

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**Minutes of May 9, 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, Stephen Hatch (Zoning Administrator), Arlington Supplee (Board of Listers/Planning Commission), Carolyn Stevens, Elroy Hill, and Steve Davis.

Chair Goslant 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):** None.

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. April 25, 2017 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Goodrich, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

**VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. Warrant #22-17.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Freeman, to approve Warrant #22-17 in the amount of \$834,211.80. Selectman Doney asked about a payment for "Drone School." Manager Schulz said Norwich University (NU) offered this training to the Northfield Ambulance Service as part of search and rescue emergency management. Selectman Doney noted a \$14,689 bill for repairs to the Western Star truck. Manager Schulz said there is an insurance claim for this. The truck hit a sewer cover that damaged the plow and front end. Selectman Doney asked about invoices from Roux Electric to install power to the new water heaters in the Municipal Building and Brown Public Library. Manager Schulz said more electrical work was required for the hookup than first thought. Selectman Doney commended Highway Foreman Trent Tucker and the Town Mechanic for installing a new gas tank at a reduced cost. Selectman Goodrich asked about tax refunds paid to residents. Manager Schulz believes these were property tax "prebates." Selectman Goodrich noted the new fire pumper truck payment for \$410,743 on the warrant. She asked if the vehicle has been delivered. Manager Schulz said Fire Chief Peter J. DeMasi would hand over the check to the manufacturer on site (Florida) after he has fully inspected the vehicle. If all is correct, the vehicle will be driven to Vermont by a dealership driver. Chair Goslant noted of the total warrant amount, about half was for the new fire truck and most of the remaining balance was for power purchases for the Northfield Electric Department. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through April 23, 2017.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Freeman, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$81,673.46. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

**VII. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION**

- a. Liquor License Renewal Application: The Woods at Wihakowi.** Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. Outside Consumption Permit: The Woods at Wihakowi.** Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the outside consumption permit. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

**VIII. SELECT BOARD**

- a. Approval of Town Zoning Bylaw Amendments.** Motion by Selectman Goodrich, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve the Town zoning bylaw amendments as prepared by the Planning Commission and presented to the Select Board. Zoning Administrator Stephen Hatch noted at the second public hearing the Select Board held on this matter (04/11/17), Development Review Board (DRB) Chair William Smith provided a number of suggested changes to the draft amendments. These included eliminating building height restrictions in high-density zones, relaxation of parking spaces requirements attached to new construction, etc.

The Select Board then asked that the DRB suggested changes be forwarded to the Planning Commission for its consideration. Mr. Hatch reported the PC at their last meeting (04/17/17) decided not to incorporate the DRB suggestions into the draft amendments submitted for Select Board approval.

Selectman Freeman is disappointed that the PC did not fully consider the DRB suggestions. He would like to table approval of the proposed zoning bylaw amendments until the next regular meeting (05/23/17) so that the reasons behind this decision can be clarified. Selectman Freeman added that despite the public input provided at the two (2) public hearings held by the Select Board, there have been no changes made to the document that was first presented to the Select Board in January 2017. Selectman Maxwell asked what would result from this two week delay. Selectman Freeman said that a final draft, which may or may not include the DRB suggestions, could be prepared for Select Board approval. Mr. Hatch warned if any "substantive" changes were made in the document, the whole process of holding public hearings, etc. would need to be restarted. Selectman Freeman doesn't mind any slight delay if it results in a more business-friendly document being approved.

Chair Goslant noted that the Select Board was allowed to make minor changes without restarting the approval process. Selectman Freeman would like some of the DRB suggestions incorporated into the final document. Manager Schulz does not believe that the DRB requested changes fall under the category of "substantive." In addition, the DRB always has the ability to grant variances on a case-by-case basis. Selectman Freeman is willing to assist with revising the current draft to include the DRB suggestions intended to encourage economic development. He also would like to see Northfield Falls reclassified as a high-density zone since it is possible that the area will be hooked up to municipal sewer in coming years. The PC now has turned its focus on updating the Town Plan so it need not be further involved in the process (nor have interest in doing so).

Mr. Hatch said the current Northfield Zoning Regulations were adopted in 2011 and were written for a community split between Town and Village. New bylaws need to be adopted as soon as possible that would incorporate all the changes that occurred when Northfield Town and Northfield Village merged in 2014. In addition, until last year Northfield had a Zoning Board of Adjustment but now has the DRB. There are other changes that incorporate changes in state law, etc. Selectman Freeman still wants to table approval until a finalized version can be prepared for Select Board approval. Selectman Doney is leery of further delays and is ready to approve the current version tonight.

Arlington Supplee has served on the Planning Commission since April 2005. Of the six (6) now serving, three (3) PC members were appointed in March 2017. Mr. Supplee said it was the consensus of the PC at its last meeting that the DRB suggestions should not be considered this late in the process. Otherwise, the whole document should be reopened for revision and the approval process started anew. One PC member has a number of other concerns with the document but does not want the PC to return to square one given how long the previous PC members worked on the current draft. The PC also looked into the possibility of rezoning Northfield Falls as high-density but felt there were serious clean water issues until the area is connected to the municipal sewer system. Mr. Supplee noted the DRB can provide variances should a developer plan to build in the area with no clean water issues involved.

Selectman Freeman pointed out that the map attached to the proposed zoning bylaw amendments shows Northfield Falls as a high-density area. Mr. Hatch said this map was wrong and will be corrected. Selectman Freeman felt having inaccurate information attached to the document presented for public review undermined the approval process.

Selectman Maxwell is willing to table approval of the proposed bylaw amendments until the next regular Select Board meeting in two weeks (05/23/17) provided that only non-substantive changes are made to the document. However, since he does not want any further delays, there also must be an up or down vote at that time. Manager Schulz said he will need to work with the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) to determine whether any proposed changes are substantive. This is a gray area in state law so he would like to consult the experts. Like Selectman Maxwell, Selectman Doney will accept a two-week delay provided a decision is made at the next meeting. He felt this matter has dragged on long enough and he would like DRB Chair Smith at this meeting. Mr. Hatch himself has no strong feelings about the DRB suggestions but would like the current outdated regulations replaced as soon as possible for the reasons explained above. Without objection, the motion was tabled.

- b. Approval of Personal Services Contract.** Charlene Lathrop is a contract employee who assists the Board of Listers with date entry, maintaining the Grand List, updating the tax map, and other vital functions. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Freeman, to approve a one year extension of Ms. Lathrop's contract and authorize Manager Schulz to execute the contract. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. DRAFT Cornerstone Burger Company Lease Agreement.** At their previous meeting, the Select Board approved Cornerstone Burger's application for an outside consumption permit. As was the case last year, the Select Board also would like Cornerstone Burger to sign a separate lease agreement that specifies the conditions under which it can make use of the two (2) public parking spaces in front of the restaurant. Selectman Doney has asked for one change: that the two spaces be available for public parking on the days that the Cornerstone Restaurant is either closed or has reduced hours. Therefore, unlike those put down last year, the barriers, tables, etc. used in future must be removable. Selectman Maxwell believes that the consensus from the last meeting was that Cornerstone Burger would be able to block off the spaces from Friday morning through the weekend. The barriers must be removed by Monday morning. Motion by Selectman Freeman, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve and authorize Manager Schulz to enter into a lease agreement with Cornerstone Burger with the new stipulation indicated above. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

#### **IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS**

- a. Rabbit Hollow Road Bridge.** Selectman Goodrich asked about the status of the bridge repairs. Manager Schulz said the railroad has solicited bids and will select a contractor soon. In addition, on the advice of the Town's attorney, Manager Schulz has informed the railroad that the municipality does not want to take ownership of the bridge after the repairs have been completed.
- b. Green Up Day.** Selectman Maxwell wanted to thank all the Northfield residents who volunteered their time last Saturday to help clean up the backroads, rivers, etc.
- c. NAVI Invitational Golf Tournament.** Chair Goslant noted that Northfield Ambulance Volunteers, Inc. (NAVI) will hold their second annual benefit golf tournament at the Northfield Country Club (2066 Vermont Route 12A) on Sunday, June 11, 2017 beginning at 10:00 a.m. The proceeds will be used to support the Betty Podgwaite Scholarship Fund and EMS training activities.
- d. VTrans Work on Vermont Route 12A.** Selectman Freeman, who lives on Vermont Route 12A, is grateful for the work being done on his road and on Vermont Route 64. He believes that the widening of Vermont Route 12A that has occurred so far is a good idea as there are many narrow corners that create dangers for pedestrians and bicyclists. He hopes that the road is widened for its entire length and is willing to give up some of his front yard to get this done. Manager Schulz said that VTrans will hold a construction meeting next week and he will bring this concern up then.
- e. Contracted Street Sweeping.** Chair Goslant said the municipality has hired a private company to sweep the streets. The Highway Committee will discuss at its next meeting whether this trial program has proved successful or not. The cost of renting the sweeper and operator is one hundred dollars (\$100) per hour. Some of the street sweeping is being done at night while traffic is light and since the work is outsourced the municipality will not be held responsible for any overtime expense.

**X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT.** Manager Schulz was on vacation last week so was unable to provide the Select Board members with the usual written report. He now gave them a verbal update on a few matters.

- a. Water, Sewer, and Electric FY 2017/2018 Budgets.** Manager Schulz reported the Utility Commissions met last night and finalized the utility budgets for the next fiscal year. Although there had been concerns that the loss of a major water customer (Chouinard's Comfort Colors) would result in a rate increase, this did not happen due to use of previous year surplus funds. Also, expenses were kept down and revenues were higher than expected. Manager Schulz will provide more details when the budgets are formally presented to the Select Board. Chair Goslant, who serves on the Water & Wastewater Commission, confirmed that \$90,000 in surplus funds were used to prevent rate increases. He added the expansion of Norwich University campus facilities did provide some buffer for the loss of Chouinard's. Chair Goslant noted all the utility departments are in very good financial condition and Northfield's rates are quite low compared to those in other Vermont communities. There are some long-term concerns about upcoming state and federal renewable energy and stormwater diversion requirements that will be phased in over the next few years. This may lead to increased operating costs. Manager Schulz added that the operating license for the Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) is up for renewal in 2020 so new stormwater and other regulations may require major upgrades. Fortunately, the stormwater diversion projects already completed (or in the works) have had a positive impact in reducing the amount of stormwater reaching the WWTF.
- b. Water Street Park Project.** Manager Schulz said a pre-bid meeting was held recently and was well attended by potential contractors. A question was asked where the displaced earth could be stored during the project. The municipality's pit off Cemetery Street was suggested but Manager Schulz does not want too many truckloads of dirt travelling through this dense neighborhood. He would like the bulk of material stored at alternate sites to be determined later.
- c. Northfield Police Department (NPD) Contract, etc.** Manager Schulz said the new labor agreement with the Police Union is pretty much complete. It now is being reviewed again by management before being forwarded to the Select Board for its approval. In addition, the NPD radar speed trailer will be placed in Northfield Falls soon. There have been a number of complaints about drivers speeding through the Vermont Route 12/Cox Brook Road intersection and crosswalk. Since this is a state highway, some paperwork must be completed first. If the need is demonstrated, speed limits in the area may be reduced. Selectman Doney believes that the recent increase in NPD presence on the roads already has resulted in less speeding throughout the community.

**XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)**

- a. Carolyn Stevens: Roadside Tree Removal Program.** Ms. Stevens sent a letter to Manager Schulz dated Friday, April 28, 2017. Due to Manager Schulz's vacation, this letter was not shared with the Select Board until this evening. Ms. Stevens would like the Select Board to reconsider its decision not to participate in a Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation roadside vegetation survey that was offered to the municipality free of charge. Ms. Stevens would like an explanation in writing from the Select Board on the reasoning behind this decision.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Freeman, to adjourn.  
**Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:52 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 May 23, 2017.