

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
TOWN SELECT BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of June 21, 2016**

- I. **ROLL CALL.** Chair K. David Maxwell, Selectmen Lynn Doney, Nathan Freeman, Matthew Gadbois, and Kenneth W. Goslant. Also present were Town Manager Jeffrey Schulz, and Highway Foreman Trent Tucker.

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

- II. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled):** None.

III. **DISCUSSION.**

- a. **Plans for Tree Removal along Town Roads.** Chair Maxwell introduced this agenda item stating that this is an opportunity for the public to comment on the Town's plan to remove trees from the Town right of way.

Jeff Schulz stated the Select Board has a responsibility to maintain the roads for safe passage, and that removing trees from the right of way is one element of the Town's road maintenance program. He added that tree removal is important because it allows sun to get to the road and the highway crew to maintain the road ditches; which in turn and gets water off the road. In addition, there are areas in which trees are hanging over the road and damaging Town and other vehicles.

Manager Schulz also stated that all affected property owners will be contacted prior to the start of the project, and that the Town will review each site with the property owner. Schulz has prepared a draft letter to the property owners detailing the project and stating that all affected property owners will be contacted. Also, Schulz noted that he has a draft contract for this project from the logging company for the Board's review.

Next, the public commented on the project. The following questions and concerns were raised by the public: Will there be an option for landowners to request an exemption for specific trees within the right of way along the front of their property? The Town does not yet have a signed contract; however the work has begun on Little Northfield Road. Is this work substantial enough to be covered by the requirement to be put out for bid? Will it have the desired effect of enhancing safety and reducing mud season? Who owns the wood cut? What is the experience of other towns which have engaged this company to do similar work? Who is responsible for any litigation resulting from the work? Has there been a plan developed defining the scope of work and procedures to be followed? What would be the cost in subsequent years of maintaining those cleared roadsides? Does Northfield have a policy covering removal of trees from rights of way? Was the Conservation Committee consulted regarding this project? The canopy of trees along Town roads provides shade, dust control, and scenic value to the property owners. The Town needs to ensure that the project will not violate state and federal stormwater and clean water laws, or riparian buffer rules.

Next, the Board members discussed the tree removal project and voiced support for the project stating that the Town needs to maintain the roads and that removing trees from the right of way is an important part of road maintenance. This project will remove trees and vegetation that has grown in the right of way over the past 15 to 20 years. The Board emphasized the need to address the questions raised by the public, and that all affected property owners must be contacted prior to the start of the project.

Chair Maxwell summarized the following items and tasks that need to be addressed. Rework the contract with LimLaw and compare it to VLCT template. Research Limlaw's experience with similar projects. Add a performance clause in contract. Call the Town of Barnet, VT regarding clearing of trees in roads.

Identify the roads that the Town will work on this year. Finalize letter to go out to property holders that have not been personally contacted. Establish a written protocol for the tree cutting process, including owner marking trees for not removing. Develop timeline for project? Will this happen year after year. Use front page forum to disseminate info on project

Research state statues regarding tree cutting and road maintenance within the Town right of way. Review Act 110 and Act 46 to determine how it affects this project. Will this project comply with state road standards? How does this project impact the clean water act Research Riparian Buffer and how do this project affect it? Does the Board need a 30 day notice prior to removing trees from right of way?

Engage Cassie Morse regarding developing a communication plan once the final details are worked out. Engage Russ Barrett as liaison in his role as Tree Warden. Consult with Conservation Committee.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled). There was none.

V. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Select Board Member Ken Goslant, seconded by Board member Nate Freeman, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey Schulz

Jeffrey Schulz, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved at the regular Select Board meeting of June 28, 2016.