

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of November 14, 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, William Jennings (Police Chief), Steve Hatch (Zoning Administrator), Sally Davidson (Recreation Committee), Kris Hammer (Vermont Housing & Conservation Board), Michele Braun, Elroy Hill, and Daniel DiLena.

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. PUBLIC HEARING

- a. Northfield Municipal Zoning Bylaws Update.** Manager Schulz said since the Select Board will be deciding later in this meeting whether to approve the proposed revisions to the zoning bylaws, this should be the last time this matter comes before the Select Board for some time. The Select Board did approve proposed changes to the zoning bylaws at its May 23, 2017, meeting (following a public hearing that night) but the Planning Commission (PC) subsequently expressed its strong opposition to one of the revisions that night. This was the lifting of the size limit (30%) on accessory dwelling units. The PC doesn't favor lifting this limitation as it may cause overdevelopment in areas not currently served by the municipal sewer system such as Northfield Falls. Zoning Administrator Steve Hatch attended the meeting when the Select Board lifted the size limitation. Although he did not oppose this at the time, Mr. Hatch did some research afterward and now believes the size limitation should be maintained. Chair Goslant asked if anyone present would like to comment on the proposed zoning bylaws. There was no public comment. The public hearing closed at 7:05 p.m.

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

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. Sally Davidson, Recreation Committee: Trunk or Treat.** Ms. Davidson would like to thank the Select Board for their permission and support for the Trunk or Treat activity held on the Common Halloween night. The event went very well and will be repeated again next year with minor changes to be determined later. Ms. Davidson was especially grateful the Northfield emergency services were all well represented at the event. Selectman Doney said it was good to see the Fire, Police, and Ambulance chiefs all present that night. Selectman Maxwell lives on South Main Street and he confirmed there were a lot of trick-or-treaters out that night. Selectman Goodrich thanked Ms. Davidson and the Recreation Committee for organizing this. Ms. Davidson noted the next big event on the Common will be the annual Christmas Tree Lighting at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, December 1, 2017. For the first time, this will be accompanied by an outdoor farmers market that will start mid-afternoon and last into the evening. In addition, Ms. Davidson said the Recreation Committee will be judging holiday home decorations on Saturday, December 9, 2017. She added the final Star Stick workshop was held last night and there was a total of about forty (40) attendees for all the workshops.
- b. Kris Hammer, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB): FEMA Buyout Properties Easement Request.** Mr. Hammer worked with Northfield's FEMA buyout consultant Michele Braun throughout the process as thirteen (13) structures damaged by Tropical Storm Irene were purchased and razed by the municipality primarily with FEMA funds. Seven (7) of these parcels along the Dog River later were joined to form the Water Street Nature Park, which he considers to be a showcase for this FEMA buyout process and for showing how sometimes something good can result even from a natural disaster. Mr. Hammer noted VHCB did provide the twenty-five percent (25%) local match amount as it did not want municipal governments burdened with this expense. However, it also was expected Northfield would provide VHCB easements on the buyout properties that would specify they would be open for public access. This would be in addition to the restrictions FEMA imposed on these parcels. Ms. Braun confirmed she worked with Mr. Hammer throughout the buyout process and the Town Attorney at the time, Ed Miller, developed easements for each of the buyout properties in order to meet FEMA requirements. Mr. Hammer now would like the Select Board to complete the buyout process by moving forward to approve an easement for the properties now comprising the Water Street Nature Park. The formal approval has to be preceded by a thirty (30) day public notification period.

Chair Goslant asked why another easement was needed since the municipality already has agreed to FEMA's stipulations. Mr. Hammer said this easement would ensure public access to the park since public funds had been spent to purchase the property. Ms. Braun added although there have been some concerns raised regarding the level of park maintenance that VHCB would require in this easement, there is no difference between this and what the municipality already has agreed to do, i.e., maintain the walking trails, "brush hog" the site a couple times a year, etc. Mr. Hammer noted the easement would have fairly flexible language conforming to the municipality's own master plan for the park. Ms. Braun added there had been an understanding from the beginning of the project that the municipality would grant this easement to VHCB upon the project's completion. Mr. Hammer confirmed VHCB had waited so it could be done all at one time.

Chair Goslant still remains concerned about another layer of government getting involved in how the municipality will maintain the park in the future. He doesn't want VHCB to come back saying the park is not being maintained to its standards and additional taxpayer money must be spent to do so. Mr. Hammer said VHCB did not have this intention since the municipality will create its own management plan. Ensuring public access is VHCB's priority in this matter. He noted obtaining this easement had not become an issue in the other Vermont communities receiving VHCB funding. The consensus of the Select Board was to commence the public notification period as soon as possible so the easement approval can be put on a future agenda.

VI. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

- a. Police Chief William Jennings.** Chief Jennings reported a "radar spy," which is a device that records but does not display the speed of a passing vehicle, recently was deployed at two locations in Northfield Falls. At the first location by Mill Street, 2142 vehicles were recorded and the average speed was 36.87 MPH. The other location was by the Rustic Restaurant with 4312 vehicles travelling an average speed of 34.745 MPH. As the speed limit at both locations is 35 MPH, Chief Jennings felt this indicated general compliance with the law by motorists. The radar spy next will be deployed on South Main Street.

Chief Jennings noted the old printer/copier in the Police Station had to be replaced recently as the repair parts needed were no longer available. After researching various options, a replacement copier/printer/fax machine was found costing \$6,696. After further negotiation, including a \$2,000 trade-in amount for the old machine, the total purchase price was \$4,669.

Chief Jennings said the officers who had been working either day or night shifts have been switched to the other. He felt this was a good move because the officers will learn what happens in Northfield throughout the day and it also is better for the officers' health and wellbeing to vary their working hours.

Regarding his department's vehicle fleet, Chief Jennings noted the 2010 Dodge Challenger has 122,500 miles, the 2012 Ford Explorer 96,000 miles, the 2014 Ford Explorer 45,000 miles, and the 2017 Ford Explorer 5,000 miles. The current plan is to budget to replace the 2010 vehicle and reduce the workload of the other high mileage vehicle.

Chief Jennings said a VLCT loss consultant inspected the Police Station recently and found only minor problems that were easily rectified. This included improved safety signage, monthly fire extinguisher inspections, etc. There are future plans to fix some of the outside trimming, etc. Selectman Doney was present during the inspection and he felt the building looks pretty good.

Selectman Maxwell asked if the Northfield Police Department (NPD) was experiencing any challenges at this time. Chief Jennings said he was trying to reduce overtime expenses. Possible solutions will be discussed at the upcoming budget meetings. Chair Goslant asked if Northfield really needed a 24/7 police department. Chief Jennings said this would be the Select Board's decision but reducing coverage hours might result in a major incident occurring with no NPD officers available to respond. He added NPD does have good relations with Norwich University Security but there now are more students living off campus and interacting with community members. Chair Goslant asked about NPD's interaction with the local schools. Chief Jennings felt it was very good and added there was a possibility of grant funding for an additional full-time officer who would interact with Northfield schools as well as Norwich University.

Chair Goslant remains very pleased with Chief Jennings' work performance and felt he was a great benefit to the Northfield community. Chief Jennings said the support of the greater community and the Select Board have been a great assistance to him and the NPD.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **October 24, 2017 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the minutes. Selectman Goodrich requested a minor change regarding the new Norwich University Agreement. **Motion to approve the revised minutes passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #10-18.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to approve Warrant #10-18 in the amount of \$366,396.00. Selectman Goodrich asked about a payment for "Water Street Park Design." Manager Schulz said this was in regard to the tree planting on the site and the expense would be covered by grant funds. Selectman Maxwell noted a PILOT payment to the Town of Northfield from the Northfield Electric Department. Manager Schulz confirmed this was an annual expense. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through October 22, 2017.** Motion by Selectman Johnson, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$84,434.31. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through November 5, 2017.** Motion by Selectman Johnson, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$82,827.43. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

IX. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Approval of Revised Northfield Municipal Zoning Bylaws.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the revised municipal zoning bylaws as recommended by Zoning Administrator Steve Hatch. The accessory structure size limit would remain at thirty percent (30%) of the primary structure on the parcel. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Northfield Transfer Station Agreement.** Manager Schulz said the contract with Earth Waste Systems to operate the Northfield Transfer Station was expiring. He asked if the Select Board would like him to negotiate with Earth Waste Systems on a new agreement or if bid proposals from other companies should be solicited. Manager Schulz added Earth Waste Systems funds its operations through the fees it collects so it does not receive money directly from the municipality. Therefore, this really doesn't fall under the Purchase Policy. Selectman Maxwell believes the Transfer Station has been very well run in recent years and would like the current agreement extended. Manager Schulz said there would be some minor changes regarding the materials accepted, business hours, etc. He also would ask Earth Waste Systems should carry additional insurance coverage. Manager Schulz will provide the finalized agreement to the Select Board for approval at a future meeting.
- c. **Northfield Snowmobilers, Inc. (NSI) Trail Requests (Wellfield & Fairground Road).** Manager Schulz noted NSI has made its annual request for a snowmobile trail through the Wellfield. In addition, NSI would like to traverse the end of Fairground Road in order to connect their trail system. In his memorandum, Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi has listed stipulations that must be accepted before allowing the Wellfield trail including proper marking, no refueling there, etc. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Goodrich, to approve the NSI request for a snowmobile trial through the Wellfield provided the conditions in Superintendent DeMasi's memorandum are followed. **Motion passed 5-0-0.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Goodrich, to allow a snowmobile trail at the end of Fairground Road. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **Main Street Sidewalk Improvements.** Manager Schulz said Northfield Savings Bank (NSB) is replacing the sidewalk in front of its building as part of a general renovation. Although it will not pay for the construction costs, NSB also has provided the municipality with engineering plans for paving the adjoining sidewalk by the Mayo Block. The estimated cost for this is \$46,242 and there would be an additional expense of \$32,185 should the municipality want to install a utility conduit while the work is being done. Manager Schulz noted NSB originally wanted this work done this year but it is now looking likely it will have to wait until next spring. Selectman Maxwell had asked about the possibility of relocating the utility lines behind the building as an alternative to burying the lines. Manager Schulz looked into this and found it would be difficult and costly as there is no direct route to locate the lines. Selectman Maxwell is reluctant to spend that much money on installing conduit when there are no immediate plans to bury the lines. Chair Goslant also favors putting in new sidewalk but not the other work.

Selectman Doney suggested some money could be saved by not paving the short stretch of East Street sidewalk next to the Mayo Block. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to authorize Manager Schulz to enter into an agreement with the contractor to install sidewalk for an amount not to exceed the \$46,242 estimate. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- e. **Letter of Support: Town Forest Conservation Easement.** At a previous meeting (10/10/17), the Select Board authorized the Conservation Commission to enter into negotiation to purchase from TDS Telecom a 49-acre parcel on Paine Mountain that could be annexed to the Town Forest. The Vermont Land Trust will cover two-thirds of the purchase provided an easement is granted to them and the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) to ensure public access. Manager Schulz has drafted a letter of support to VHCB confirming this easement will be granted. Selectman Goodrich would like to review the easement wording before authorizing the letter to be sent. Selectman Maxwell also would like to see the easement before this goes any further. This matter was tabled until the next meeting (11/28/17).
- f. **Highway Department: Chevrolet Truck & Plow Purchase.** Manager Schulz noted at a previous meeting (09/26/17), the Select Board authorized the purchase of a 2018 Chevrolet Silverado for the Highway Department. At that time, the Select Board decided not to authorize the purchase of a new plow for the vehicle as a cost-saving measure. However, the Select Board said it would revisit this should Highway Foreman Trent Tucker confirm the new plow really was needed. Mr. Tucker now has said the new plow is needed as the old one would not fit on the new vehicle. The old plow can be repurposed on a smaller vehicle and used on some of the side streets. Chair Goslant serves on the Highway Subcommittee and he agreed with Mr. Tucker's reasoning and would now like to recommend the purchase of the new plow. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Goodrich, to authorize Manager Schulz to enter into an agreement for the purchase of the new vehicle with plow. Selectman Doney would like it specified only Mr. Tucker can drive the new vehicle. He doesn't want a less experienced driver using and damaging it. Chair Goslant would not like to limit the Highway crew in regards to which vehicles they can use. He felt Mr. Tucker would be ultimately held responsible for any vehicle damage. Selectman Maxwell suggested some kind of policy can be developed to cover this. **Motion passed 4-1-0, with Selectman Johnson voting in the negative.**

X. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Replacement of Damaged Highway Truck.** Selectman Johnson asked what was the timeline for replacing the Highway truck that was totaled. Manager Schulz said if the Select Board authorizes the purchase of a Dodge, the replacement vehicle is on the lot already. The old body would need to be transferred to the new vehicle so there would be some delay. VLCT insurance will cover the cost of this transfer (\$12,000) as well as the cost of the vehicle itself (\$45,000) minus the \$1,000 deductible. Selectman Johnson would like a sturdier six-wheeled vehicle purchased instead that would do a better job on the side streets. The problem is such a vehicle could not be put in service until next February, so the Highway crew would be down a vehicle for much of the winter. Selectman Maxwell thought it might be a good idea for the Highway Subcommittee to look into Selectman Johnson's suggestion. A meeting was scheduled for next week.
- b. **Gold Star Families Memorial Monument Dedication.** Selectman Goodrich said she was very proud to attend the dedication ceremony last Friday afternoon (11/10/17). She is glad the Select Board authorized its construction on municipal property (Center Park) and she thanked all those who worked to get it ready for the Veterans Day holiday. Selectman Doney said Richard Wobby was the driving force behind this project and deserves the lion's share of gratitude. Selectman Maxwell noted a lot of work was done in the days beforehand to get the monument and site ready in time for the ceremony. Despite some recent statements to the contrary, he added the public was given ample time and opportunity to discuss whether or not the monument should be located at Center Park. Selectman Maxwell feels the monument will be a valuable asset to the community.
- c. **Water Street Park.** Selectman Maxwell believes rules need to be developed to specify what is and what is not allowed in the new park. An ordinance probably will need to be developed so these rules can be enforced.

- d. Municipal Vehicle Usage.** Selectman Maxwell noted what seems to be a rash of accidents involving municipal vehicles. He is pleased Manager Schulz has mandated all drivers must attend safety school but he also feels there should be written policies governing how these vehicles are used.
- e. Sale of Old Fire Truck.** Chair Goslant would like the fire truck sold before the next budget sessions begin. The purchase of the new fire truck had been budgeted based upon the sale of the old one for about \$45,000. It now seems that \$12,000 is a more accurate resale price. Selectman Maxwell believes the Select Board should have firmer numbers regarding trade-in values before any new vehicle purchases are authorized.
- f. Municipal Park Playing Fields.** Chair Goslant said he and Manager Schulz met with representatives from the Northfield School District regarding use of the playing fields. A memorandum of understanding is being developed that would include the sharing of costs for field maintenance, etc. The plan is the school will maintain the playing fields during the school year and it will be the municipality's responsibility the rest of the time.
- g. Winter Parking Ban.** Chair Goslant noted the annual winter parking ban will begin on November 15, 2017 and will continue until April 15, 2018. This means parking is banned from all streets and roads from 12:00 midnight through 6:00 a.m. during this timeframe. The NPD have been putting warning notices on vehicles parked overnight the past few weeks.
- h. DRAFT Municipal Budget Schedule.** The draft schedule of budget meetings was in the Select Board packets. The plan is to hold budget meetings Tuesday and Thursday nights at 6:00 p.m. in December 2017 and January 2018. The meetings will be held in the Community Room.

XI. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. Northfield Promise Community.** Manager Schulz has been working with the Northfield Promise Community regarding the proposal for a new playground for children 0-6 years old on Slate Avenue as well as new playground equipment for the Northfield Falls Park.
- b. Northfield Falls Speed Limit.** Manager Schulz went to the meeting of the Vermont Traffic Committee on Friday, November 3, 2017, regarding the municipality's request to lower the speed limit in Northfield Falls from 35 to 25 MPH. As expected, the Board followed the recommendation of the VTrans Traffic Operations Unit that the current speed limit is appropriate. As indicated in NPD Chief Jennings' report earlier this evening, Manager Schulz noted radar evidence shows most motorists are obeying the current speed limit.

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

XIII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to adjourn.
Motion passed 5-0-0.

The Board adjourned at 9:43 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 November 28, 2017.