

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

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Kenneth W. Goslant, Selectmen Lynn Doney, Nathan Freeman, Julie H. Goodrich, and K. David Maxwell. Also present were Town Manager Jeffrey Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Ambulance Chief Lawton Rutter, Megan McCusker (NAVI), Stephen Fitzhugh (Chair, Planning Commission), Sally Davidson (Recreation Committee), Laura Hill-Eubanks (Conservation Commission), William Smith (Law Office of William S. Smith), Elroy Hill, and Steve Davis.

Chair Goslant 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. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** William Veve and Victor Veve from VWSD LLC, who were to address the Select Board tonight regarding their proposed 500kw net metering solar project on Bull Run, were not present. If they do not arrive before the end of the meeting, their presentation will be rescheduled.

- IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):** None.

V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

- a. Ambulance Chief Lawton Rutter.** Chief Rutter reported the run volume for the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) remains strong with more than seventy (70) calls for service so far this month. He estimated that the total run volume for fiscal year 2016/2017 may be between 75 and 100 more than the previous one. Although this will bring in more revenue, there will be accompanying increases in material and personnel expenses. In addition, the outsourcing of ambulance billing is providing more revenue than had been expected. Chief Rutter expects call volume to further increase as the weather heats up and more people get out of the house, etc. There also will be more stand-by work with additional sporting events, graduations, etc.

Chief Rutter said that he now has more accurate numbers regarding the purchase of a new chassis for the 2008 ambulance unit. He should have a draft RFP ready for the Select Board's next meeting. He also is actively pursuing additional revenue sources for NAS including contacting neighboring communities about their current ambulance coverage agreements. Chief Rutter feels that NAS would be able to offer them better service at competitive prices. He concluded by noting that NAS staffing levels remain good.

Selectman Goodrich asked about the plans to replace the 2008 ambulance unit. Chief Rutter said the idea is to retain and remount the current box body on a new chassis. This is much less expensive than purchasing an entirely new unit. Chief Rutter added that he has discovered that the price of new ambulance units has roughly doubled over the past ten (10) years. He added that the old chassis might have some trade-in value.

Chair Goslant noted that NAS call volume appears to have risen each year with corresponding increases in revenue. He feels that it is important to plan ahead for additional increases as the local population ages. Chief Rutter said he and his department have been doing long-term planning based on such projections.

Chief Rutter then turned to his main reason for being here tonight: to present and explain to the Select Board the newly revised bylaws for Northfield Ambulance Volunteers, Inc. (NAVI). This is a non-profit organization started in 1992 that provides manpower for the NAS, conducts fundraisers on its behalf, performs community outreach on health and safety concerns, etc. The NAVI bylaws, which provide membership and organizational rules, have not been updated since 2006. Since NAVI is an independent agency, Chief Rutter is asking that the Select Board members acknowledge receipt of the updated bylaws (not approve). He is willing to answer any questions they might have.

Selectman Maxwell asked if NAVI is audited like any other 501(k) non-profit. Chief Rutter confirmed there were professional audits every five (5) years or so. This is the normal timeframe for non-profits of this size. In the rules regarding membership, Selectman Goodrich noted NAVI is forbidden to "discriminate based on race, sex, gender, etc." She thought it might be good to better define what the "etc." means. Chief Rutter will make this suggestion to the NAVI Board. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Freeman, for the Select Board to acknowledge receipt of the revised NAVI bylaws. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **February 21, 2017 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Doney, seconded by Selectman Freeman, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-2, with Selectmen Goodrich and Maxwell abstaining.**
- b. **February 28, 2017 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Freeman, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-2, with Selectmen Doney and Goodrich abstaining.**
- c. **March 16, 2017 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Maxwell seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the minutes. Selectman Freeman was unable to attend this meeting and he had some questions regarding filling a vacancy on the Board of Listers that resulted from a resignation (Francis Bell). He wanted to know if the vacancy had been advertised before the replacement Lister (Chris Bradley) was appointed. Chair Goslant said such vacancies normally are advertised but the Select Board was informed by Lister Chair Arlington Supplee that the Listers were entering their busy season and did not want reduced manpower for the foreseeable future. Since Mr. Bradley had served as a Lister prior to Town Meeting Day, there were no objections to his appointment. Selectman Freeman said he had no questions regarding Mr. Bradley's qualifications but merely had concerns about the appointment process. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Selectman Freeman abstaining.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #19-17.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve Warrant #19-17 in the amount of \$215,611.66. Selectman Doney had questions about the purchase of a new pistol for the Northfield Police Department (NPD). Manager Schulz said that this was part of the normal practice of phasing out older weapons over time. The old pistol was sold to a gun dealer. Selectman Doney noted another NPD purchase of \$780 for shoulder patches, etc. He felt that with the new Police Chief coming on board next month, it might have been better to wait for his input on this purchase. Chair Goslant agreed that the timing of this purchase could have been better. Selectman Goodrich asked about a \$2,550 purchase of boots and helmets for the Northfield Fire Department (NFD). Manager Schulz said this was another phasing out of old equipment as well as providing turnout gear for new volunteers. Selectman Goodrich noted the Municipal Building and Brown Public Library (BPL) received new water heaters at the same time. Manager Schulz said the old BPL water heater had broken down and had to be replaced. A low cost water heater was purchased for the Municipal Building so that the employee's kitchen area would have hot water for the first time. The heaters themselves were inexpensive but there was a fair amount of installation labor. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through March 12, 2017.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Freeman, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$85,388.28. Chair Goslant noted the higher than normal amount of Highway Department overtime (\$3,422) for this timeframe due to recent snow and ice storms. He saw this as proof that the municipality does not compromise when it comes to public safety (despite the added cost). **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

- a. **Liquor License Renewal Application: Champlain Farms.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Goodrich, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

IX. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Draft MOU - Roadside Tree Inventory.** Manager Schulz had provided the Select Board members with a draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation (FPR) and the Town of Northfield. Approving the MOU would allow for an inventory of trees and other roadside vegetation in Northfield followed by the development of local management plans for roadside clearing for public safety reasons. Manager Schulz said there would be no cost to the municipality and the MOU would not be legally binding. This issue arose last year when there was some controversy over the municipality's agreement with a private contractor (Limlaw Pulpwood) to clear some roadsides in exchange for the downed trees. There could be concerns that agreeing to the MOU might hinder future roadside clearance efforts.

Chair Goslant has served on the Highway Committee for several years and he believes that the agreement with Limlaw was done properly. The local Tree Warden (Russ Barrett) was brought in to identify the roadside foliage that needed to be trimmed back and the adjacent property owners were contacted before any work was done. He does not believe that anyone living on the targeted roads has complained since the work was completed.

Selectman Freeman feels that the Highway Committee has done good work but also believes that tree removal is a sensitive issue in Vermont. Many residents (and visitors) look forward to the foliage canopy each fall. Selectman Freeman believes approving the MOU would establish clear guidelines for future roadside clearance that would be responsive to public concerns. He does not feel that the MOU would prevent needed roadside work. Chair Goslant believes that the municipality already has acted responsively by bringing in the Tree Warden and conducting public notifications. He does not want private contractors discouraged from doing roadside work in Northfield.

Selectman Freeman would like to delay any action until Mr. Barrett has been able to provide his input. Selectman Doney agrees with Chair Goslant that approving the MOU might hinder future efforts to deal with roadside overgrowth. Laura Hill-Eubanks from the Northfield Conservation Commission feels that the program the FPR has proposed would be both educational and informative on how best to take care of trees in the public right-of-way, how to identify which trees should be removed and which should be preserved, etc.

Selectman Maxwell believes that the municipality now has an established process of working with the local Tree Warden to identify problem areas and creating action plans. He would like to continue with that. Manager Schulz said he brought this draft MOU to the Select Board members for informational purposes and to see if this is something they might consider acting upon. It is clear that the current Select Board consensus is not to go forward on this.

b. Appointment of Various Town Officials. The terms of several Select Board-appointed Town positions will expire at the end of this month. The vacancies were advertised to the general public and the current office holders were contacted to determine whether they would like to be reappointed.

1. Conservation Commission. Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to reappoint Nathaniel Miller to a new four-year term. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

2. Development Review Board. Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to reappoint Timothy Donahue III to a new five-year term. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

3. Planning Commission. There were two (2) four-year seats and one (1) one-year seat expiring at the end of the month. The Planning Commission (PC) met earlier this month and recommended that Paul Brown, Laura Hill-Eubanks, and Ruth Ruttenberg be appointed to the four-year seats and Arlington Supplee be reappointed to the one-year seat. This will (at least temporarily) increase the number of Planning Commissioners from five (5) to six (6). Selectman Freeman thinks this might cause problems in getting enough members to show up for quorums. Also, having an even number of members might cause problems when votes are taken. Stephen Fitzhugh, the outgoing PC Chair, believes that with last year's establishment of the Development Review Board (DRB), the PC now focuses more on long-term planning so the PC doesn't really hold binding votes anymore. He also does not feel that expanding the PC by one person will lead to lack of quorums, etc. State law states that the PC could have between three (3) and nine (9) members. In addition, Mr. Fitzhugh said since there will be three (3) new Planning Commissioners, the PC would like Mr. Supplee reappointed in the interest of continuity. Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Doney, to appoint Paul Brown, Laura Hill-Eubanks, and Ruth Ruttenberg to the PC for four-year terms. **Motion passed 5-0-0.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to reappoint Arlington Supplee to the PC for an additional year. **Motion passed 4-1-0, with Selectman Freeman voting in the negative.**

4. **Recreation Committee.** Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to reappoint Bruce Wright to a new three-year term. **Motion passed 5-0-0.** Scott Amell's term on the Recreation Committee also expires this month but he has asked to be appointed for only one more year. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to reappoint Scott Amell to the Recreation Committee for an additional year. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
 5. **Tree Warden.** Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to reappoint Russ Barrett as Tree Warden for another one-year term. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
 6. **Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) Representative.** Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to reappoint Laura Hill-Eubanks as Northfield's CVRPC Representative for another one-year term. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
 7. **CVRPC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC).** This position has been vacant for a couple years. Manager Schulz would be willing to represent Northfield at TAC meetings but they conflict with regular Select Board meetings (4th Tuesday of the month). Ms. Hill-Eubanks said the CVRPC now is looking at changing the TAC meeting schedule in order to get more participation. With that in mind, Manager Schulz would like to be appointed. Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to appoint Jeff Schulz as Northfield's CVRPC TAC Representative for a one-year term. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Development Review Board Vacancy.** Manager Schulz reported that DRB member Leslie Skinner has resigned and the DRB would like Paul Brown, who has been serving as an alternate member, appointed as his replacement. Mr. Skinner's five-year term has one year remaining. There is no legal impediment to Mr. Brown serving on both the PC and DRB. In fact, Mr. Fitzhugh felt Mr. Brown could serve as a valuable liaison between the two boards. Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to appoint Paul Brown to serve the remaining one year of a five-year DRB position. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
 - d. **First Constable Vacancy.** This position has been vacant for a few years but long-time Northfield resident Richard Wobby recently submitted a letter of interest. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to appoint Richard Wobby as First Constable. This is an annual appointment. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
 - e. **Northfield Observances, Inc. Request to Block off Common over Labor Day Weekend.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to grant Northfield Observances' request to block off the Northfield Common from through traffic starting on Friday, September 1, 2017, at 6:00 p.m. and lasting through Monday, September 4, 2017. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
 - f. **Northfield Observances, Inc. Request for Labor Day Weekend Car Show.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to grant Northfield Observances' request to hold a car show in the Kenyon Hardware parking lot on Sunday, September 3, 2017, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This would require closing Water Street to through traffic from North Main Street to Carpenter Street. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
 - g. **Northfield Observances, Inc. Request for Labor Day Parade Parking Ban.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to grant Northfield Observances' request to impose a parking ban along the Labor Day Parade route (Main Street from Crescent Avenue to Water Street) on Monday, September 4, 2017, starting at 7:30 a.m. and concluding with the parade's end. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
 - h. **Northfield Observances, Inc. Request for Labor Day Coin Drop.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to grant Northfield Observances' request to hold a coin drop at two locations on Main Street on Monday, September 4, 2017, starting at 9:00 a.m. and concluding at 4:00 p.m. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
 - i. **Rabbit Hollow Road Bridge.** Local attorney William Smith was tasked by Manager Schulz to determine whether the municipality or the New England Central Railroad (NECR) is responsible for the maintenance (and repair) of the now-closed Rabbit Hollow Road Bridge. Mr. Smith has researched this matter and found valuable information in an old copy of the *Northfield News* archived by the Northfield Historical Society. Mr. Smith learned the bridge was built in 1908 by the Central Vermont Railroad (CVRR) and its future maintenance became the sole responsibility of the CVRR and its successors. Mr. Smith has transmitted this information to the NECR attorney and the Vermont Transportation Board. NECR now has proposed to pay to have the bridge repair work performed, which must be approved by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans). Since there are legal issues involved, Mr. Smith would like to discuss this further with the Select Board in executive session (see below).

X. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Economic Development Committee.** Selectman Freeman noted the committee will meet tomorrow night (03/29/17) at 6:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building. Since the committee has ambitious goals this year, the intention is to meet twice a month and recruit more members. Chair Goslant suggested that perhaps Norwich University (NU) business students could be recruited to make suggestions on how to better market Northfield, etc.
- b. **Municipal Parks Spring Cleanup.** Selectman Doney repeated his announcement from the previous Select Board meeting that the Recreation Committee will be asking volunteers to show up at the Memorial and Falls parks on Sunday, April 23, 2017, in order to perform some park cleanup, minor repairs, etc. in exchange for a free lunch. Selectman Doney has been working on the dugout doors already and they should be fixed tomorrow.
- c. **New Police Chief.** Selectman Doney noted the new Northfield Police Chief, William Jennings, will come on board next week. A welcoming get-together for him has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 5, 2017, from noon to 2:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building. Selectman Doney hopes residents will come in to meet the new Police Chief.
- d. **Sewer Line Project.** Selectman Goodrich noted the work being done on the sewer lines near the Common and asked what its purpose was and when it will end. Manager Schulz said leaks were found in the sewer pipes so they are being filled with plastic sleeves that expand when steam-heated to fill any gaps. This is a lot less expensive than installing new pipes. The work on the Common itself will be done at night to avoid disruptions to the businesses. The whole project should be completed in a few days. Similar work was done on Water Street earlier in the month.
- e. **Norwich University Men's Hockey Team.** Selectman Maxwell wanted to congratulate the NU Men's Hockey team for winning the NCAA Division III Championship at Utica, New York, last weekend. This is their fourth championship (2000, 2003, 2010, and 2017). Chair Goslant added that this is big achievement for a university this size and that the NU Women's Hockey team won the Women's Division III Championship in 2011. Selectman Maxwell was in Utica himself last weekend and he estimated about 1,200 Central Vermonters were in attendance. Chair Goslant agreed that Northfield was well represented over the championship weekend.
- f. **VTrans Vermont Route 12A Roadwork.** Chair Goslant saw a notice that VTrans will restart its work on Vermont Route 12A the week of April 10, 2017. This is an extensive project with drainage, grading, paving, etc. This will cause some traffic disruptions but the results will be good for some time.

XI. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Municipal Pool Leak.** Chair Goslant saw in Manager Schulz's report that there is a leak at the Municipal Pool. Manager Schulz said that the leak is on the pool deck rather than in the pool itself. Water Department employees should be able to fix it themselves before the pool reopens in June.

XII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED). There was none.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a legal matter with Manager Schulz and attorney William Smith present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

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

Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Doney, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:10 p.m. No action was taken.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Doney, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:15 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 April 11, 2017.