

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of February 28, 2017

- 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, Fire Chief Peter J. DeMasi, Ambulance Chief Lawton Rutter, Patrick DeMasi (Utility Superintendent), Arlington Supplee (Chair, Board of Listers), Stephen Fitzhugh (Chair, Planning Commission), William Smith (Chair, Development Review Board), Laura Hill-Eubanks (Conservation Commission), Christine Barnes (Conservation Commission), Roy Ward (E.H. Danson Associates), Gretchen Elias (Good Beginnings), Mark Podgwaite (Northfield Ambulance Service), Sara Nevin (Good Beginnings), Dan Pudvah (Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice), Devereaux Simon (Capstone Community Action), Kreig Pinkham (Washington County Youth Service Bureau), Robert Danaher (Washington County Youth Service Bureau), Kaylan Sweet (O'Maddi's Deli & Café), Katrina DeMasi, Julie Goodrich, Michael Eriksen (Craft Beer Armory), and Steve Davis.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- a. VCDP/CDBG Combined EMS Facility Grant.** Manager Schulz said the municipality received a state grant a couple years ago in order to conduct a feasibility study regarding a proposed combined facility to house the Northfield Fire Department (NFD) and the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) on municipal property on Wall Street. The Project Architect, Roy Ward from E.H. Danson Associates, has created preliminary plans with cost estimates. Holding this public hearing is one of the grant requirements and Mr. Ward is present to provide an overview of his findings and to answer any questions. Mr. Ward has studied the existing Fire Station on Wall Street and has worked with NAS Chief Lawton Rutter and NFD Chief Peter J. DeMasi regarding their views on what the combined facility should include, etc. There is some urgency for this project since the current NAS facility is located on Dog River Drive in a flood zone. In addition, Mr. Ward's inspection of the Fire Station discovered some serious problems in need of repair. After looking at a number of options, Mr. Ward felt that the best solution would be to co-locate the emergency services on Wall Street. The existing Police Station adjacent to the Fire Station would not be affected by this project.

Mr. Ward noted the Fire Station was built in 1988 and has not been upgraded since then. There is space on the second floor that is used for training and storage but the building's sprinkler system does not cover this area. Therefore, this space cannot be used for assemblies of more than thirty (30) people because it is not up to code. The new NAS facility would be sited to the west of the Fire Station and there would be a connector section between the two that would have a reception area, office space, storage areas, etc. There would be parking spaces both in front and behind the combined facility. The connector area also would include an elevator to provide handicap access to the second floor, which would be brought up to code with an upgraded sprinkler system, etc. The current washroom in the Fire Station would be improved along with the hazmat storage area. Mr. Ward said the Fire Station now has vinyl siding that might be concealing rotting wood and other problems. Some drywall would have to be replaced along with the overhead doors.

Chair Maxwell asked if there were any questions for Mr. Ward regarding his presentation. Selectman Freeman did not have any questions at this time but was impressed with the thoroughness of the presentation. Mr. Ward said this project had been considered in various concepts since 2014. NAS Chief Rutter confirmed this has been a long process. The focus has been creating a durable building that will not have significant maintenance costs. Mr. Ward said creating a durable building would increase the initial cost but there would be substantial savings over time. He added the site plans are very preliminary so alterations are possible. Mr. Ward said the estimated cost of bringing the Fire Station up to code is about \$1,000,000. In addition to the problems already mentioned, the building's heating and lighting systems need serious upgrades. The power system will need to be upgraded to three-phase due to the elevator installation.

Selectman Goslant asked if there were any grant funds available to help pay for the total project costs, which now is estimated at \$2,700,000. Chief Rutter said he has been looking for any state or federal grant opportunities. Unfortunately, USDA Rural Development grant eligibility is based on local median income and Northfield's is \$57,000, which is just over the \$55,000 limit. Chief Rutter has had similar problems with other grant applications. There is a lot of competition for grant funds that would cover facility construction. Since the EMS facility would provide regional coverage, Chief Rutter has tried to have the local median income figure adjusted downward when the lower income areas of Roxbury, West Berlin, etc. are included but has not been successful to date. He will continue working on this track along with continuing to look for other grant opportunities. Should this be unsuccessful, Chief Rutter thought local benefactors could be approached for contributions.

Chair Maxwell noted if a thirty (30) year bond was obtained to cover project costs, the annual note payment would be about \$170,000. He asked if the Fire Station upgrades needed to be done within the next five (5) years. Mr. Ward said there were serious deficiencies that had to be addressed as soon as possible. He added that if the Fire Station's second floor is covered by the sprinkler system and made ADA-compliant, the training area could become a community space used for public functions. Chair Maxwell asked if it might be better to start from scratch with an all-new facility. Mr. Ward felt that upgrading the Fire Station and making it a major component of the combined facility would be the more economical approach. He added that the project estimate includes a \$130,000 contingency fund that may not be needed if no surprises arise during construction. Selectman Goslant noted that each year's municipal budget includes CIP funding for building improvements but the amounts set aside are never enough to cover major problems.

Chair Maxwell asked what was the next step for this proposal. Manager Schulz said the Select Board will need to decide soon whether to proceed with the project as presented tonight, whether it will need to be scaled back or delayed, etc. Chair Maxwell said the decision should be made within the next thirty (30) days. He then thanked Mr. Ward for his presentation.

There being no other comments or questions, this public hearing closed at 7:37 p.m.

- b. Warned Australian Ballot Articles.** Manager Schulz said there is an annual requirement that the Select Board hold a public hearing prior to Town Meeting so that the public can ask questions about the articles to be voted upon by Australian Ballot. Most of these involve funding requests from local non-profit organizations and each of them have been invited to attend this public hearing. Chair Maxwell then went through the list of Australian ballot articles to see if there were any questions or comments.

Article 10. Shall the voters authorize the Select Board to enter into tax stabilization contracts fixing and maintaining the valuation of certain grand list properties, fixing and maintaining the rates of tax applicable to such properties, fixing the amount of money which shall be paid as an annual tax upon such properties, and/or fixing the tax applicable to such property at a percentage of the annual tax, as authorized by 24 VSA §2741, provided that the term of any such contracts shall not exceed seven (7) years? (Australian Ballot) Selectman Freeman has been involved with the Economic Development Committee for several years and the Committee advocates for tax stabilization agreement authorization as a vital tool for local economic development. If this article is approved by voters (two-thirds vote required), Northfield would be able to compete with neighboring communities (such as Berlin) in attracting new businesses or expanding existing ones. Chair Maxwell noted that this article fell just short of the two-thirds requirement last year so the Select Board put it on the warning again this year. He and the other Select Board members support its passage.

Article 11. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of an amount not to exceed twenty-one thousand dollars (\$21,000) for FY18 towards the Northfield Commuter year-round commuter with service between Northfield and Montpelier? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 12. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$12,400 for the Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice? (Australian Ballot) CVHHH Executive Director Dan Pudvah thanked Northfield voters for their past support for CVHHH and the services it provides. There is a breakdown of the CVHHH services provided to Northfield residents on page 31 of the 2017 Northfield Town Report. This includes home health care, hospice care, long-term care, and maternal child health.

Article 13. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$6,000 for the Boys & Girls Club of Northfield under the leadership of the Washington County Youth Service Bureau/Boys & Girls Club? (Australian Ballot) Kreig Pinkham is the Executive Director for the Washington County Youth Services Bureau and he said the funds requested cover a myriad of services and activities for local youth noted in detail in the Northfield Town Report (pp. 26-28). He added a major focus in the coming year will be to engage more local youth in these programs. Robert Danaher is a recent Norwich University graduate and now is the Northfield Teen Center Director. He said in the coming month, there will be alternating Teen Center programs for creative writing and photography as well as cooking classes every Friday afternoon. There also will be presentations including arts and crafts; foreign films; etc. These activities are made available to the youths using the facility but there is no requirement that they take part. Mr. Danaher is hoping to work more with the local schools to inform local youths of the services and activities offered at the Teen Center. Mr. Pinkham has been in contact with Northfield youth for some time and has been informed that there really aren't any other local services tailored to their needs.

Article 14. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$3,000 for the Central Vermont Council on Aging? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 15. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$2,800 for the Good Samaritan Haven? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 16. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$2,500 for the Washington County Diversion Program? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 17. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,250 for the People's Health and Wellness Clinic? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 18. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,200 for Central Vermont Adult Basic Education? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 19. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,200 for the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 20. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for Capstone Community Action, Inc. (formerly Central Vermont Community Action Council)? (Australian Ballot) Devereaux Simon said the Northfield community has been very supportive of Capstone, which provides low-income residents with various forms of assistance such as food shelves, emergency heating, reliable transportation, tax preparation, etc. Please see the Northfield Town Report (pp. 28-29) for a full listing.

Article 21. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for Circle (formerly Battered Women's Services and Shelter)? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 22. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for Good Beginnings of Central Vermont? (Australian Ballot) Gretchen Elias is the Executive Director of Good Beginnings and Sara Nevin serves on its Board of Directors and was one of its founders when it began in Northfield in 1991. Ms. Nevin said Good Beginnings was located in Northfield for its first twelve (12) years but moved to Montpelier when its operations expanded throughout Central Vermont. Ms. Elias has young children herself so she understands how new parents can get overwhelmed and need additional information and assistance. In the past fiscal year, Good Beginnings had thirteen (13) referrals from Northfield residents. Volunteers often spend about two (2) hours per home visit as well as providing warm spaces for parent support, parenting workshops, etc. Ms. Elias and Ms. Nevin are grateful for the support Northfield voters have provided Good Beginnings in the past and ask for their support again this year.

Article 23. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for the Vermont Center for Independent Living? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 24. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$800 for the Family Center of Washington County? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 25. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$600 for Home Share Now? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 26. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$600 for Prevent Child Abuse Vermont? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 27. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$500 for Arts Bus, Inc.? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 28. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$350 for the Friends of the Winooski River? (Australian Ballot) Steve Fitzhugh supports the work of Friends of the Winooski River and noted that our Dog River is an important part of the Winooski watershed. He added Friends of the Winooski River provided much assistance to Northfield after Tropical Storm Irene to help restore the wellfield after it was flooded. Mr. Fitzhugh also said Friends of the Winooski River has applied for several grants on behalf of Northfield for projects including riverbank restoration, flood mitigation, etc.

Article 29. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$350 for the Sexual Assault Crisis Team of Washington County? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 30. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$300 for the Green Up Vermont? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 31. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$250 for OUR House of Central Vermont? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

There being no other comments or questions, this public hearing closed at 8:00 p.m.

- c. **Northfield Municipal Zoning Bylaws Update.** Chair Maxwell said this was the second public hearing for the revised zoning bylaws. At the first one (02/14/17), Planning Commission Chair Stephen Fitzhugh explained the municipality's zoning bylaws, last updated in 2011, had been amended to account for the 2014 merger of Northfield Town and Northfield Village; to comply with the latest version of the Northfield Municipal Plan adopted in 2014; to accommodate the change last year from a Zoning Board of Adjustment to a Development Review Board (DRB); to comply with recent changes in state law, etc. There had been some questions from a potential developer who had some suggested changes as well. William Smith is the DRB Chair and he asked that this public hearing and any other action on the proposed zoning bylaw changes be tabled until the DRB is able to meet and provide its own recommendations regarding downtown development, etc. Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to table any action on the proposed zoning bylaw changes until the DRB is able to provide its input. Chair Maxwell said the Select Board is also waiting for information regarding the Berlin DRB and its operations. He does not want to create (or perpetuate) the impression that Northfield is not business friendly. He asked Mr. Fitzhugh if he had any objections to this delay. He did not. Selectman Freeman has some suggestions of his own that he will forward to the DRB. He also would not oppose bringing in a professional consultant if that would help the process. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

IV. SET/ADJUST AGENDA. There were no changes to the posted agenda.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)

- a. **Arlington Supplee, Board of Listers: Closing the 2016 As-Billed Grand List.** Mr. Supplee said the state legislature added a new requirement that the Select Board (as well as the Board of Listers) needed to formally certify that there was no outstanding litigation regarding the approved Grand List. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve and sign the 2016 As-Billed Grand List.

Selectman Freeman asked what constituted a Grand List appeal. Mr. Supplee said there would have to be a formal appeal of a Board of Tax Abatement decision that has been forwarded to either the Superior Court or the State Appraiser. This did not happen last year. **Motion passed 3-0-1, with Selectman Freeman abstaining.**

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **February 14, 2017 (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 #17-17.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve Warrant #17-17 in the amount of \$191,447.58. Selectman Gadbois asked about a \$3064.38 payment for "Radio Site Lease." Manager Schulz said this was an annual expense to allow the municipality's radio towers on Turkey Hill to remain on private property. Under the current lease agreement, the amount increases three percent (3%) each year. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through February 12, 2017.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$83,700.24. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VIII. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

- a. **Liquor License Application**
 1. **Craft Beer Armory.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the liquor license application. Manager Schulz noted this is a new business. Michael Erikson, the owner of Craft Beer Armory, said his establishment would be retail selling craft beer for takeout only. There would be no alcohol consumption on site. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Liquor License Renewals**
 1. **Rustic Restaurant.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
 2. **South Village Mobil.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. **Outside Consumption Permits.** At the last meeting, approval of these permits had been tabled until it could be confirmed that conditions of serving hours, dates, and locations were the same as last year. This has been confirmed.
 1. **American Legion Club.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the outside consumption permit. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
 2. **O'Maddi's Deli & Café.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the outside consumption permit. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

IX. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Police Chief Search Update.** Selectman Goslant serves on the Police Chief Search Committee and he said a new Police Chief has been selected who has accepted the position. A formal announcement will have to be postponed for a few days so all the paperwork can be finalized, etc. Selectman Goslant is pleased the Police Chief Search Committee met its goal of being able to introduce the new Police Chief to Northfield residents at Town Meeting Day.
- b. **Appointment of Deputy Health Officer.** Manager Schulz said Northfield has been without a Deputy Health Office since Lawton Rutter left the position to become Health Officer. Northfield EMT Meggan McCusker now has volunteered to serve. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to appoint Meggan McCusker as Deputy Health Officer. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

X. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Selectman Matthew Gadbois.** Chair Maxwell wanted to thank Selectman Gadbois for his two (2) years of service on the Select Board.
- b. **Social Media Policy.** Selectman Gadbois asked if the municipality's Social Media Policy was being enforced. He noted a recent posting on Front Porch Forum (02/25/17) stating that the union representing the Northfield Police Department (New England Police Benevolent Association Local 406) had endorsed Select Board candidates. Selectman Gadbois did not feel this was appropriate since negotiations between the Select Board and the NPD regarding the new union contract are ongoing. Manager Schulz will look into this. He said the primary focus of the policy was to prevent inappropriate language, etc. on municipal websites but he will check to see if political endorsements on non-municipal websites are prohibited.
- c. **New Northfield Logo.** Selectman Gadbois noted that the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN) has designed a community logo that is being sold on t-shirts as a fundraising project. He asked if there were any plans for the municipality to adopt the logo. Selectman Freeman, who works with the NCDN, said there were not.
- d. **Town Meeting Candidate Forums.** Selectman Goslant said the NPD union had hosted a well-attended forum for the candidates last week (02/22/17) in the Community Room. Another forum is scheduled for tomorrow night (03/01/17) at Good Measure Brewing on East Street from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. All four (4) Select Board candidates will be in attendance. Selectman Freeman felt the first forum was very successful and the intention is for members of the public to meet the candidates.

XI. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT.

- a. **Mud Season Road Maintenance.** Selectman Goslant saw an update in the Town Manager's Report on the backroads following the big thaw over the past couple weeks. He is very concerned about how bad Mud Season will be this year and asked if the Highway Department will be prepared. Manager Schulz believes that it will. He added there were a couple road washouts over the weekend. He received calls from grateful residents for the Highway crew's quick response. Selectman Goslant recently inspected Lovers Lanes and found it in very bad shape. He feels the municipality may need to close a few unpaved roads to through traffic so that they won't get torn up.

XII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Julie Goodrich, Select Board Candidate.** Ms. Goodrich said she was unable to attend last week's candidate's forum as she was in Virginia on a previously scheduled trip to see her new granddaughter. She will be attending tomorrow night's candidates' forum.

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

The Board went into executive session at 8:45 p.m.

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

The Board came out of executive session at 9:15 p.m. No action was taken.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:16 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 March 28, 2017.