

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**Minutes of January 26, 2016**

- I. **ROLL CALL.** Chair John Quinn III (absent), Selectmen Lynn Doney, Matthew Gadbois, Kenneth W. Goslant, and K. David Maxwell (absent.). Also present were Town Manager Jeffrey Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Finance Director Laurie Baroffio, Daniele Lacavalla (Norwich University), Rich McSheffrey (Cornerstone Burger Company), Keith Paxman (Cornerstone Burger Company), Bobby Clarke (Cornerstone Burger Company), Willem Jewett (Vermont Gran Fondo), Timothy Watkins (IBEW Local 300 President), Steve Jeffrey (Town Moderator), Bobbi Underhill (Municipal Employee), Denise Gabaree (Municipal Employee), Karen Zedick (Municipal Employee), Karl Bailey (Municipal Employee), Chris Wade (Municipal Employee), Steven Tiersen (Northfield EMS), Patrick DeMasi (Municipal Employee), Katrina DeMasi, Jim Russo (Municipal Employee), Steve Reed (Municipal Employee), Deb O'Grady (Municipal Employee), Timothy Emmons (Municipal Employee), Elroy Hill, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

*Note: In the absence of Chair Quinn and Vice-Chair Maxwell, Selectman Goslant will be serving as Acting Chair.*

Acting Chair Goslant called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
- III. **SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** Manager Schulz stated that there was a request from municipal employees to address the Select Board members regarding the decision to eliminate the Town's contributions to the employees' ICMA retirement accounts in the proposed 2016/2017 municipal budget. This will be added under "Public Participation."
- IV. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):**

- a. **Daniele Lacavalla: Norwich University ROTC Five K Run.** Ms. Lacavalla stated that like last year, a 5k race is being organized to commemorate the founding of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) at Norwich University in 1916. The race is scheduled for Saturday, April 23, 2016. Since this will be the ROTC's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is anticipated that there will be even more participants (500±) than last year. The race route will mainly be on the Norwich University campus but there will be some stretches that will include Main Street, Depot Square, and Central Street. Ms. Lacavalla already has been in contact with Northfield Police Sergeant Brian Hoar regarding traffic control and she believes that any disruptions should take no longer than ten (10) minutes. Selectman Gadbois is concerned that emergency service responses might be delayed during the race. Acting Chair Goslant felt that many similar footraces, etc. have held on Northfield streets and there has been sufficient traffic control to prevent any problems. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to permit Norwich University to hold this footrace on Northfield streets provided that there is coordination with the local emergency services to prevent any threat to public safety, undue traffic delays, etc. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- b. **Keith Paxman, Cornerstone Burger Company: Request for Economic Development Funds.** Mr. Paxman is the co-owner of Cornerstone Burger Company, which purchased the property on East Street that had been occupied by the Knotty Shamrock, and he plans to open a new restaurant there in coming weeks. Mr. Paxman noted that since he and his partners opened their first restaurant in downtown Barre (Cornerstone Pub & Kitchen) in 2012, they have started two (2) additional businesses (Two Loco Guys and Cornerstone Catering), created jobs for over thirty-five (35) local residents, and contributed to the revitalization of the downtown area with increased foot traffic, etc. Mr. Paxman believes that the opening of a new restaurant on East Street could have a similar impact on downtown Northfield and is thereby requesting \$10,000 in economic development funds from the municipality. This would come out of the \$100,000 reserve fund that voters authorized at the 2014 Town Meeting for "the purpose of economic development." Selectman Gadbois asked if Mr. Paxman has contacted Northfield's Economic Development Committee regarding this request. Mr. Paxman said that he contacted Manager Schulz and was advised to bring this request directly to the Select Board. Selectman Gadbois noted that to date none of this \$100,000 reserve fund has been used and he was unsure if the committee had established any guidelines for its distribution. Manager Schulz confirmed that the committee still is developing the criteria for using these funds; it was thought that the initial outlays would be used for "Brownfields" projects or for assisting local businesses to adapt their signage, etc. to conform to the recommendations provided by the Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT). Selectman Gadbois would prefer that this request go first to the committee for its recommendation. The committee has not met since last November but Manager Schulz expected its next meeting to be held in mid-February.

Mr. Paxton had no objection to meeting with the committee provided that the fact that the restaurant might be open by then does not preclude the possibility of obtaining these funds. Acting Chair Goslant said that this would not be a problem. Without objection, consideration of this matter was tabled until it has been presented to the Economic Development Committee for its recommendation.

- c. **Willem Jewett, Vermont Gran Fondo Cycling Event.** Mr. Jewett stated that Vermont Grand Fondo (VTGF) is asking for the Select Board's permission to use Northfield roads for a cycling event on Saturday, June 4, 2016. Due to anticipated road repair work in Middlebury and Brandon this summer, one of the event's three (3) routes (i.e. the longest one at 104 miles) has been altered to include a brief jaunt into Northfield. Bikers will start in Middlebury at 9:00 a.m. and first head north to Bristol. After travelling along Vermont Route 17 through Mad River Glen and into the Mad River Valley, the bikers would go north on Vermont Routes 100 and 100B, travel east on the Moretown Mountain Road, and then enter Northfield Falls via the Cox Brook Road. The route then goes south on Vermont Route 12 until the Vermont Route 12A intersection, and then south on Vermont Route 12A to the Northfield/Roxbury border. Bikers would return to Middlebury by way of the Warren Mountain Road and the Lincoln Gap. Given the route's length, Mr. Jewett did not expect the first bikers to reach Northfield until mid-afternoon. The Vermont Department of Public Service (DPS) has required that VTGF receive written permission from each of the towns along the route. Selectmen Doney and Gadbois had no objections provided that local emergency services were "kept in the loop." Acting Chair Goslant agreed, noting that there seems to be fairly heavy bicycle traffic through Northfield during the summer months. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to give VTGF permission to use Northfield streets for its cycling event and to authorize Acting Chair Goslant to sign the consent form. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

- d. **Timothy Watkins, IBEW Local 300 President: Proposed Elimination of Municipal Contribution to Employee ICMA Retirement Funds.** Mr. Watkins recently heard of the Select Board's intention to eliminate the Town's matching contributions to the municipal employees' ICMA retirement accounts. He believes that many of the current municipal employees decided to work here because of the benefits package available to them at the time of hire. Mr. Watkins added that the Town employees have been able to invest in ICMA with employer matching funds since 1994. The former Village employees first had this opportunity in 1988. He is asking that this annual expense (\$40,000±) be reinstated into the proposed FY 2016/2017 so that Northfield voters can decide this matter on Town Meeting Day (03/01/16).

James Russo has been employed by the Northfield Utility Department since 1998. He asked the Select Board to please put these funds back into the budget so that he still will be able to have the retirement that he had been expecting.

Tim Emmons has been an employee of the Northfield Highway Department for the past three (3) years after working in Williamstown for twenty (20) years. When he decided to change jobs, he had no idea that such a modification in the Town's retirement benefits had been possible. Now that he is getting closer to retirement, Mr. Emmons is concerned that it will not be as comfortable as he assumed. He felt that there are several alternatives to totally eliminating the employer contribution, such as retaining it for current employees only. He believes that it is unfair to take it away from those employees who have been counting upon this for several years. Selectman Doney asked if Williamstown did matching ICMA contributions when Mr. Emmons worked there. Mr. Emmons said it did not; however, it is difficult to see something taken away from you once you have it. He suggested that another option might be to freeze the amount of the employer's contribution at a certain level.

Selectman Doney noted that this action had been under discussion at the Select Board's budget meetings for some time and he wondered why the employees did not come forward earlier with their concerns. Mr. Emmons said that he and most of the municipal employees only learned of this fairly recently. Selectman Doney asked if the status quo was limited to current employees, could this not lead to a lawsuit on the behalf of future employees. Mr. Watkins said that this could be a matter for discussion when the next union contract is negotiated. The current union contract is set to expire June 30, 2016. Manager Schulz said that he did some research and found that it is possible to restrict the current system for current employees only. Mr. Watkins added that several municipal employees signed and circulated a petition asking that the employer contribution be retained. He then handed the petition to the Select Board members for their review.

Selectman Doney wanted to emphasize that the primary retirement system for Northfield municipal employees (VMERS) would not be affected by the current proposal. He felt a lot of local residents had been confused into thinking that the municipality was planning to eliminate all the employee retirement plans. Mr. Watkins stated that the employees represented by his union did understand this distinction.

Selectman Gadbois asked how setting the employer contribution at \$40/week for department heads, \$30/week for foremen, and \$25/week for staff would affect the proposed FY 2016/2017 budget. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio stated that there would be a net increase of \$21,550 in operating expenses. Manager Schulz noted that \$15,000 had been set aside in the proposed budget for merit pay increases. If these funds were shifted to ICMA employer contributions instead, the increase to the tax levy would be \$6550.

Acting Chair Goslant stated that this issue has been well-discussed during the budget sessions and again over the past few days. The Select Board looked at other Vermont municipalities and did not find very many that contributed to two (2) separate employee retirement plans. He added that this action is not being taken to punish the employees but rather to keep the tax rates low after the Town took some hits to its Grand List in recent years. Selectman Gadbois suggested that the employer contribution be capped based upon employee salary, etc. He felt that this might cut the ICMA contribution expense by half. Mr. Watkins felt that this was something that also could be negotiated but he would like to do that in the right way during scheduled bargaining sessions.

Acting Chair Goslant asked Manager Schulz for his opinion on this. Manager Schulz noted that the full Select Board did discuss this matter during its budget meetings and that there had been a formal vote to eliminate the employer contribution. If the Select Board members want to reconsider this decision, a new vote would have to be taken. Selectman Doney asked what would happen to the tax rate should the ICMA employer contribution be reinstated at full funding. Ms. Baroffio estimated that it would be increased by about a three-fourths ( $\frac{3}{4}$ ) of a penny if the merit pay is removed

Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to reinstate the ICMA employer contribution at \$40/week for department heads, \$30/week for foremen, and \$25/week for staff. Acting Chair Goslant stated that eliminating this employer contribution probably was the most difficult decision he had during his six (6) years on the Select Board. However, he feels that as a Select Board member he has responsibilities to both the municipal employees and to the Northfield taxpayers. He does not oppose shifting the \$15,000 merit pay funds to the ICMA employer contribution fund and begin negotiating with the union as soon as possible on this matter. However, Acting Chair Goslant still does not see the need for the municipality to contribute to two (2) separate employee retirement systems. Manager Schulz noted that formal union negotiations probably would begin within the next month or so. Mr. Watkins believes that negotiations can begin as soon as management is willing. Selectman Doney believes that this matter might be resolved amicably at a meeting with the Select Board members and all the union employees present. He sympathizes with the current municipal employees but would like to exclude future employees from the current system. Mr. Watkins stated that this change could not be agreed upon tonight. In that case, Selectman Doney does not want to reinstate the employer contribution. **Motion failed 1-2-0, with Selectman Gadbois voting in the affirmative and Selectmen Doney and Goslant voting in the negative.**

Acting Chair Goslant still favors shifting the proposed \$15,000 for merit pay increases back to the ICMA contribution account. Mr. Watkins stated that since the merit pay increases would be taxable while retirement contributions are not, he believes that this shift would benefit the employees. Manager Schulz said that this would require determining how to set limits on the employer contribution amounts, etc. Selectman Doney felt that this could be negotiated at a later time. Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Doney, to shift the \$15,000 in the proposed FY 2016/2017 for merit pay increases back to the ICMA contribution fund. Selectman Gadbois doesn't feel that this is enough to support the program. There also will be the need to allocate funds for the utility employees. Manager Schulz said that this would be a separate budget process. The Utility Commissions will review this matter and provide their recommendations to the full Select Board. Acting Chair Goslant believes that this is an acceptable compromise that can be renegotiated at a later time. **Motion "passed" 2-1-0, with Selectmen Doney and Goslant voting in the affirmative and Selectman Gadbois voting in the negative.** Mr. Watkins stated that he appreciated the Select Board members' efforts to find the middle ground here but was disappointed that the full ICMA employer contribution amount was not being reinstated. He hopes that this matter can be renegotiated in the upcoming union bargaining sessions.

## V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **January 12, 2016 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- b. **January 14, 2016 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

## VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #15-16.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve Warrant #15-16 in the amount of \$46,107.58. Selectman Doney noted that the Northfield Police Department used the municipal credit card and spent \$900 to purchase holsters, pouches, etc. Manager Schulz said that the NPD is seeking safety grant funds to cover this expense. Manager Schulz added that a new policy has been instituted that all large purchases must be pre-approved by management. Selectman Doney would have preferred that this purchase had been put on hold until the next fiscal year. Selectman Doney then asked about some payments for the completed water projects (Central Street and King Street). Manager Schulz said that these were expenses related to finishing up the project including creating as-built drawings, etc. These costs were included in the original bid amounts so both projects really were completed on time and under budget. Acting Chair Goslant asked if the work was completed to everyone's satisfaction. Manager Schulz confirmed that representatives from the State of Vermont inspected and signed off on the projects. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through January 17, 2016.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$82,250.21. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

## VII. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

- a. **Liquor License Application: Cornerstone Burger Company.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the liquor license application. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

## VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Approval of FY 2016/2017 Municipal Budget.** Manager Schulz stated that the proposed budget was the result of over two (2) months of budget meetings, etc. and it would be a reduction of \$3800 from the FY 2015/2016 budget. He felt that the budget that will be presented to the voters for their approval is a responsible one. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the proposed budget with an additional \$6000. Selectman Gadbois would like the additional funds added to the ICMA retirement fund. **Motion failed 1-2-0, with Selectman Gadbois voting in the affirmative and Selectmen Doney and Goslant voting in the negative.**

Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the proposed budget with an additional \$10,000. **Motion failed 1-2-0, with Selectman Gadbois voting in the affirmative and Selectmen Doney and Goslant voting in the negative.**

Motion by Selectman Doney, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to accept the FY 2016/2017 budget as presented. **Motion "passed" 2-1-0, with Selectmen Doney and Goslant voting in the affirmative and Selectman Gadbois voting in the negative.** Kathleen Lott pointed out that since only three (3) of the five (5) Select Board members were present tonight, according to Robert's Rules of Order any successful motion must have the support of the majority of the full board membership instead of a simple majority of those present. Acting Chair Goslant said that if the Select Board members present tonight cannot achieve unanimity, another meeting would need to be scheduled when Selectman Maxwell and/or Chair Quinn might be able to attend. Selectman Gadbois does not want to delay the approval of the Town Meeting Warning so he asked that the former vote be reconsidered. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to accept the FY 2016/2017 budget as presented. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

- b. **Approval of 2016 Town Meeting Warning.** Steven Jeffrey is the current Town Moderator as well as a recognized expert on Town Meetings and the proper wording of Town meeting articles. He reviewed the proposed warning and had a couple suggestions. Regarding Article 4 ("Shall the voters authorize \$2,652,340 to be raised by property taxes in support of the Town General Fund operations"), Mr. Jeffrey suggested that the article be reworded to include total fund expenditures and the amount of non-tax revenues. Ms. Baroffio will provide these figures and the article will be revised accordingly. In addition, Mr. Jeffrey noted that Article 7 (which is Mayo Healthcare's request for a partial local property taxation exemption) is specified to be voted upon by Australian Ballot. Mr. Jeffrey stated that unless a formal vote had been taken at a previous Town meeting to allow this, it must be voted on at the open session. This matter will be researched and the article will be revised if necessary. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve and sign the 2016 Town Meeting Warning with the revisions recommended by Mr. Jeffrey. **Motion passed 3-0-0.** *Note: A subsequent review found that an article approved at the 1998 Northfield Town Meeting provided for "Voting for All Non-Budgeted Money by Australian Ballot." Therefore, Article 7 will remain on the warning as an Australian Ballot article.*

- c. **Approval of Mountain Alliance Solid Waste Implementation Plan (SWIP).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the Mountain Alliance SWIP. Acting Chair Goslant noted that the SWIP had been discussed in some detail at the public hearing held at beginning of the last regular meeting (01/12/16). **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
  - d. **Appointment of Emergency Management Coordinator.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to appoint Lawton Rutter as Northfield's Emergency Management Coordinator. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- IX. **BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS.** There was nothing additional.
- X. **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT.** Manager Schulz had nothing to add to his written report.
- XI. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)**
- a. **Kathleen Lott: Special Select Board Meeting.** Ms. Lott noted that the Select Board had held a separate meeting earlier tonight in order to discuss a personnel matter in executive session. She asked if any action was taken after the Select Board came out of executive session. Manager Schulz stated that no action was taken.
- XII. **EXECUTIVE SESSION (IF NEEDED).** Motion by Selectman Doney, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a personnel matter and a contract with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:35 p.m.

Motion by Selectman Doney, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:03 p.m. No action was taken.

- XIII. **ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to adjourn. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the regular Select Board meeting of February 9, 2016.