

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
Minutes of October 24, 2017**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Kenneth W. Goslant, Selectmen Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, Kenneth Johnson, and K. David Maxwell. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Highway Foreman Trent Tucker, Stephen Hatch (Zoning Administrator), Ken Hepburn, Pam Hepburn, Elroy Hill, and Steve Davis.

Chair Goslant called the meeting to order at 7:03 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. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT**

- a. Trent Tucker, Highway Foreman.** Prior to Mr. Tucker's report, Chair Goslant and Selectman Doney provided a brief overview of their recent Highway Subcommittee meeting. Selectman Doney said Limlaw Pulpwood will be in Northfield soon to perform the scheduled tree trimming along West Hill Road and Stony Brook Road. If time permits, Barrow Road will be trimmed as well. In addition, there was a discussion regarding sidewalk paving on South Main Street. Chair Goslant said the plan is to blacktop one side of the sidewalk from Depot Square to the intersection with Central Street (near Plumley Armory). There also was a discussion of addressing the broken sidewalk on North Main Street by the Common Café.

Mr. Tucker reported the Winch Hill Road paving project, which was scheduled to start today, has been delayed a couple days due to rainstorms. Chair Goslant added there are plans to repave both ends of Lovers Lane as well as about one hundred yards (100') of Berlin Pond Road from its intersection with Vermont Route 64 to Sanders Drive. Manager Schulz confirmed there are funds in the paving budget to cover these small road sections.

Mr. Tucker then discussed the recent accident that put the one-ton dump truck out of service. The vehicle now is being inspected by the insurance company to determine whether it should be repaired or considered totaled. Chair Goslant noted the municipality recently spent about \$11,000 in repair costs for this vehicle. Mr. Tucker already has been getting quotes for a replacement truck in case this is the insurance company's recommendation. He added it is very difficult to rent this type of vehicle. Selectman Johnson is concerned about any further delays in either repairing the old truck or purchasing a new one. He noted winter won't wait for the municipality to make a decision. Selectman Maxwell also doesn't want the Highway Department to be down one truck should a heavy snowstorm hit Northfield. Chair Goslant then thanked Mr. Tucker for both his report and his recent good work.

**VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. October 10, 2017 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Doney, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Selectman Maxwell abstaining.**

**VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. Warrant #09-18.** Motion by Selectman Doney, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve Warrant #09-18 in the amount of \$379,657.26. Selectman Goodrich asked if the installation of new electric outlets on the Common for the Labor Day Weekend Festivities was a one-time expense. Manager Schulz confirmed it was. Chair Goslant noted another FEMA Irene flood-damaged structure buyout for \$145,000. Manager Schulz said this would be the last one since the source of funding has dried up. In the unlikely situation another buyout application is made, it must come before the Select Board for approval. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. Warrant #09-18A.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Goodrich, to approve Warrant #09-18A in the amount of \$24,356.00. Manager Schulz noted this is the annual payment for the loan on Depot Square roadway rehabilitation project. There are another eleven (11) installments due. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. Approval of Biweekly Payroll through October 8, 2017.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$88,197.73. Selectman Maxwell asked if there were any glaring issues to date regarding payroll. Manager Schulz said there are some concerns regarding Northfield Police Department (NPD) overtime but he is working with NPD Chief William Jennings to set up proper work scheduling to prevent this from becoming a problem. Chair Goslant noted Chief Jennings is putting in a lot of work hours himself. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

### VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Schedule Public Hearing – Zoning Regulation.** Manager Schulz said the Select Board did approve revisions to the local zoning regulations at its regular meeting of May 23, 2017. However, there were some approved changes regarding sign size limits and accessory buildings that had not been reviewed by the Planning Commission (PC) beforehand. According to her memorandum, PC Chair Laura Hill-Eubanks believes since PC members subsequently expressed concerns about these specific changes and the lack of PC discussion prior to their approval, she has asked another public hearing be held before the Select Board provides final approval of the revised zoning regulations.  

Zoning Administrator Stephen Hatch does not have any objections to the proposed changes in size limits for signs. However, he does strongly oppose removing the thirty percent (30%) size limit for new accessory buildings. Mr. Hatch believes this might result in accessory buildings even larger than the “main” structure on a parcel. This might cause significant problems in areas without access to the municipal sewer system such as Northfield Falls. Due to the small lot sizes there, a failed private septic system could cause significant problems not only on the parcel directly affected but also for abutting properties. Mr. Hatch would like the current size limit maintained at least until the sewer system is expanded to include Northfield Falls and other high density areas. Manager Schulz noted the PC has raised other issues about lifting the size limit on accessory buildings such as increasing housing density in areas now dominated by one-family homes. Selectman Goodrich said removing the limit was an effort to encourage development but it now appears there were possible consequences not seen at the time. Manager Schulz said this and the other revisions can be reconsidered at the public hearing, which is tentatively scheduled for the beginning of the next regular Select Board meeting on Tuesday, November 14, 2017. Chair Goslant would like the updated zoning regulations formally approved and this matter put to rest. Ken Hepburn noted the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) has to approve any changes in private septic systems so this is not entirely a local decision.
- b. **Request to Lower Speed Limit on Vermont Route 12 North.** Manager Schulz sent a letter to the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) on May 25, 2017, which asked the speed limit in Northfield Falls along Vermont Route 12 North be reduced from 35 mph to 25 mph. This was due to a number of complaints about the apparent high number of speeding vehicles in the area. VTrans sent its letter of response last week reporting the results of the study done by its Traffic Operations Unit. According to the report, the 35 mph speed limit was found to be appropriate given the area’s road conditions and the general compliance by drivers with the current speed limit. The report also stated driving 25 mph along this section of road “felt painfully slow” and did not seem warranted. VTrans will forward their recommendation to the Vermont Traffic Committee, which will decide on this matter at their next meeting on Friday, November 3, 2017. Manager Schulz will attend this meeting and, if the Select Board members so desire, present the case for the 25 mph speed limit. Selectman Doney would like the speed limit kept at 35 mph as this is a good safe speed now NPD officers appear to be doing a better job of enforcement. Selectman Maxwell agreed the current speed limit seems appropriate but would like Manager Schulz to attend the meeting to answer any questions, etc. (Manager Schulz added the NPD has purchased new radar units that record but do not display the speed of passing vehicles. This will be very helpful in determining whether speed limits in other areas should be lowered or kept the same.)
- c. **Main Street Sidewalk Project.** At the previous meeting, Manager Schulz discussed the current plans of the Northfield Savings Bank (NSB) to renovate the sidewalk in front of its building. NSB will pay for the engineering costs should the municipality decide to renovate the adjoining sidewalk in front of the Mayo Block down to East Street. The materials used, the contractor employed, and the time frame for this additional work would be the same as the NSB project. The intent is for the renovated sidewalk to be seamless and to have the project completed this autumn. Manager Schulz added there is about \$65,000 in the current sidewalk budget and paving the municipality’s section of sidewalk would cost about \$35,000. There is a possible additional expense of about \$25,000 should the Select Board elect to have conduits for utility lines installed at the time of paving. Selectman Johnson felt it made sense to address this possibility at this time rather than wait until after the new sidewalk is in place. Selectman Maxwell asked if it were possible to relocate the utility lines behind the building. Manager Schulz will look into this. He will have this information and firm cost estimates in time for the next regular meeting.
- d. **Engineering Services – Storm Water Project Main Street/Slate Avenue.** Manager Schulz said several complaints regarding the condition of Slate Avenue led to it being placed on the priority list for repaving. However, it was the Select Board’s decision to resolve any stormwater issues in this area before any new paving is done. The Utility Department employees are capable of doing the actual construction work themselves after the engineering plans have been completed.

Manager Schulz now would like the Select Board's authority to solicit Statements of Qualifications (SOQs) from civil engineering firms in order to obtain these plans as soon as possible. An ANR grant will pay for fifty percent (50%) of the engineering study costs. In addition, since both the state and federal government consider stormwater mitigation projects as long overdue throughout Vermont, additional grant monies should be available. Chair Goslant noted the State of Vermont is monitoring this situation already as Lake Champlain cleanup has been deemed an urgent matter. Manager Schulz added the Northfield Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) to date has done a good job of reducing the amount of phosphorus getting into the Dog River but this project would help significantly with this. Unless there is a real concerted effort to address this, ANR may choose to impose regulations that might hinder local development. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Goodrich, to authorize Manager Schulz to solicit SOQs for engineering services as related to the Main Street Drainage Improvement Project. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- e. **Cemetery Fees.** Manager Schulz noted a couple months ago (08/22/17), the Select Board looked into raising the cost of burial lots in order to better reflect the actual expenses of maintaining the public cemeteries. The matter was tabled then as Select Board members had questions regarding the current balance of the perpetual care account, etc. Manager Schulz stated the balance now is \$211,294. Selectman Maxwell noted although this might be significant amount, only the interest generated from the fund can be used to maintain grave sites. He also asked then about the number of lots remaining in the seven (7) public cemeteries (i.e., Mount Hope, Northfield Falls, Elmwood, Robinson, Aldrich [West Hill], Four Corners, and Loomis [Berlin Pond Road]). Manager Schulz is working on this but still does not have the exact figure. Chair Goslant suggested the perpetual care fund be put into an account providing a higher rate of interest. Manager Schulz will look into this. Selectman Maxwell asked if the cemeteries are in overall good condition. Manager Schulz said despite some trees to be removed, some walls repaired, etc., the overall condition is good. Chair Goslant would like a full report from the person (Bruce Wright) contracted to do the cemetery maintenance. Selectman Maxwell asked if it were possible to approve the rate increases while leaving the issue of the perpetual care fund for a later time. Manager Schulz confirmed this was possible. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Goodrich, to approve the proposed cemetery rates dated August 22, 2017, while taking no action on the perpetual care fund clause. Chair Goslant noted the perpetual care fund will be revisited as a separate policy as soon as possible. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

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

- a. **Proposed Plow Purchase.** Selectman Johnson noted when the Select Board authorized the purchase of a 2017 Chevrolet Silverado for the Highway Department (09/26/17), the motion made clear this did not include a new plow for the vehicle. He now understands Highway Foreman Tucker has requested the plow be purchased. He asked if this would require a new vote. Chair Goslant confirmed another vote will need to be taken before the plow purchase. He added the original motion did allow for this matter to be revisited if Mr. Tucker made a subsequent request for the new plow. This matter will be put on the next agenda (11/14/17).
- b. **Recreation Field and Building Renovations.** Selectman Doney said extensive work has been done at Memorial Park recently with new bleachers, etc. In addition, the lights in the Community Room have been repaired and door stops installed. Also, Selectman Doney and his son worked to clear the overhanging brush from the new community mural on North Main Street. Chair Goslant and the other Select Board members were grateful for Selectman Doney's efforts. Selectman Doney also wanted Sally Davidson and Frank Hall recognized as they were a great assistance with the park renovations. Chair Goslant plans to meet with representatives from the Northfield School District regarding the condition of the playground's ballfields as well as possible renovations to create more usable space.
- c. **Gold Star Families Memorial Monument.** Selectman Doney noted the groundbreaking for the monument site at Center Park took place last Saturday (10/21/17). In addition to a good turnout of Northfield residents, Governor Phil Scott and some Gold Star families from other towns were present and helped with digging the hole where the monument will sit, etc. Chair Goslant added the old benches at the site have been removed as they were in bad condition. He suggested the Northfield Historical Society might want to take possession of one. He added today's rainstorm did delay the concrete pouring but the project does appear on schedule for its dedication in a couple weeks. This formal dedication is tentatively set for Friday, November 10, 2017, at 2:00 p.m. (but he added this is not "set in stone").

- d. **Town Budget Meetings.** Selectmen Goodrich and Maxwell comprise the Budget & Financial Review Subcommittee and will be meeting with Manager Schulz soon regarding budget priorities, etc. before the proposed FY 2018/2019 budgets are presented to the full Select Board next month. Manager Schulz will be working with the various department heads to keep the proposed budgets (and property taxes) as low as possible. Some increases for highway paving and sidewalk work may be needed.
  - e. **Town Buildings Report Update.** Selectman Maxwell noted he and Selectman Doney, as the Town Buildings & Energy Subcommittee, presented a written report to Manager Schulz and the other Select Board members regarding the condition of the various municipal facilities along with recommendations for action. He asked what has been done to date. Manager Schulz said the focus so far has been on the Municipal Building, which Select Board members have agreed is in poor condition. There now are plans to install a new security system for the front area (Utilities Office, Town Clerk's Office, etc.). In addition, the staff have expressed a preference for having the old carpeting replaced with tile rather than new carpeting. Tile samples are being reviewed. In addition, a VLCT loss control consultant will inspect the Police Station, Fire Station, WWTF, Municipal Garage, and Ambulance Bay this Thursday (10/26/17) for any safety hazards, etc. Selectman Maxwell would like a written response to the action plan in the next meeting packets.
  - f. **Downstreet Housing & Community Development.** Chair Goslant said he and Manager Schulz met with two (2) representatives from Downstreet today. This is an initiative from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development that seeks to identify local options for developing affordable housing units, etc. Manager Schulz said this program also looks at potential commercial development opportunities. Downstreet will perform an assessment in Northfield to identify any possibilities. Chair Goslant noted Northfield resident Will Eberle, who works for the Vermont Human Services Agency, was instrumental in setting up this meeting. Now Northfield Falls has been formally designated a Village Center, Chair Goslant feels there is cause for some optimism regarding local community development.
  - g. **Household Hazardous Waste Collection.** Chair Goslant noted Mountain Alliance and Casella Waste Management will be holding the last of three (3) collection events this year in Randolph, Vermont, on Saturday, October 28, 2017, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The collection site will be at the landfill just past the Randolph Transfer Station (250 Landfill Road). This event is open only for residents of Randolph, Braintree, Brookfield, and Northfield.
- X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**
- a. **Garvey Hill Reservoir.** Manager Schulz reported the 1,000,000 gallon reservoir tank on Garvey Hill will be inspected and cleaned soon. This requires a skin diver going inside the tank itself.
  - b. **Norwich University/Town of Northfield Agreement.** Manager Schulz reported the municipality has signed the new agreement and now waiting for Norwich University to sign and return the document. There will be a sizable increase in the annual donation to Northfield Emergency Services. This will be clear when the document is finalized and released to the public.
- XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)**
- a. **Ken Hepburn: New "Welcome to Northfield" Signs Update.** Mr. Hepburn thanked those who already have donated about \$600 towards the installation of new welcome signs at Northfield's northern and southern boundaries on Vermont Route 12. These donations are tax deductible and a "Go Fund Me" website also has been set up. The projected total budget is \$15,000 and a petition will be circulated for an article to be put on the 2018 Town Meeting Warning seeking \$1,500 in public funds. In addition, the current signs would be refurbished and relocated to the other town borders on Vermont Route 12A and Cox Brook Road.
- XII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:20 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 are subject to approval at the next regular Select Board meeting.