

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of October 11, 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, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi, Dan Currier (Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission), Michele Braun, Katrina DeMasi, Steve Davis, Gary Davis, Carrie Morris, Eden Morris, 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. **Dan Currier, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC): Stormwater Basin Projects.**

Mr. Currier wanted to provide the Select Board with updates on the two (2) stormwater projects already completed (Central Street and Holland Place) as well as another proposed project. He reported that the Holland Place project was completed this morning with the striping of the parking lot behind the American Legion. Some plantings around the guardrail will be installed later using some surplus grant funds. Mr. Currier will be writing the amendment plan that will focus on future maintenance, etc. Submitting this plan to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) will free up any remaining grant funds.

Chair Maxwell recently inspected the water retention structure on Central Street and found it full of sediment and weeds. Mr. Currier said the plan is to have it cleaned out annually. This was done with shovels the last time. Manager Schulz said this cleaning should be done by the Highway Department but the Water/Sewer crew did it this past year. Selectman Gadbois asked about the shrubbery that was supposed to be installed around it. Mr. Currier said there should be some plantings left over from the Holland Place project. Selectman Goslant noted most people think the structure is an eyesore but we keep hearing it was built as planned and is operating properly. Selectman Gadbois asked if there were still plans to purchase metal grates to eliminate the possibility of a child getting into the structure and drowning. Manager Schulz said additional price quotes were obtained (as requested) after the last Select Board meeting but they were all about the same as the earlier ones (\$19,000 to \$20,000 range). It also was agreed at that meeting the Highway Committee would review the quotes and make its recommendation to the full Select Board.

As to the proposed next wastewater project, Mr. Currier said the optimal site identified is alongside the Dog River near the intersection of Water Street and Union Street. There are two (2) different municipal properties near the pedestrian bridge that could be used. Mr. Currier favored the FEMA buyout parcel that was previously occupied by the Fernandez apartments. The project would involve building an underground chamber system and installing about one thousand feet (1000') of water and sewer lines along Union Street. The new structure would treat forty (40) acres of stormwater and could be expanded at a later time to cover a larger area. Should the Select Board indicate support for this proposal tonight, CVRPC will apply for a grant on Northfield's behalf that would pay for all of the costs. This grant has a Tuesday, October 25, 2016, application deadline.

Selectman Goslant did not know another stormwater project was even being contemplated. He asked why this one would be built underground. Mr. Currier said this was due to its proximity to the river and this would preserve riverbank stability. This also would prevent the structure from being undermined during flooding events and would dovetail with the floodplain restoration project that Michele Braun will discuss later in the meeting. Chair Maxwell asked why the Select Board is now being made aware of this project so close to the grant application deadline. Mr. Currier asked to be put on the agenda of the next regular Select Board meeting when he learned these grant monies had become available. Such grant funds become available twice a year so the Select Board can apply later if a decision cannot be made tonight.

Selectman Freeman asked if there would be a local match amount for this project. Mr. Currier said there would not. Selectman Freeman asked how much competition there was for these stormwater grants. Mr. Currier said a large amount of grant implementation (i.e., construction) funds are available at this time. However, since Northfield is ahead of other communities in preparing for new state stormwater treatment requirements, this may change as other Vermont municipalities go beyond their initial planning stages. Since grant money is now available and this work probably will be required at a future time, Selectman Freeman favors proceeding with this project.

Selectman Doney asked how many such stormwater projects are possible in this community. Mr. Currier said the exact number could not be determined until the new state regulations are in place and the ANR starts issuing directives. Selectman Freeman would like to see a map that identifies the areas in Northfield with stormwater issues. Mr. Currier will forward this to Manager Schulz for distribution.

Selectman Gadbois likes the fact that Northfield would not have to provide any matching funds. In addition, the roads and sidewalks affected by the construction would be restored (and probably improved) with no local cost. He just would like some assurance that all will go as promised before providing final approval for the project. Mr. Currier said all he seeks tonight is authorization for a formal letter of support for the grant application. This would not commit the municipality to completing the project.

Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Doney, to authorize a letter of support for the CVRPC grant application with the understanding that the proposed project will be at no cost to the municipality. Selectman Goslant believes since the first two (2) stormwater projects had their problems, he does not want to move too quickly on this one. Chair Maxwell noted applying for grant funds does not obligate the municipality to the proposed project. Selectman Doney asked about the project timeline. Mr. Currier said project engineering would take place over the winter with the construction possibly occurring next summer. Since the grant funds would not have to be expended for two (2) years, construction could be delayed to 2018 if necessary. Selectman Doney asked how much the project would cost. The current estimate is \$200,000. Selectman Goslant asked if the utility lines in the area were scheduled for replacement in the near future. Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi said they were part of a five (5) year replacement plan. **Motion passed 4-1-0, with Selectman Goslant voting in the negative.** Selectman Doney asked when the grant award would be announced. Mr. Currier said it would be by this Thanksgiving (11/24/16).

- b. **Michele Braun: Water Street Flood Hazard Mitigation Project.** Ms. Braun is the former Zoning Administrator for Northfield and she is still employed part-time by the municipality to work on FEMA-related projects that commenced during her tenure. Ms. Braun attended a meeting this morning at which the updated flood hazard mitigation plan was presented. The Friends of the Winooski will be applying for a \$238,000 grant for this project that would supplement the \$295,000 implementation grant that Northfield was awarded previously. If this grant application is successful, the funds would be used to address the problem area along Water Street where Union Brook flows into the Dog River near a sharp bend. Ms. Braun said the previously discussed CVRPC stormwater project in the area would not conflict with the updated flood hazard mitigation plan, especially if the underground structure was situated on the former Fernandez lot. This is considered to be one project with one contractor (Milone & MacBroom) even though there would be two (2) separate sources of funding. The Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) that are already in hand would be used along the riverbank south of Wall Street while the funds for which the Friends of the Winooski are applying would be used north of Wall Street. If the new grant application is unsuccessful at this time, the floodplain work south of Wall Street could be done first.

Selectman Freeman said this appears to be a good project but noted private funds also have been collected for it. Ms. Braun affirmed the Northfield High School Class of 1957, under the leadership of Sally Nadon Pedley, has created a trust fund and have encouraged their classmates make donations. She met with Ms. Pedley and other '57 alums this morning to update them on the current plans. Having these private funds on hand were very helpful when applying for grant funds as it demonstrates local support for the project. Selectman Freeman believes the '57 alums donated the funds for a park on the FEMA buyout properties and not for a flood hazard mitigation project. He also would like to see some evidence of the public input collected so far. Ms. Braun has created a website (<http://waterstreetriverpark.zohosites.com>) that provides detailed information about the project as well as soliciting additional feedback. She also has gone on Front Porch Forum, Facebook, etc. to both inform the public and obtain their views at various stages of the project. Selectman Freeman feels the feedback he has seen so far has been rather vague on what the public does and does not want put on the site.

Chair Maxwell asked what additional forms of outreach would Selectman Freeman like. Selectman Freeman thought it would be useful to circulate a survey on the current plans for a “natural playground.” Chair Maxwell would like Selectman Freeman to work with Ms. Braun in order to obtain the optimum level of public input for this project. He added there have been public meetings involving the Water Street neighborhood and other community members for the past four (4) years on this matter. Ms. Braun agreed there have been years of discussion but now there is a CDBG grant expiration date of June 30, 2017 to get the floodplain work done. There also are strict FEMA guidelines on what can be done on this site, i.e., no permanent structures, etc. Chair Maxwell would like to see this project completed so he hopes Selectman Freeman and Ms. Braun can work together to address any remaining concerns about public input. Manager Schulz said the updated flood hazard mitigation plans should be ready within three (3) weeks and will be presented to the Select Board when available.

Ms. Braun would like Select Board authorization for a letter of support for the Friends of the Winooski's grant application. If successful, the grant funds would be used to widen the channel and reduce the flooding hazard where Union Brook flows into the Dog River. This is what the project engineers recommended after looking at a number of options. Ms. Braun believes with this letter of support, there are good odds that the application will be successful. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Freeman, to authorize a letter of support for the Friends of the Winooski flood hazard mitigation grant application. **Motion passed 5-0-0.** Chair Maxwell then thanked Ms. Braun for her work to date on this project.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **September 27, 2016 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-2, with Selectmen Doney and Freeman abstaining.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #08-17.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve Warrant #08-17 in the amount of \$487,433.62. Selectman Gadbois noticed a large crushed gravel purchase and asked on which roads it was used. Manager Schulz thought this material was added to the gravel pile for later use but will check. Selectman Gadbois thought it was good the Northfield Police Department (NPD) received a grant for bicycle helmet purchases. Selectman Goslant saw a payment to fix utility damage done when the parking lot at the Fire Station was being upgraded. He understands donation funds were used but he also would like to know the total cost of this project. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Warrant #08-17A.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve Warrant #08-17A in the amount of \$275,709.31. Manager Schulz explained these were payments to cover the expenses of past water and sewer bonds. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Warrant #08-17B.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve Warrant #08-17B in the amount of \$28,775.33. Chair Maxwell noted these were payments related to the completed water projects on Central Street and King Street as well as loans taken out to repair the damage done at the Wellfield due to Irene flooding. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through September 25, 2016:** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$82,768.65. Chair Maxwell explained the higher than normal part-time expenses in the Northfield Fire Department were the annual stipends paid to its officers, i.e. Fire Chief, Fire Captains, etc. Selectman Gadbois noted a \$3355 cost for NPD overtime. Manager Schulz said NPD overtime was relatively low in July and August but has risen the past couple months due to holidays, vacations, etc. Selectman Freeman felt if NPD overtime remains a problem, perhaps the Select Board should determine if the current staffing level is a cause. Chair Maxwell believes a lot of the NPD overtime cost is due to union contract requirements. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **DRAFT Hazard Mitigation Plan.** Manager Schulz noted the second draft plan was distributed at the last meeting (09/27/16) and any feedback should be forwarded to him or CVRPC Assistant Planner Gail Aloisio by Thursday, October 20, 2016. This is a long-term plan to address and mitigate various natural and man-made hazards to which our community is subject, i.e. flooding, winter storms, etc. Chair Maxwell would like the Select Board members to forward their comments as soon as possible so the next revised draft can be approved at the next regular meeting (10/25/16). Selectman Freeman felt this was an excellent document and was especially impressed by the Hazard Mitigation Activities Matrix (pp. 31-34) that identifies potential local hazards and the actions needed to mitigate their impact.
- b. **Public Nuisance/Public Event Ordinance.** Manager Schulz felt the local public nuisance ordinance adopted in 2002 may need to be updated to address recent concerns about large parties attended by young people, etc. Before revising the current ordinance, Selectman Gadbois would like to know how many nighttime noise violation tickets have been issued in recent years, the dollar amount of fines received, etc. He felt the problem may be in enforcement and not with the ordinance itself. Manager Schulz will look into this. Chair Maxwell attended a public forum earlier this year that included Norwich University representatives and other community members that sought ways to address the problems associated with large off-campus parties. One suggestion was to make landlords more responsible for the actions of their tenants. Chair Maxwell also would like to receive statistics regarding enforcement of the current noise ordinance in order to see if it should be revised.

VIII. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **General Election Information.** As requested by Town Clerk Kim Pedley, Chair Maxwell announced that absentee ballots are available in the Town Clerk's Office for the Vermont General Election to be held on Tuesday, November 8, 2016. Registered Northfield voters also can vote absentee there, pick up their own ballots, or have ballots mailed to them. The last day to register to vote is Wednesday, November 2, 2016, by 5:00 p.m. For questions or to call for a ballot, please call Town Clerk Pedley or Assistant Town Clerk Karen Zedick at 485-5421.
- b. **Zoning Administrator Vacancy.** Selectman Freeman saw that this position was being re-advertised. He was under the impression it was to be filled from the last batch of applicants. Manager Schulz said that the applicants were interviewed but none of them had been considered fully acceptable. Selectman Freeman heard there had been one strong candidate but one Planning Commission (PC) member was adamant he could not work with this person and the other PC members did not push the matter. Manager Schulz added there had been other concerns, including the fact this applicant lives more than an hour away by car. Selectman Freeman thinks this prolonged vacancy has resulted in Northfield falling behind its neighbor communities in public planning matters. Chair Maxwell agreed filling this position is a priority.

- c. **Removal of Blue Spruce Tree.** Selectman Gadbois asked about the timeline to remove the large, dying tree on the Common. Manager Schulz said the contractor hired by Highway Foreman Trent Tucker has scheduled its removal for later this week. The Christmas lights on it have been removed in preparation. Selectman Gadbois would like the Depot Square merchants, etc. informed beforehand in case the removal causes traffic or parking disruptions, etc.
- d. **Annual Town Meeting Open Session.** Selectman Gadbois had understood the Select Board authorized the open session moved to the night before Town Meeting Day. Manager Schulz said there had been a misunderstanding when he asked the Select Board to approve this. He subsequently learned this action would require voter approval. There will be an article on the next Town Meeting Warning to obtain voter authorization for this. Chair Maxwell added Town Clerk Pedley also recommended an article on the warning that would seek voter approval to have the municipal budget and other binding action voted upon by Australian Ballot and not during the open session.
- e. **Brown Public Library (BPL) Roof.** Selectman Goslant asked what has been done since the last Select Board meeting to address the leaky roof. Manager Schulz said he is working on the roof replacement RFP and expects it to go out before the end of the week. Chair Maxwell would like the RFP to specify that the roof replacement should be done as soon as humanly possible. He also would like Manager Schulz to identify where the money for this project will come from before the next meeting.
- f. **Vermont Route 64 Paving Project.** Chair Maxwell thought the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) would be paving Vermont Route 64 this year but has seen no announcement. Manager Schulz contacted VTrans and learned that although some work on the road shoulders will be done this fall, the actual paving will not start until next spring. VTrans had planned to complete the project this year but ran out of time. However, the guardrail blocking off the east entrance to Robinson Road will be installed soon. The Select Board already has acted to “throw up” the eastern loop of the road after the residents complained about excessive speed, litter, etc.
- g. **BPL “Sip and Paint.”** Chair Maxwell said the Select Board received an email from a resident complaining about this upcoming event as wine will be served on municipal property. The writer had assumed alcohol use was prohibited on municipal property and worried about any liability issues should something bad happen. Chair Maxwell would like Manager Schulz to look into this and advise the Select Board if a formal alcohol ban policy should be developed. Selectman Freeman cautioned against overreacting to one email when all the facts are not known.
- h. **Household Hazardous Waste Collection.** The next collection event will be held behind the Northfield Fire Station (128 Wall Street) on Saturday, October 22, 2016, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This event is sponsored by the Mountain Alliance and Casella Waste Management and is only for residents of Randolph, Brookfield, Braintree, and Northfield. For a full list of the items that will and will not be accepted, please check the advertisement in this week’s *Northfield News* or call Denise King at Casella (802-888-2797).

IX. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT.

- a. **FEMA Buyout Properties.** Selectman Goslant saw in Manager Schulz’s report there are three (3) additional buyout properties. Manager Schulz confirmed this was the case. One homeowner originally considered having his structure raised to meet floodplain requirements but later decided to accept the buyout instead. Selectman Goslant asked if it was certain all three (3) structures would be razed. Manager Schulz said it was possible a property owner could back out at the last minute but this is unlikely as all the paperwork has been completed. He will look into the demolition timeline.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).

- a. **Steve Davis: Union Brook Road Paving.** Mr. Davis was grateful to the Select Board that the worst parts of the road had been provided with a shim coat. He added, however, the approximately seven thousand feet (7000’) of paving affected only about a quarter of the road’s total length. Mr. Davis would like the Select Board to consider doubling (or even tripling) the amount designated for highway paving when the FY 2017/2018 budget is developed later this year. He felt the municipality is so far behind on paving projects that something drastic needs to be done.

XI. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Selectman Doney, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:40 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 October 25, 2016.