Public Records Act request for Pam Smith.

3. Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda

Timestamp: 2:04

Griggs thanked Sandy Anderson for providing cookies for the meeting.

4. Act 250/Tier 1B Presentation

Timestamp: 2:30

Planning Director Steven True read a prepared statement on Act 250 exemption. True emphasized that the main tenant of the new location-based jurisdictional model or tier system is the exemption from Act 250 review, which would apply only to housing developments and only in certain circumstances. He noted that developers would still be subject to local review. True highlighted that Title 24 gives municipalities authority to plan land development and provides regulatory tools and standards to mitigate or eliminate land development issues.

Calloway shared that there are about 30 Act 250 permits in town and that she was worried that the Act 250 permits might not come up in the development review process.

True stated that he was not sure if there was a solution yet from the state on how to handle pre-existing Act 250 exemptions.

Kyle Katz, Regional Planner at Two Rivers, gave background on Tier 1B. Katz explained that the primary driver in its enactment was to promote housing, largely through Act 250 reform and changes to land use planning. This included interim exemptions from Act 250 currently in place for Norwich, which expire at the end of the year. Katz explained that when the exemptions expire, Act 250 reverts and any new housing development above 10 units would go through Act 250 review. The interim exemption, Katz explained, is mapped around the center of Norwich, while the proposed Tier 1B exemption would be based on the regional future land use map village center and village area, as decided upon by the town. Katz noted that there were not criteria for what kind of housing would fall into that exemption from Act 250, as long as it was between 10 units and 50 units.

Katz highlighted that the opt-in is tied to the regional plan adoption process, which needs to happen by the end of the year, and that Two Rivers is looking to have confirmation from towns in March.

Selectboard members and Katz discussed the opt-in process. Griggs asked if there were any possible downsides to opting in.

Katz shared that he could not think of any drawbacks, as the exemption is already in place, and that not opting in would allow Act 250 to revert and add an extra layer of regulation to new housing.

Calloway referenced a Vermont Digger article that stated that some towns had not opted in to Act 250 exemption. Calloway voiced concern about the difference in village center and village area between the town plan and the Two Rivers proposal. She noted that the legislature is still discussing the tier structure, and she therefore wondered why towns would be asked to vote on it now. Calloway further wondered whether areas that have an existing Act 250 permit should be excluded from the Tier 1B exemption and voiced concern about flooding.

Jaan Laaspere stated that the Planning Commission recommended to the Selectboard at the last meeting that the Selectboard should move forward with asking for the exemption. Laaspere emphasized that there was an extensive mapping exercise in warned meetings with feedback from the public incorporated into the maps.

Laaspere shared that he would be curious as to how they could ensure a property with an Act 250 permit on it would be counted appropriately, but that site suitability would be caught through other permitting processes or zoning reviews.

The Chair asked about the decision timeline and shared that she thought it might be premature to respond that night.

Laaspere explained that the Planning Commission itself did not have scheduling urgency but that the schedule was driven by the regional plan adoption.

Calloway stated that she remembered asking about the difference in size of the village center and that hearings at the Planning Commission level did not meet what is required for a town plan.

Jeff Lubell asked Katz to explain the timing of the opt-in window.

Katz explained that the plan had been readopted once every 3-4 years, and that a town would need to wait for the next round of regional plan adoption to opt-in if they do not move forward with it in the current round. Katz shared that Two Rivers would like a decision by March to allow them to bring it to the Two Rivers Board in April, followed by the Land Use Review Board in May or June.

Katz clarified that the previous village center designation program was being replaced by new village centers in the regional plan and that other future land use areas like “village areas” are residential and often encircle the village center.

Lubell stated that Legislature could change the rules, but that that is always the case, and he therefore encouraged the Selectboard to take advantage of the current opportunity to opt in. Lubell added that Act 181 came out after the town plan, that the village area designation gives benefits to the town, and that there are very few parcels that could qualify for the exemption.

Calloway shared that she thought the Selectboard was being pushed to approve the exemption, that Act 250 protected her house and many others, and that they need to develop a process for recognizing the existing Act 250 parcels before moving forward with the proposal at a later date.

Vincent stated that she did not see how this opt-in could be harmful to the town.

Katz clarified that they were discussing Tier 1B, not Tier 1A. In Tier 1A, a town takes on all existing Act 250 permits, while in Tier 1B, existing Act 250 permits remain in place and remain enforced at the state level.

Linda Gray encouraged the Selectboard to opt into Tier 1B. Gray refuted the suggestion that the process was rushed and shared that she had been involved in discussions on the topic since last fall. Gray noted that a town must have zoning regulations, which Norwich has, to opt into Tier 1B.

Griggs asked whether the Planning Commission anticipated moving forward with this opt-in when new land use regulations were adopted last fall.

Laaspere explained that the changes made last year were updates and did not change things that overlap with this topic, but that the local zoning has the staff and permits to review anything that comes up.

I move that the Selectboard approve opting into Tier 1B status for the village area and village center. -- Griggs moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (Vincent, Griggs, Layton), no (Calloway)

Nan Carroll asked to comment on a matter not on the agenda. Carroll shared that she thought the Selectboard historically simply accepted correspondence and that it seemed like there was potentially a violation of open meeting law when the Town Manager and a

Selectboard member had an in-depth discussion about correspondence. She noted that she felt there was some “inappropriate and unprofessionalism” going on. Carroll recounted an organizational meeting two years ago when the Town Manager ran the meeting and “basically endorsed one candidate over another who was running for Chair.” Carroll asked that the Selectboard have someone more impartial run the Selectboard organizational meeting given the Town Manager’s past behavior.

The Town Manager stated that he felt that the Listserv posting related to the discussion about a piece of correspondence was misleading and that there is a procedure for accepting correspondence and entering it into the meeting packet. He highlighted that in the agenda under correspondence, it says that there could be discussion and a motion, and therefore no violation of the open meeting law occurred. He noted that there is a history of routinely discussing items of correspondence.

The Chair reflected that they “have to operate according to the statutes” but that they sometimes “sort of spill over a little bit.”

Vincent shared that she was unaware the correspondence would be in the packet until it came out and that she had not known there had been communication requesting it be taken out.

5. Discussion of Concerns Regarding Speeding

Timestamp: 50:58

***Please view the video recording to see the presentation and associated data.**

Police Chief Matthew Romei shared a presentation on speeding in town with a focus on radar speed feedback sign data. He explained that all except one of the hardwire signs were replaced with solar and battery powered signs shortly after he began working for the town. The Police Chief noted that the signs can only collect speeding data on traffic approaching the sign, but that the data collector can be put out anywhere and collect data going in both directions. The Police Chief shared that the public is welcome to see the public-facing data that was shared on the Listserv.

The Police Chief explained that the signs are negatively affected by cold weather, the signs do not capture pedestrian data but sometimes bicycle data, and that he lacks bandwidth to dive deeply into the data.

The Police Chief shared that his team had placed the data collector on Union Village Road at Partridge Hill for 20 days between January 15 and February 5, and it collected data on almost 65,000 vehicle speeds. The Police Chief highlighted average travel speeds

at peak hours and shared the “85th percentile” approach to determining speed limits based on motorist self-limits on certain types of roads, including rural highways. The Police Chief stated that Union Village Road is a rural highway and cautioned against setting speed limits based on feeling.

Brian Riordan interjected with frustration at the speed data and stated that it felt like the Police Chief was trivializing the issue.

The Police Chief explained that “25 in that location is an artificially low speed limit” and highlighted data from another timeframe that showed that most vehicles were in the 26 to 40 mph range driving inbound from Union Village Road. He cautioned that the data from the Main Street radar may be an overcount, since the radar can interpret two cars instead of one when someone stops at a red light driving into town.

The Police Chief stated that pedestrian safety on roads is different from pedestrian safety on streets where there are sidewalks. He shared that they had written “a lot of tickets” last year but not the previous year due to staffing, and that writing tickets is a big burden on officers based on their current workload.

John Farrell stated that he had lived in the Upper Valley for 40 years and that it used to be “well known that you did not speed in Norwich” but that that reputation had disappeared. Farrell voiced frustration at excessive speeding in town and advocated for issuing more tickets for speeding and not stopping at stop signs.

Christian Spalding shared that he lives on Church Street and thought the data from that street was somewhat misleading due to the placement of the radar close to a road that some cars turn off onto. Spalding emphasized that 90% of cars exceeded the speed limit according to the data presented. He recommended the Selectboard explore traffic calming measures but that enforcing existing speed limits would be the least in-depth and expensive option.

Worth Parker shared that he lives on Beaver Meadow Road and that he had noticed speeding increase recently. Parker advocated for moving the radar on Beaver Meadow down the road to a straighter segment and encouraged reflection on the quality of data gathered. Parker noted the low visibility of the crosswalk by the cemetery on Beaver Meadow and encouraged greater traffic enforcement in the area.

David Macaulay highlighted that there are large puddles on Beaver Meadow towards Main Street that lead to pedestrians walking in the road. Macaulay shared that he thought the “core set of streets” in town should be policed more seriously for speed and should

include Beaver Meadow and Turnpike. He stated that he recognizes the reluctance to have a low speed limit in the outer areas like Union Village Road.

Vincent wondered whether there were more police officers in the past when the town was known for speed enforcement.

Emily Scherer noted that the data presented makes it sound like the focus is more on traffic coming into town and not out of town. Scherer cautioned interpretation of the data collection at Union Village since many people slow down to turn onto Turnpike Road. Scherer shared that while walking around town, no one stops at stop walks and there is speeding. Scherer advocated for speed enforcement in town and shared that she would be happy to analyze the data as a statistician.

Laaspere cautioned against drawing too many conclusions from data from the signs since the signs are visible and therefore influence driver speed. Laaspere advocated for non-visible data collection and shared concern about the cars recorded as driving at over 50 mph into town. He noted that the police report no longer tracks traffic stops.

Peter Orner stated that the Selectboard devoted about \$60,000 to purchase movable speed signs about four years ago, but the money ended up being used to replace existing signs in the old locations. Orner emphasized that the data from the signs is inaccurate due to sign placement, encouraged the Selectboard to purchase the mobile signs, and advocated for increased sidewalk maintenance and possibly speed tables.

Riordan spoke to the importance of data and highlighted that only 30% of cars were recorded as going under 30 mph into town from Union Village Road. Riordan cautioned against allowing cars to dictate the community and shared that the 25 mph speed limit on Union Village Road was moved up the hill because the town village starts at the top of the hill. Riordan explained that he could feel it in his house when cars speed past his house on Union Village.

Jen Shepherd shared that she lives on Church Street and that the speed signs do not slow cars down. Shepherd questioned the acceptance of vehicles going over 40 mph when the speed limit is 25 mph and noted that the radar signs frequently do not work.

Andy Scherer asked why the physical hardwired monitors were replaced with solar battery powered ones in the same location.

The Police Chief explained that the Town Manager asked him to put the solar signs up when the Police Chief first started in his role. He added that he had requested a mobile sign in the coming year's budget.

Andy Scherer stated that Two Rivers is the town's regional commission and that the town should explore resources from the commission to help with this sort of matter.

Brendan Classon shared that while acting as a crossing guard on Church Street, most cars are at or below the speed limit by the time they reach him, but that that does not necessarily apply to cars further down the road. Classon emphasized that the stopping distance of a car is an important component of the speeding matter.

Laaspere asked the Police Chief where speed stops are recorded in the police report.

The Police Chief explained that there was an update to the records management system that prevented them from pulling the police stop data but that it has since been fixed so he is now able to pull data again. He noted that he wants to manage expectations of the possible number of stops.

Laaspere clarified that the request is that priority in police discretionary time be shifted more towards speed enforcement. Laaspere asked whether the Selectboard agrees that there is a speeding problem and asked whether they will talk with the Town Manager and Police Chief to increase its priority.

Orner reiterated Laaspere's question about accountability for speed enforcement prioritization, asked what happened to the \$50,000 allotted to study walkability and create a pedestrian safety plan, and asked what the next steps would be after that night's discussion.

Griggs shared that he found speeding to be concerning, especially as a crossing guard, and that he looks forward to working on the matter.

Calloway stated that there needs to be a mix of solutions depending on area and the inability to have constant enforcement. Calloway suggested starting with speed bumps in the center of town.

The Chair suggested a follow-up meeting in late March or April.

6. Emerald Ash Borer Management Subcommittee Update
Timestamp: 1:58:40

Doug Hardy gave an overview of the Emerald Ash Borer's presence in Norwich over the past two years and the subcommittee developed to fight against the beetle. Hardy explained the danger of affected trees and high speed of the infestation.

Hardy shared that the subcommittee had done some private fundraising on a limited scale for inoculation of Norwich-owned public ash trees.

Hardy explained the ash tree removal prioritization process and emphasized the significant variability in cost of removing trees due to variability in tree health and location. Hardy shared that they had put in a request for FY27 by petition due to the approval timeline even though they had not yet spent the initial money granted.

Hardy shared the resources of the Norwich Conservation Commission's website, norwichconservation.org, and the subcommittee's email, eabnorwich@gmail.com.

Selectboard members and Hardy discussed possible tree removal methods, the removal timeline, and the RFP process. Hardy shared that the updated target start date is as soon as the roads are unposted in April with a targeted end date of June or July.

Peg Merrens explained that one of the reasons they are requesting more funding is that there will be more to do since they have not finished reviewing some roads.

Vincent asked about the response rate from the group's property owner outreach. Steve Long shared that there was a strong and positive response.

7. Library Request for Letter of Support

Timestamp: 1:21:11

Lucinda Walker explained that the Department of Libraries was working with HUD on a grant for public libraries in the State of Vermont. The scope of work for the Norwich Library would consist of boiler replacement, chimney work, decoupling of the hot water heater from the boiler, and skylight leak repair.

Walker noted that the grant requires a letter of support from the municipality that would be served, which she had drafted.

Walker responded to Selectboard questions about the current system and proposed project. Walker shared that they were proposing to replace their original oil boiler with a new oil boiler. She noted that they had originally wanted to install heat pumps as a

secondary source but that the grant was written for crucial work and heat pumps could be viewed as “an add-on.” Walker noted that their oil tank was in the mechanical room in the basement and was just inspected and passed. Walker shared that they were requesting about \$130,000-\$140,000, depending on the cost of contingencies, and that their “plan b” would be to seek private funding and use about \$60,000 that they have in a capital reserve fund.

Griggs encouraged Walker to plan ahead for a future air to water heat pump in the design of the current proposed project.

I move to authorize the Chair to sign the draft letter in support of the Norwich Public Library’s application for a HUD Public Facilities Preservation Initiative grant. – Griggs moved (2nd Calloway) Vote: yes (Vincent, Griggs, Calloway, Layton)

8. Town Clerk Spending Request

Timestamp: 2:29:30

I move to approve the expenditure of \$135.60 from the Restoration Fund #45 for the purchase of archival storage boxes. -- Griggs moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (Vincent, Griggs, Calloway, Layton)

9. DPW Bid Recommendation for Moore Lane Bridge Membrane, Paving and Guardrail Project

Timestamp: 2:30:04

Vincent noted “astonishing disparity in bids,” highlighted a misprint in the purpose of work, and questioned the origin of the final recommended amount of \$150,000.

The Town Manager explained that the reference to culverts was incorrect and that the proposed bid came in at \$128,000, but that the work might uncover the opportunity to remove more emulsion, which would cost more.

Calloway shared that she always preferred to replace the bridge but that it was extremely expensive and that she supported Chris’s recommendation given the Selectboard’s prior votes.

Peter Orner emphasized Vincent’s question about the disparity in cost between bids. Orner voiced concern about rushing to approve the project and questioned the experience of the company.

The Town Manager explained that there were only two bids and that the DPW Director and the town's engineering team at Stantec both felt that Waters Excavation was an appropriate firm for the job.

The Chair stated that she thought this was a "fairly unique" bridge.

Griggs explained that variability in quotes can easily be explained by attractiveness of the project and suitability of a firm's equipment.

The Chair and Griggs voiced confidence in the style of the bridge project.

Orner shared confusion at the stark evolution in remediation projects being pursued. Orner questioned why this option was not suggested previously given that upwards of \$200,000 had already been spent on efforts.

Calloway recalled that the current Selectboard had had an investigation done, reviewed a report, weighed in on options, and voted to pursue this option. Calloway explained that this was the path that the Selectboard chose.

Orner questioned whether due diligence had been done to confirm that the company selected could accomplish the task.

The Town Manager explained the general steps of the work being proposed.

I move to approve the Moore Lane Bridge Membrane, Paving & Guardrail Project with Waters Excavation, Inc. as presented for an amount not to exceed \$150,000. – Vincent moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (Vincent, Griggs, Calloway, Layton)

10. DPW Bid Recommendation for Mitchell Brook Rd. Culvert No. 9 Replacement Project

Timestamp: 2:47:20

I move to approve the Mitchell Brook Road Culvert #9 Replacement Project with Chase Site Services, Inc. as presented for an amount not to exceed \$40,000. – Calloway moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (Vincent, Griggs, Calloway, Layton)

11. Request for Funds from Citizen Assistance Fund

Timestamp: 2:49:44

Farrell explained that the person involved in the request had been filling their oil tank with five-gallon buckets of oil through the winter and had two children in school. Farrell stated that the person had set up an account with Cota & Cota and that the request was for \$800 to be credited to the account.

The Selectboard and Farrell discussed the limited awareness of the fund and the possible need for prioritization of requests upon increased publicity of the fund's existence.

The Town Manager thanked Farrell for his work as Town Service Officer.

I move to authorize the expenditure of up to \$800.00 to be paid from Fund #33 Citizen Assistance Fund to assist a citizen. – Calloway moved (2nd Vincent) Vote: yes (Vincent, Griggs, Calloway, Layton)

12. Informational Meeting Presentation Review

Timestamp: 2:57:15

Selectboard members requested minor language and formatting updates to the draft presentation.

Calloway highlighted that the presentation displayed the Town Manager's success at building back up the town staffing.

I move to approve the Informational Meeting Presentation with suggested amendments. – Calloway moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (Vincent, Griggs, Calloway, Layton)

13. Town Manager Report

Timestamp: 3:03:15

The Town Manager shared that (1) the audit was been completed, (2) the town report was published and available, (3) the tax collection process was mostly complete, (4) Steven True was taking initial steps to update floodplain maps, (5) the town received a municipal planning grant, (6) the Planning Commission was working on the short-term rental interim bylaw adoption that would come before the Selectboard in the next month or so, (8) bid recommendations came in for two DPW projects, (9) youth basketball season ended, mud season sports begin soon, and summer camp registration is underway, (10) election preparation is underway, (11) there is continued collaboration with EABMS on tree removal planning, (12) there have been multiple public records requests over the past month, and (13) Doug Sonsalla of Studio Nexus is available to attend the March 25th Selectboard meeting to get direction on the board's requested next steps.

Calloway wondered where the public records requests were coming from.

The Town Manager noted two separate requests from Chris Katucki, one from Pam Smith, one from out of state regarding zoning permits, and one from the Service Officer about property tax payments.

14. Department Reports

Timestamp: x

See item 13.

15. Approve Minutes

Timestamp: 3:11:55

I move to approve the minutes for February 11, 2026 as presented. – Calloway moved (2nd Griggs) Vote: yes (Vincent, Griggs, Calloway, Layton)

16. AP Warrants

Timestamp: 3:12:16

I move to approve AP Warrant #1458 in the amount of \$100.05 to be paid from the General Fund and AP Warrant #1459 in the amount of \$7,584,519.02 to be paid from the General Fund. – Griggs moved (2nd Calloway) Vote: yes (Vincent, Griggs, Calloway, Layton)

17. Receipt of Correspondence

Timestamp: 3:12:54

The Chair listed off the correspondence included in the Selectboard packet.

Calloway read prepared remarks that highlighted that the agenda item of correspondence includes a descriptor of “discussion” due to previous public criticism that correspondence was ignored. Calloway noted that she made a point of not responding to inflammatory remarks about herself but that she stood up for the town staff and actions of the Selectboard.

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

18. Set Organizational Meeting

Timestamp: 3:19:15

The Chair shared a small packet for the new members joining the Selectboard that outlined processes like the rules of conduct, receipt of correspondence, and selection of a media person.

The Chair asked if the Chair's Report was a useful part of the agenda; members spoke in favor of continuing it.

Calloway noted that there was a change in law that would affect the rules of procedure, which she had noted in a previous memo; the Chair asked Calloway to resend the memo.

Selectboard members discussed the process for signing off-cycle warrants.

Calloway shared that she thought it would be a good idea for the Selectboard to assign a specific member to follow each committee.

The Chair highlighted feedback from a town member about who should run the organizational meeting and asked if Selectboard members felt strongly about recruiting someone who was not the Town Manager; no Selectboard members spoke in favor of recruiting someone.

I move to warn the date and time of the Organizational Meeting as March 4th, 2026 at 6:30 pm. – Griggs moved (2nd Calloway) Vote: yes (Vincent, Griggs, Calloway, Layton)

19. Adjournment

Timestamp: 3:27:10

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:00.

Minutes taken by Jenny Tolman.

Minutes approved on March 11, 2026

Kimo Griggs, Selectboard Chair