

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**Minutes of November 28, 2017**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Kenneth W. Goslant (absent), Vice-Chair K. David Maxwell, Selectmen Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, and Kenneth Johnson. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Finance Director Laurie Baroffio, Casey Scandore CPA (Kittell Branagan & Sargent), Michael Krause (President, Norwich Commons Condo Association), Deborah Smith-Krause (Vice-President, Norwich Commons Condo Association), Heidi Passalacqua (Secretary, Norwich Commons Condo Association), Nancy LaVarnway, Gerard LaVarnway, and Steve Davis.

Acting Chair Maxwell 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):**

- a. Casey Scandore CPA, Kittell Branagan & Sargent: FY 2016/2017 Financial Audit Reports.** The Select Board members were provided with copies of the audit beforehand so Ms. Scandore was present tonight to provide a brief overview and answer any questions. She made it clear the audit was an "unmodified" (or "clean") opinion and no problems had been encountered in the process. Ms. Scandore noted the financial statements often were split into two columns: government activities (i.e., municipal operations) and business-type activities (municipal utilities). She also explained the levels of funding restricted to specific departments and those that were not. Ms. Scandore then went over the extensive "notes" that explained and provided detailed narratives for the various financial tables. Ms. Scandore felt the utility funds were all healthy. In addition, the General Fund had an increase in revenues mainly due to more timely collection of property taxes as well as increased revenue from the Northfield Ambulance Service. Chair Maxwell thanked Ms. Scandore and her colleagues for working with municipal staff to provide this favorable report.
- b. Michael Krause: Norwich Commons Drainage Issue.** Mr. Krause is representing tonight the Norwich Commons Condo Association (NCCA) regarding concerns over stormwater runoff affecting this housing complex located near the junction of Vermont Routes 12 and 12A. The attorney acting on behalf of NCCA has reviewed the 1968 easement provided to the former occupant of the site (Reed's A&W) and believes it is clear when the municipality installed a manhole and ditch there, it became its responsibility to maintain them in perpetuity. Mr. Krause said this has not happened since at least 2006. He added when the condominiums were built, a disbursement pond was built to handle stormwater runoff. However, due to the municipality's negligence, the pond has overflowed on several occasions. Mr. Krause said Manager Schulz has responded to his concerns by stating the municipality is not responsible for maintaining the culvert, ditch, etc. Mr. Krause now has come before the Select Board seeking resolution of this problem. He foresees three (3) possible outcomes: 1. the municipality will agree to maintain the culvert and ditch in the future; 2. the municipality will relocate the culvert and ditch so stormwater will be diverted away from Norwich Commons; or 3. the municipality and NCCA will find some other mutually agreeable solution.

Chair Maxwell noted since this a legal matter, Manager Schulz recommends it be discussed later in executive session. If a decision is made tonight, Mr. Krause will be informed as soon as possible. Mr. Krause looked forward to the Select Board's decision and said if there are any questions regarding the area, he is willing to provide a site tour. Chair Maxwell then thanked Mr. Krause for bringing this matter to the Select Board's attention.

## **V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **November 14, 2017 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Doney, seconded by Selectman Goodrich, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

## **VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. **Warrant #11-18.** Motion by Selectman Doney, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to approve Warrant #11-18 in the amount of \$201,090.92. Selectman Doney asked why a "wood splitter" was purchased. Manager Schulz said the equipment bought actually was an "eliminator" put at the front of truck so its saw can be used to trim small branches, etc. Selectman Doney asked if it really cost \$1,600 to install an outdoor fluorescent light at the Ambulance Bay. Manager Schulz also thought the cost was higher than expected but added the installation required two (2) men each working eight (8) hours. Selectman Doney thought the cost would be closer to \$300 or \$400. Selectman Goodrich asked about some tree trimming expenses. Manager Schulz said most of the work was done on South Main Street as some tree branches were impinging on power lines. He added there are more than sufficient funds in the Northfield Electric Department's budget for this type of work. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through November 19, 2017.** Motion by Selectman Doney, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$87,645.82. Manager Schulz said Police Chief William Jennings has been working with him to try to reduce his department's overtime expenses. This pay period has seen a reduction due to his efforts, which include hiring additional part-time officers, shift changes, etc. Selectman Johnson said things seem to moving in the right direction. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

## **VII. SELECT BOARD**

- a. **Letter of Support: Town Forest Conservation Easement.** The Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC) has been working with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) to obtain funds to purchase the TDS property at the summit of Paine Mountain. If the purchase goes through, this parcel would be annexed to the adjacent Town Forest. However, before any funds are released, the municipality must agree to provide VHCB an easement confirming perpetual public access to the property (and other conditions). Although the Select Board has authorized NCC to engage in negotiations over the purchase price, etc., it was the consensus of the members that they would like to see the exact wording of the easement before its formal approval. Manager Schulz said the easement is still being drafted but should be ready for review at the next regular meeting (12/12/17). Chair Maxwell asked Manager Schulz to make sure NCC is aware of the Select Board's position on this. Nancy LaVarnway hopes the Select Board will review this matter fully before any decision is made. Manager Schulz noted the timeline for a decision has been extended to late January 2018 so this will allow the Select Board to explore this further over several regular meetings. Once the easement has been drafted, it will be made available for public comment.

- b. Police Union MOU: Health Insurance Opt-out Clause.** Manager Schulz said non-police municipal employees are able to opt out of the municipality's health insurance plan if they can provide evidence of other coverage. In return, the employee receives a payment equal to seventy-five percent (75%) of the cost of an individual health insurance plan. However, this option was not incorporated in the current Northfield Police Department (NPD) union contract so it is not available to NPD officers. A NPD officer now is interested in opting out so the NPD union has asked for an amendment allowing this in the contract. Chair Maxwell noted since a contract is involved, any further discussion of this matter needs to be done in executive session.
- c. Norwich Commons Drainage Issue (possible executive session).** Chair Maxwell said the Select Board heard earlier tonight from Mr. Krause regarding his concerns. As this is a legal matter, it also will be discussed in executive session.

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

- a. VLCT Loss Control Inspection Follow-up.** Selectman Doney noted the loss control inspector found a few minor problems during the recent inspection. The concerns at the Police Station have all been addressed including back-up batteries for the garage light, floor tape marking off electric areas, posting of bound MSDS sheets, etc. In addition, the missing lights in the Brown Public Library and Municipal Building have been replaced. Chair Maxwell thanked Selectman Doney for all the work he has done on this.
- b. NAVI Christmas Tree and Wreath Sale.** Chair Maxwell noted Northfield Ambulance Volunteers, Inc. (NAVI) will be holding its annual tree and wreath sale at the Ambulance Bay. Trees and wreaths come in a variety of sizes and are available for sale from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. during the week and from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekends. Free delivery is available.
- c. Outdoor Farmers Market and Christmas Tree Lighting.** Selectman Goodrich reminded the public this coming Friday (12/01/17) will see a special winter outdoor farmers market on the Common from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. In addition, the annual Christmas Tree Lighting also will take place that night with caroling around the tree at 5:30 p.m. and the lighting at 6:00 p.m.

#### **IX. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

- a. Better Roads Grant Applications.** Manager Schulz said the municipality has applied for grant funds to address problems on Dole Hill Road and Barrows Road. The latter road is in worse condition with several culverts and ditches needed to resolve serious stormwater concerns. Manager Schulz felt somewhat optimistic that the applications would be successful. Chair Maxwell asked if there's enough money in the budget to cover the local match amount. Manager Schulz said there would be a twenty percent (20%) local match but this includes in-kind services. The plan is to use the grant funds to purchase materials while the Town Highway crew does the actual road work.
- b. Main Street/Slate Avenue Stormwater Project.** Manager Schulz said two (2) bids were received for engineering services for this project. The bids are now being reviewed.
- c. Northfield Promise Community.** Manager Schulz met with members of the Northfield Promise Community regarding the proposal to use already awarded grant funds to put a new children's park on Slate Avenue and to purchase new playground equipment for the existing park in Northfield Falls. Both sites were reviewed and found acceptable. The next step is to develop formal plans to be forwarded to the funding agency.

- d. VTrans Bridge Inspection Reports.** Manager Schulz said he and Highway Foreman Trent Tucker met with state auditors regarding local responses to VTrans bridge inspection reports. All thirty-three (33) local bridges were reviewed as well as any known problems. Manager Schulz found the meeting to be both interesting and enlightening. The only bridge found to have significant problems is Main Street Bridge, which already is on the state's priority funding list. Selectman Johnson asked about Wall Street Bridge. Manager Schulz said the walkway had some problems but overall the bridge is in good condition and structurally sound. He added the Select Board will need to review bridge maintenance funding during the upcoming budget meetings. He doesn't feel enough money has been set aside for this in recent years.

**X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).** There was none.

**XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Selectman Goodrich, seconded by Selectman Doney, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a legal matter and a contract with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:15 p.m.

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

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

**XII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Goodrich, seconded by Selectman Doney, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:11 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 December 12, 2017.