

**Town of Canaan
Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting
Thursday, July 3, 2008 at 7:30 P.M.
Town Hall, 108 Main Street, Falls Village, CT 06031**

Present: First Selectman Patricia Allyn Mechare. Selectmen Peter G. Lawson and Charles H. Lewis

Also Present: Priscilla Belcher, George and Ann Anastasio, Ann Seregi, Larry Kallenberg, Theodora Gordineer, Maggie Clark, Bea Bambaco, Jerry Hunting, Eric Korbel, Lorma Davis, Amy Odell, Gail and Peter Martin, Audrey Robsen, Martin Merriman, Leif Thomsen, Bob Blair, Benjamin and George Wright, Robert Hoskins, Norma DeMay, Janet Hanna, Linda and Bill Fox, John Phillips, June and Kaitlynn Shippa, Tony and Lynn Nania, Fred Petersen, Bill Blass, Lon Carter, Laura Werntz, Wayne Collier, Sarah Charlesworth, Karl Munson, Olivia Kimmins, Alisa Clingher, Vanessa Edgerton, Joe Brien, Mary Lou Howie, John Pernak, Arthur Jacobsen, Norma Galaise, and Terry Cowgill, *The Lakeville Journal*. A few other members of the public came in while the meeting was in progress, but did not sign-in.

First Selectman Patricia Allyn Mechare called this Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen to order at 10:30 A.M.

1.) The first item was to consider action on the annual agreement (attached) between VNA Northwest and the Town regarding reimbursement for home health care visits to residents. The amount is included in the new 2008-2009 budget.

C. Lewis made a motion to approve an Agreement for Provision of Town Reimbursed Public Health Nursing and Home Health Services between the VNA Northwest, Inc. and the Town of Canaan, billings not to exceed an amount of \$10,027.00, and authorizing the First selectman to sign the agreement on behalf of the Town. P. Lawson seconded. Passed unanimously.

2.) The second item was to consider an annual performance review and evaluation for Transfer Station Attendant Norma Galaise, following a six-month probationary report, put on the agenda in response to a request by Ms. Galaise made December 19, 2008.

Public Comment: First Selectman Mechare asked that those wishing to make a public comment please give their name and address and wait until called upon in an orderly way.

T. Nania (35 Undermountain Road) – He felt fortunate in our town to have had a wonderful experience with both people at the transfer station.

J. Hanna (32 Main St.) – The Transfer Station is a pleasant place for news and taking care of business and she is happy with the personnel there. In a small town if you hire someone you should stick with them and work-out issues.

N. DeMay (64 Point-of-Rocks Rd.) – It is a pleasant place to go – everyone is friendly. Norma is hospitable and saves books for the Douglas Library in North Canaan for their book sales.

B. Fox (Deer Rd.) – Satisfied.

L. Werntz (12 Warren Tpk.) – Satisfied.

W. Collier (105 Rt. 7 N.) – He noted he'd had a personality conflict with Norma at first, but they have worked it out.

S. Charlesworth (92 Main St.) – The Transfer Station is a pleasant experience. Norma has made it that way and we owe her our fidelity. She makes her feel welcome.

K. Munson (199 Canaan Mtn. Rd.)– She has an unpleasant job working with the recyclables, but is always smiling and has a good personality.

O. Kimmins (16 Arnott Dr.) – She is always smiling and has dog treats and saves things she knows I can use.

A. Clingher (61 Rt. 7 N) – No matter what I bring or what kind of chaos is going on, I am always greeted by Norma and really appreciate that. The table is a mess, but people take “stuff”, so it saves the Town money from having to haul it away.

B. Hoskins (17 Miner St.) – She is helpful, has a good spirit, shows care and attention to her job, and is warm, caring, and helpful.

B. Blair (177 Canaan Mtn. Rd.) – She does an outstanding job and gives warm greetings. If there are personality issues, we are in a small community and these issues can be worked out. He’s sure the Board of Selectmen can do this.

B. Wright (497 Undermountain Rd.) – Is there a particular issue we can shine a light on here instead of just saying “we all love Norma”?

Mechare noted that this was the public comment period and the performance review was to be addressed after that period.

G. Wright (497 Undermountain Rd.) – Norma is an important ambassador for this Town in helping people with recycling, which is tremendously important and she helps in that process.

L. Kallenberg – She saves books for me and is pleasant and efficient.

S. Charlesworth (92 main St.) – Doesn’t think it’s a personality “thing”. She does her job well.

G. Martin (Barnes Rd.) – Who does the annual performance review?

Mechare indicated it was done by the Board of Selectmen and the Transfer Station Operations Manager together and there are other reviews in between the annual review, as necessary, during the year.

Sinclair noted Norma gives her dogs biscuits, is careful with recycling, and always pleasant.

P. Belcher (18 Rt. 63) – Does the BOS go to the Transfer Station to review her? She hopes that any determination made by the Selectmen is ignored by the town – nothing should be different.

G. Anastasio (88 Rt. 126) – Loves Norma – she does a wonderful job, the dogs love the biscuits.

A. Anastasio (88 Rt. 126) – Lived in Salisbury for 33 years and felt harassed at their dump. Not here – it is a meeting place and Norma saves things and books for her. It would be a disservice to the town to remove her from her position.

L. Thomsen – Has his business in Falls Village (129 Rt. 7 S) - feels Norma’s sense of responsibility is wonderful and she is a hard worker. That being under probation in her job puts her under pressure. She should be removed from whatever probation she is on and the evaluation should be transparent to the people of Town.

A. Odell – Lives in Patterson, NY, but used to take an ailing FallsVillage friend to the transfer station here – Norma has no place to even wash her hands or have running water to drink. She’s read the evaluations and thinks they are petty for the past 2 ½ years after Fred Palmer stopped dating her. She (Odell) is going to contact a lawyer.

L. Davis – Lives in North Canaan and knows Norma.

E. Korbel – Has lived here 26 years and manages the Interlaken Inn. Since Norma is at the Transfer Station, he enjoys going there. The other person has no smiles and is always punitive or angry, but she always smiles and saves him magazines and books.

A. Robson (57 Warren Tpk.) – Norma saves the Town a lot of money. – she picks up things this Town doesn’t recycle and takes them to Torrington at her own expense. She doesn’t get her lunch till 2:15 P.M. some days. The BOS have turned their back on us. She doesn’t have a phone there. The tables fill up suddenly sometimes. She’s afraid of the BOS. Her evaluation is “bogus”. She hands out coupons to people who need them. She cleans up from 3 P.M. to 4 P.M. on her own time. Has our Town Transfer ever been cited and what does the Manager do?

Mechare explained the recent re-licensing – there have been no citations. Operations Manager Fred Palmer is there 1 day/week (Saturday), but also handles all the paperwork relative to the managing of the Transfer Station, i.e. CRRRA, etc., supervising and other responsibilities.

J. Hunting (206 Rt. 63) – Lived here 20 years. Before Norma, it was not pleasant to go to the transfer Station – when she took over, efficiency changed for the better and with a smile. The table is a great service to people.

L. Carter (9 Prospect St.) – This is a peculiar meeting – everyone loves Norma, but we don't know what the objections are – we're talking in the dark.

M. Clark (19 Prospect St.) – I look forward to seeing Norma, she is the most valuable person there and does that job better than anyone she knows, a job that no one else would want to do.

T. Gordineer – Rents in FV. Norma is warm and goes above and beyond her job, especially considering the things she has to handle. She has helped her out a lot as a single parent. She shouldn't be in danger of losing her job and hopes we can resolve this.

S. Charlesworth (92 Main St.) – Implicit in this is a personal thing – an underlying sexual harassment issue.

J. Shippa (97 Rt. 7 S) – Please keep Norma – she has been a big personal help to me.

P. Belcher (18 Rt. 63) – How can we countermand your position (BOS)?

Mechare noted that no position has yet been taken by the Selectmen.

Selectman Lewis pointed out that an Annual Performance Review would not normally be handled in public, but Norma requested that this be done in a December 19, 2007 note (attached response). She will be given the opportunity to speak here to her performance review, if she wishes to, and also if she wishes to have her review handed-out, she may do so for purposes of FOI.

Mechare called for any further comments from those who had not gotten to speak yet, so that the Public Comment portion could be closed and the Selectmen could address the business of the meeting.

V. Edgerton – lives in North Canaan – Norma helped a disabled woman, who could not get out of her car – she cares about people.

J. Hanna – Is there an appeal process?

Mechare and Lewis indicated that they did not believe there was an appeal process. Lewis noted that termination, however, was not being considered here.

Ms. Galaise had a statement to make. She gave the Selectmen a list *Items that Need to be Addressed* (attached). She said she felt backed into a corner and had no chance to express herself and felt attacked. She felt the items on the *Annual Performance Review Fiscal Year 2007-2008* dated June 17, 2008 (attached) were too generalized, especially about the full table. She wanted a job description and specifics. She said she did fine for 8 ½ years and now she can't seem to do anything right. There is not a set lunch break. Mechare noted that by law she is supposed to have one. Galaise pointed out that on a recent Tuesday, when she works from 8 A.M. – 3 P.M., she did not have lunch or a bathroom break until after 3 P.M. She states she has tried to cooperate and feels like she is breaking the rules without knowing what they are. She said – you tell me I am rude and the tables are piling up, but I need to know specifics, like certain dates and times.

Regarding the Annual Performance Review, Mechare points out that the DPW Manager, Tim Downs, reports that residents are waiting in line at the gate when Norma comes in late and he has to open up for them.

Norma notes that she goes by her car clock, but Fred and Tim get there early, but she isn't late. She says she does the day's end clean-up on her own time. She would like a specific set of guidelines and job description from the selectmen.

Mechare noted that they can go over everything with her, put her concerns in writing and then address them.

Galaise asked what personal items, for instance, could she have in her office – she asked for that issue to be clarified and “tidy-up” – what does that mean specifically? She wants more communication from Mechare and Palmer. She said she did not even know about the new computer fees – which she was never told about it.

Mechare noted that they had been posted in her (Norma's) office for her.

Norma asked for information on recycling, like the tonnage reports, so she can answer questions. She notes that Palmer turns all conversations around to personal comments and she can't have a work-related conversation with him.

Mechare indicated that this was the first time Norma had brought this concern to the BOS and that such problems should be reported to the BOS.

Galaise said that Palmer has changed things over time with the bulky waste, but doesn't tell her ahead of time – like about receipts. “We have no good work-related conversation”.

Mechare said the BOS can work with her to put together a specific job description. Other specific problems should be reported to the BOS first, rather than doing so in the public forum first.

Norma said there are things she needs to make her job easier, like a wooden slide for stuff so it won't fall off. Tim and Fred won't do these things when I ask. I could give recycling classes for new residents and have a recycling display at the station.

Mechare noted these ideas could be brought to the BOS and if specific they could better address them.

Norma noted that if she was in the recycling room, she could not monitor traffic. About parking concerns – put a cordoned-off area for safety. And about spending an inappropriate amount of time looking through the stuff on the table, what is an inappropriate amount of time? She notes that if Fred sees a problem on Saturdays, he should come out of the office and tell people, when she is in the recycle room. “He has not said anything at the “dump” about these problems and I need more help from Fred.” This past Saturday she notes she did not finish till the end of the day – there were no slow times (except when it rains).

Mechare noted Norma should take time to do a lunch break and put up a sign that says that. This can be handled in the revamped job description – times can be put in for breaks and lunch.

Regarding coming in on time, Norma says she would like a way to prove when she comes in- like a time clock or a phone number she can call during the week. She would like clean water to wash with or for an emergency – not to drink, but like a 55 gallon drum.

Mechare noted this is the first time Norma has mentioned this to the BOS.

Norma said she needs an answering machine and a portable phone and brought this up two years ago. She says the BOS says she spends too much time at the treasure table pouring over it, but says she does not have time to go through the stuff and people need these things. She noted that a State class instructor said the most important thing at a transfer station is the people. She said at the end of her day the work is done and she has left people better-off than when they came - “let me do this and treat me fairly.”

Mechare asked Norma if she wanted her performance review shared with the public – “Yes, that is my wish, I want everything to be open.” Copies were made and circulated.

Mechare stated that there has never been any issue of Norma's friendliness at the station. There are other issues, and this is not the first time they have been brought to Norma's attention. She has now brought things to the BOS's attention that they should meet and go over in a more definitive way to reflect what Norma is currently doing there. “We had not been informed by you that you were not taking lunch in

writing and this is the first time that several of these issues have been brought to us by you". She noted that some allegations brought from the public at this meeting will have to be addressed in a different venue.

Mechare noted that there has been clutter in the corner of your office for a long time. We understand that you cannot be in two places at the same time and will have a portable phone to you by Saturday. The running water issue had never been brought to our attention and that is a serious safety issue.

Norma responded that the vacuum cleaner is in the corner of the office, but Mechare noted that that is not the issue, it is things saved over a period of time, setting aside things for people, but then left for a long period of time. There is a safety issue of things on the floor in the office.

Norma noted that when she arrives at 8 A.M. the tables are already full and the garbage hauler is full.

Mechare noted that perhaps Norma's hours needed to be adjusted in both directions – start and finish - helping to accommodate these opening-up and clean-up issues.

Adjournment: Mechare indicated that there would be no further public comment taken at this time and declared the meeting adjourned at 11:51 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Margo B. Lewis, Recording Secretary