

DRAFT Minutes of the Selectboard Meeting of
Wednesday, February 23, 2022, at 6:30 pm

This meeting was conducted via teleconference using ZOOM according to Open Meeting Law requirements. Members present: Roger Arnold, Chair; Mary Layton, Vice Chair; Claudette Brochu; Marcia Calloway; Robert Gere; Rod Francis, Interim Town Manager; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager.

Also participating: Bonnie Batchelder, Cheryl Lindberg, Rita Seto, Chris Kaufman, Jaci Allen, Mary Albert, Joy Kenseth, Charlotte Metcalf, Harrison Whitecloud, Chris Rimmer, Brooke Dingleline, Doug Wilberding, Jack Cushman, Aaron Lamperti, Will Smith, Neil Fulton, Pam Smith.

1. Approval of Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the agenda. **Motion approved unanimously.**
2. Public Comment. No public comment was offered.
3. Consent Agenda. Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to approve the consent agenda. **Motion approved unanimously.**
4. Presentation of Audit Report. Bonnie Batchelder, the Town's contracted auditor, appeared to answer questions about the audit she prepared for the Town. Batchelder said that overall, the town is in a very strong financial position. Batchelder said the last couple of years have been very challenging for the Finance Office, in particular. Batchelder said her strongest recommendation is to make sure the Finance Office has the personnel and training they need. She also recommended that the pending taxpayer refunds need to be cleared up. Batchelder said that having strong financial controls is important, as well. Cheryl Lindberg said that the town doesn't have a sweep account; instead, we have collateralized up to \$12 million. Lindberg asked about wages expenses and about the unassigned fund balance. Batchelder said the town does not have an unreasonable amount of unassigned funds.
5. Warrant & Recording Fee Waiver for Woody Adams Conservation Forest & Easement. Arnold **moved** (2nd Layton) to approve a warrant in the amount of \$131,180.17; with \$130,000 coming from the Conservation Designated Fund and the remainder from the general fund for the Town's contribution to the purchase of the Woody Adams Conservation Forest. **Motion approved unanimously.** Arnold **moved** (2nd Gere) to waive the recording fees for the Woody Adams transaction. **Motion approved (4-yes; Calloway-no).**
6. Tigertown Culverts Construction Inspection Services & Contractor Bid and VT132 Contractor Bid Approvals. Rita Seto from TRORC gave background information on the Tigertown culvert project and Rte. 132 project. Seto summarized the process and proposals. Chris Kaufman, DPW Director, offered further details about the projects. Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to authorize the Town Manager to sign the DuBois and King contract to conduct Contract Inspection Services for \$79,204. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Gere) to authorize the Town Manager sign the Notice of Award to Kirk Fenoff & Son Excavating, LLC for construction services for \$414,176.10. **Motion approved unanimously.** Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to authorize the Town Manager sign the Notice of Award to Kirk Fenoff & Son Excavating, LLC for construction services \$216,583.74. **Motion approved unanimously.**

7. Review of Preferred Siting for Solar Projects in Norwich. Arnold introduced the topic and summarized the issues at hand. Francis then shared his screen to present a series of slides explaining the town's preferred site policy and review process. Jaci Allen said the vast majority of the land in town is zoned as rural residential. Brochu said the presentations on the Loveland Project before the Planning Commission and Selectboard were very clear about the fact that there will be no undue visual impact of this project. Mary Albert said she found the process of reviewing this project to be very clear and thorough. Joy Kenseth said she is an abutter to the project; she had questions about the site and is very concerned about the possible impact to her property. Charlotte Metcalf expressed concern about cutting down trees. Chris Rimmer, a member of the Conservation Commission, recommended a thorough study of the ecological impact of solar installations such as the Loveland project. Harrison Whitecloud agreed that it is very important to move forward with solar power. Brooke Dingleline, an attorney from Barre, said she is very concerned about the town's process of review. Calloway proposed a motion for the SB to set a future agenda item to more fully discuss the issue of solar siting. No one seconded the motion and it therefore failed. Francis said this project is before the Vermont Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and people can access the PUC website to gather information and become involved. Francis said he can help people access the PUC website if they need help.

8. Presentation from Article 36 Task Force. Rob Gere, as SB liaison to the Article 36 Task Force (TF), introduced the topic and thanked the TF for their work. Jack Cushman talked about the necessity of rapidly reducing the use of greenhouse gas usage. Aaron Lamperti shared his screen and summarized some of the data gathered by the TF. Also, the TF came up with 6 recommendations, listed in the TF's report, which is included in the SB meeting packet. SB members discussed the report and possible actions to address energy usage issues. Will Smith suggested the SB reach out to other towns that have successfully eliminated fossil fuel use. Neil Fulton talked about some options for electric vehicles for the town. Pam Smith said that, since Article 36 was passed, the town has purchased fossil fuel vehicles. She also suggested the town will need to own more solar to produce the electricity we'll need when we switch to using more electricity. SB members thanked the TF for their work.

9. Rule Requiring Wearing Masks in Indoor Public Spaces. Layton said the case rate hasn't come down quite enough yet to suspend the mask rule. Layton **moved** (2nd Brochu) to extend the Rule Requiring Wearing Face Coverings Indoors in Public Spaces for an additional 30 days through March 25, 2022. **Motion approved (4-yes; Calloway- abstain).**

10. Future Agenda Items. SB members discussed a variety of possible future agenda items, including:

ARPA

Childcare issues

Article 36 Task Force

Dog Policies

Working collaboratively with the Town Mgr. to move forward

Timeline for agenda setting with town staff

Discussions about how staff can support the SB

Relationships with town's committees, the SB, and town staff
Digitization and website improvement
Land Management Council discussion
Tracy Hall phone system

SB members agreed to hold the 2022 reorganization meeting the day after Town Meeting; March 2, 2022 at 5:30 pm via Zoom.

11. Adjourn. Brochu **moved** (2nd Layton) to adjourn. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 pm.

By Miranda Bergmeier

Approved by the Selectboard on _____, 2022

Roger Arnold, Selectboard Chair

Next Meeting – March 2, 2022 – Meeting at 6:30

PLEASE NOTE: CATV POSTS RECORDINGS OF ALL REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE NORWICH SELECTBOARD