

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of September 13, 2016**

- I. **ROLL CALL.** Chair K. David Maxwell, Selectmen Lynn Doney (absent), Nathan Freeman, Matthew Gadbois, and Kenneth W. Goslant. Also present were Town Manager Jeffrey Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Police Chief James Dziobek, Police Sergeant Brian Hoar, Joseph Smith, Steve Davis, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

Chair Maxwell 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.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

IV. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)**

- a. **Joseph Smith: Haunted Hill Horror Fest, October 6-8, 13-15.** Chair Maxwell had asked that Mr. Smith attend the meeting to answer some questions because there is an application to serve liquor at this event and Town Clerk Kim Pedley had some concerns about granting this request without further information about the caterer (14th Star Brewing Company), the venue, etc. This particular event would take place at the same location off Vermont Route 12 South used for the "Bonestock" music festivals the past two summers.

Mr. Smith is a Northfield resident and owner of Dubtek Productions, which provides sound and lighting for functions including weddings, parties, festivals, etc. He said that the Haunted Hill Horror Fest is intended to fill some of the role as the Haunted Hayride that was held on the Norwich University (NU) campus for several years until the empty space used became unavailable due to campus construction. This will be a six-night event with the Thursday nights focused on family activities such as pumpkin carving, face painting, etc. The other nights will have hayrides, live music, baked goods for sale, alcoholic refreshments, etc. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to local charities and local schools. The liquor catering will be done by 14th Star Brewing Company which, even though based in St. Albans, includes a fair number of NU alumni and has a good history of being generous to various Vermont charities. The music offerings will vary each night and quite a number of out-of-staters already have expressed interest in attending.

Selectman Freeman thought that this all sounded rather good but was concerned about the logistics involved in holding this event. Chair Maxwell noted that since this event would be held on private property, the Select Board's main responsibility was whether or not to recommend the Town Clerk should approve the spirituous liquor catering permit. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to recommend that the permit application be approved and signed by Town Clerk Pedley. Mr. Smith said 14th Star Brewing would be responsible for having on hand the proper staffing, barricades, etc. in order to prevent underage drinking or other problems. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

Selectman Gadbois asked about the entrance/exit to the event on Vermont Route 12 South. Mr. Smith said that there were plans to control the number of entrants by having vehicles parked at the bottom of the hill and then have tractors bring attendees up the hill to the staging area. In addition, NU has been contacted about the possibility of providing some overflow parking on campus as well as providing transport to and from the event. There will be handicapped children attending the festivities so the event will be ADA-compliant. The organizers also will be working with local law enforcement to make sure all runs smoothly. Chair Maxwell thanked Mr. Smith for providing this information and he hopes that all goes as planned and the Haunted Hill Horror Fest is successful.

V. **DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT**

- a. **Police Chief James Dziobek.** Chief Dziobek provided the Select Board members a handout with background information regarding his report tonight. For example, there were printouts of all the calls for service requested since the start of the current fiscal year (07/01/16). There were a total of 442 callouts in this time period with suspicious person/circumstance (46), agency assist (34), directed patrol (27), citizen assist (27), and citizen dispute (25) being the most numerous. His handout also included a table that indicated the times and days of the week when callouts were most common based upon statistics compiled over the past eight (8) years. This showed that weekday calls for service were most common during mid-afternoon. However, when the numbers spiked over the weekend, the callouts mostly came late in the evening (after 10:00 p.m.) or very early in the morning. Selectman Goslant asked if the Northfield Police Department (NPD) had sufficient resources to respond to all these callouts. Chief Dziobek said that it usually did but there was the option to contact the State Police if necessary.

Chief Dziobek then discussed some recent NPD staffing changes: Corporal Chris Quesnel has left the NPD to join the Montpelier Police Department; Officer Michael Gero was subsequently promoted to Corporal; and Officer Jared Mitchell was hired to fill the vacancy. He added that Officer Mitchell is waiting for his orders to report from the US Navy so he probably will be leaving the NPD within six (6) months. Selectman Gadbois asked if this upcoming vacancy was already being advertised. Chief Dziobek said that advertising has been ongoing but no certified officers had applied to date. He noted that this is a common problem for municipal police departments around the country.

Chief Dziobek stated the last session of the Junior Police Academy was held at the Northfield Middle/High School in mid-July as part of the Bridges Summer Program. There were twenty-five (25) participants and this was the largest class to date. NPD Officer Dan Withrow volunteered his spare time to help as did officers from neighboring departments and the State Police. Selectman Freeman felt that this was an excellent program that provides young men and women the opportunity to see how local police departments operate, including interaction with K-9 units.

Chief Dziobek then noted that the security system at the Northfield Police Department needed to be upgraded. He has solicited quotes and the lowest of the three (3) received was from Cameras Networking & Security (Barre, VT) for \$5234. Manager Schulz added that there are CIP funds in the NPD account to cover this expense. Selectman Gadbois wanted to be sure that the service provided would be of good quality and not just the cheapest. Chief Dziobek confirmed that this company has a very good reputation and expected them to do a fine job. Chair Maxwell would like the work done as soon as possible so that the municipality is not left open to lawsuits, etc. in the interim.

Chief Dziobek announced the NPD recently took possession of a donated prescription drug drop-off box that will be located at the Police Station. Residents now can drop off any expired or unneeded drugs whenever they want without having to wait for special collection events. The drugs collected are later incinerated at no cost to the municipality. Chief Dziobek also noted that the annual Northfield Labor Day Weekend Festivities went well this year without any major problems.

Chief Dziobek met with Manager Schulz last week and informed him of his plan to retire by the end of April 2017. He also has reached out to the Director of the Vermont State Police should reductions in NPD manpower require additional law enforcement assistance from the state. Selectman Freeman noted that in his memo Chief Dziobek referred to the possible need for state assistance should the NPD “be disbanded or reduced further of manpower.” He asked if there had been any formal discussions of the possibility of disbanding the NPD. Chair Maxwell said that there had been none to date. He felt that Chief Dziobek was merely looking at contingencies should there be a manpower shortage. Selectman Freeman understands that at least one Select Board member has publically advocated that the NPD be disbanded. Chair Maxwell believes that Select Board members are free to express their opinions outside their meetings but this does not mean that any such action is either planned or anticipated. Chief Dziobek has not heard back from the Director but will keep the Select Board informed when there is additional information.

Since he is planning to leave before the start of the next fiscal year (07/01/17) Chief Dziobek would like the Select Board’s permission to have NPD Sergeant Brian Hoar, his top-ranking officer, join him when the NPD budget is put together later this year. Chair Maxwell felt that this was a good idea in the interests of department continuity. Manager Schulz also believed that it would be wise to have someone on hand during the budget sessions who also would be involved when the approved budget is implemented.

Chair Maxwell has noticed increased pedestrian traffic in Northfield on the weekends after 10:00 p.m. Chief Dziobek said this was due to the return of Norwich University students. He added that ninety percent (90%) of the students now live on campus and either don’t own vehicles or (as underclassmen) are not allowed to park them on campus. There have not been any incidents related to the increased foot traffic. Selectman Freeman noted that there has been some discussion of NU providing a nighttime shuttle service so that students can get to and from campus.

Chair Maxwell received a letter from a resident recently regarding a perceived increase in both northbound and southbound speeding along Vermont Route 12/Main Street. He asked if Chief Dziobek has seen this himself. Chief Dziobek said traffic patterns do change with the seasons and as new residents move into town but he has not seen any dramatic changes recently. He added that NPD officers do spend a lot of their time dealing with speeding and other traffic violations. Chair Maxwell said that the municipality does own a roadside speed meter that is in need of repair. He asked when it could be put back in operation. Chief Dziobek said that there was a \$1000-\$1200 annual cost to maintain the equipment software. Chair Maxwell felt that the roadside speed meter was an important tool in deterring speeders while also collecting valuable information on traffic patterns, etc. He would like it put back into service as soon as possible.

Chair Maxwell said he was very disappointed that the NPD budget ended up with a \$45,000 deficit in spite of numerous pledges from Chief Dziobek that it would finish “in the black.” Chief Dziobek said that there had been some unforeseen workers’ compensation payments that occurred after he addressed the Select Board. Chair Maxwell would like some assurance that this would not happen again in the current fiscal year. Chief Dziobek said that the current NPD budget had some safeguards put in that should prevent a recurrence. Chair Maxwell would like Chief Dziobek to be aware that Northfield has limited financial resources and that budgets therefore need to be managed properly.

Selectman Gadbois noted that additional flood-damaged structures on Water Street were being purchased by the municipality through the FEMA buyout program. He asked if any of them could be used by the NPD or other law enforcement agencies for training purposes prior to their demolition. Chief Dziobek said that it was possible depending on the timeline. Manager Schulz said that there would be an undetermined amount of time between when the municipality takes possession of the properties and their demolition can be scheduled. Chair Maxwell noted that one of the earlier buyout structures had been used by the Northfield Fire Department for live fire training.

Selectman Gadbois asked about the status of the NPD vehicle fleet. Chief Dziobek said that some of the older vehicles do need some work but those in service appear to be both reliable and safe. Chair Maxwell then thanked Chief Dziobek for his report tonight.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **August 23, 2016 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-1, with Selectman Freeman abstaining.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #06-17.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve Warrant #06-17 in the amount of \$1,410,280.63. Selectman Gadbois noted that there was an expense of \$5800 to provide electric service to the Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF). He would like Manager Schulz to investigate the possibility of installing solar panels on the WWTF roof as well as in the Wellfield to limit these expenses. Manager Schulz said that the Utility Commission has looked into installing solar farms in Northfield. Due to the possibility of groundwater contamination from cleaning solvents, etc., the Utility Commissioners felt that the Wellfield was not a good site. Manager Schulz will research Selectman Gadbois’ suggestion to install solar panels on the WWTF roof. Selectman Gadbois asked about installing solar panels on Cheney Farm. Manager Schulz confirmed that the Utility Commissioners were considering this possibility. Selectman Freeman has been informed that changes in state law regarding net metering credits will make solar power in Vermont less attractive in the future. Selectman Goslant noted the high warrant amount and wanted it clarified that over \$1,000,000 of this amount were property taxes collected by the municipality and then forwarded to Northfield schools. Chair Maxwell added that another \$276,000 was to purchase power for the Northfield Electric Department that later will be sold to its customers. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through August 28, 2016.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$81,015.21. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Central Street Storm Water Detention Basin.** Manager Schulz said several Select Board members have been critical of the basin’s appearance and had also raised safety concerns about possible drowning hazards. Manager Schulz has obtained quotes for installing metal grates on the structure but they turned out to be rather high (\$20,000-\$25,000). Chair Maxwell asked if the basin does divert stormwater towards the new culverts behind Holland Place. Manager Schulz said that some of the overflow does reach the new culverts. After lighter storms, the storm water is retained in the structure until it evaporates. The Central Street facility was inspected recently and it was confirmed that it is functioning properly and helping to keep stormwater from reaching the WWTF. In order to improve its appearance, plantings will be put around the structure after the decision on metal grating has been made. Selectman Goslant would like additional quotes received from local steel companies in case the costs can be lowered. Chair Maxwell would like the Highway Committee to discuss the grating matter at its next meeting and later make its recommendation to the full Select Board.

- b. **Pre-Town Meeting Day.** Manager Schulz said there had been a lot of support expressed at this year's Town Meeting for moving the Open Session from the morning of Town Meeting Day (1st Tuesday in March) to the night before. The Select Board can make this change itself without a public vote. Selectman Goslant felt there had been a clear indication that those present did want this change in order to increase public attendance. Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to move the Open Session of the 2017 Northfield Town Meeting to the night before Town Meeting Day. The starting time will be determined later. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Economic Development Committee Meeting.** Selectman Freeman noted that this meeting originally was scheduled in the Brown Public Library's Community Room on Wednesday, September 21, 2016, but has been postponed one week (09/28/16) and now will take place in the Police Station's Training Room. Since there are some community groups hoping to take part in this meeting that will focus on area-wide planning, he would like to see it moved back to the larger room if possible. Manager Schulz confirmed that another group had already reserved the Community Room on September 28 but he will contact them to see if they could reschedule or meet elsewhere.
- b. **NAVI Benefit Golf Tournament.** Chair Maxwell said the Northfield Ambulance Volunteers, Inc. (NAVI) will be holding an invitational golf tournament at the Northfield Country Club on this coming Sunday (09/18/16). The proceeds will benefit the Betty Podgwaite Scholarship Fund as well as EMS training activities.
- c. **Labor Day Weekend Festivities.** Selectman Goslant was out of town over the holiday weekend but he understands that it was another success. He feels that those who plan and organize all the weekend's activities put a lot of energy into the effort. He understands that there already are plans for some improvements for next year. Selectman Goslant believes that this celebration has become a very effective promotion for the Northfield community.
- d. **Recreation Committee Update.** Selectman Goslant reported that the Recreation Committee is moving ahead with installing a new pavilion at the old softball/Little League field. This should attract more people to Memorial Park. However, with the upcoming loss of the field off Doyon Road, there will be a need to look for additional organized sports venues. The Recreation Committee is considering how to reorient Falls Park to accommodate additional sports fields. The area between the Fire Station and the Senior Center also is being looked at as a possible site for a winter ice rink, etc. Since there is no money at present to install new restrooms at Memorial Park, the Recreation Committee is focusing on smaller, less costly projects.
- e. **Downtown Parking.** Selectman Goslant believes that there is a public parking shortage in the downtown area that has been made worse since the Holland Place project now appears to have taken away more parking spaces than had been anticipated. A number of buildings around the Common have apartment housing on their upper floors and those tenants need somewhere to park. Despite the Select Board's previous attempts to accommodate the businesses on and around the Common by imposing weekday parking limits, parking problems persist and need to be addressed.

X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT. There were no questions regarding Manager Schulz's report.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Kathleen Lott: Aseltine Road Repairs.** Ms. Lott noted that the Highway Department put up signage ahead of time regarding plans to close off part of the road to work on it. This allowed Ms. Lott to plan an alternate travel route ahead of time and she was grateful for the advance warning.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Selectman Goslant seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a personnel matter with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

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

Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 8:40 p.m. No action was taken.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 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 September 27, 2016.