

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN  
SPECIAL MEETING  
Minutes of December 5, 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, Finance Director Laurie Baroffio, John Quinn III, Pam Hepburn, Elroy C. Hill, and Steve Davis.

Chair Goslant called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled):** None.

- IV. BUDGET WORK SESSION**

**OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED FY 2018/2019 BUDGETS**

Manager Schulz stated the first draft budget was provided to the Select Board members a few days ago so tonight he wanted to provide a brief overview. Before the meetings with department heads begin, he would like the Select Board members to confirm this budget is on the right track or if they want significant changes. If there are no problems, the next budget meeting (12/07/17) will discuss the Administration (Manager, Clerk, and Accounting), Listers, and Zoning budgets. As drafted, the proposed budget would have a 3.1% increase in total expenditures. This is mainly due to scheduled employee wage/benefit increases as well as the hiring of an additional (sixth) full-time police officer. Manager Schulz then went through the departments to indicate what changes have been made from the previous fiscal year.

**OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE (O&M) BUDGETS**

**Administration.** There are no additional staff but there will be three percent (3%) wage increases and benefit increases between seven and nine percent (7-9%) due to expected rises in health insurance costs. In addition, the cost of insurance for public officials is up three percent (3%), which is due to statewide and not local factors.

**Listers.** There will be a \$3000 increase due to a proposal to change the contract employee (Charlene Lathrop) into a part-time municipal employee. The extra expense is FICA payments. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio said Ms. Lathrop is not a true independent contractor as she is answerable to the Listers regarding work hours, etc. Manager Schulz said there are no other significant changes as Listers pay will remain at \$13 per hour.

**Fire Department.** The budget will have a slight increase due to higher dispatching costs. There aren't really any alternatives to using Capital West. There also are additional funds for vehicle maintenance. Chair Goslant noted fire trucks now have to respond to every car accident and this adds wear and tear. Manager Schulz noted there are no changes to firefighter wages.

**Police Department.** Manager Schulz said Police Chief William Jennings has recommended that a sixth full-time police officer be hired. He feels this is needed to fully staff a department that is open twenty-four hours a day in a seven day work week (24/7). This will add about \$75,000 to the budget. Chair Goslant feels there should be a fuller discussion of whether the Northfield Police Department (NPD) should be on a 24/7 schedule. Manager Schulz said Chief Jennings will provide information on this when the NPD budget is discussed at a future meeting. Selectman Maxwell asked if this would result in a comparable decrease in the overtime line item. Manager Schulz said this line item has been decreased from \$20,000 to \$15,000. Although actual savings might be more, he would like to err on the side of caution. The Select Board members then expressed a number of concerns regarding the additional officer but postponed further discussion until they can hear directly from Chief Jennings.

**Ambulance Department.** The O&M budget would go up ten percent (10%) mainly due to costs increases in part-time employees, paramedic intercepts, dispatching, etc. As the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) has increased its call volume and revenue in recent years, this has resulted in increases in personnel and material costs. NAS Chief Lawton Rutter has made a request for a second full-time employee but this is not in the proposed budget. Chief Rutter will be able to explain his request at a future budget meeting. There is an additional \$16,000 in the budget to allow two (2) NAS employees to train as paramedics. The intention is to cut the cost of paramedic intercepts in future. Selectman Maxwell is pleased that due to Chief Rutter's efforts NAS revenues now come close to balancing its expenses but he doesn't want to see the service expanded any further. He does not want NAS to become a regional ambulance service. Selectman Maxwell would like NAS to focus its efforts on Northfield residents. Selectman Doney is not sure that the paramedic training actually will provide long-term savings. These matters will be discussed further when Chief Rutter attends a future budget meeting.

**Highway Department.** Manager Schulz said the proposed budget reduces the Highway O&M budget by about \$7,800 mainly due to reductions in the amounts budgeted for road gravel, fuel, calcium chloride, and culverts. The municipality now anticipates grant money will cover most of the culvert costs in the next fiscal year.

**Grounds & Parks.** Personnel costs have been reduced as the municipality will have more of the mowing contracted out. Chair Goslant fears that the new Water Street Park will have much higher maintenance costs than had been anticipated.

**Cemetery.** The budget will have a 3.5% increase due to the annual increase in the maintenance contract as well as additional tree removal, etc.

**Brown Public Library (BPL).** Manager Schulz noted the BPL Board of Trustees have put the library's budget together with a \$3,000 decrease due to lower expenses on part-time employee wages.

**Municipal Pool.** Manager Schulz said this department will see a sizable budget increase (11.7%) due to the upcoming increase in the minimum wage as well as accounting for the actual costs of water and sewer changes for the pool. Chair Goslant noted Pool Director Shannon Palone warned the Select Board earlier that Northfield faces a real risk of losing its most experienced lifeguards if it insists on paying them around the minimum wage. He would like to discuss this further. Manager Schulz said proper lifeguard compensation is a difficult matter as there is a real effort to keep pool operating costs down. Selectman Maxwell would like hard numbers on how many people use the pool each summer, etc.

**Zoning.** Manager Schulz said this budget sees a three percent (3%) increase so that the Zoning Administrator can work a twenty (20) hour week. This position was vacant when the current fiscal year began.

#### **CAPITAL BUDGETS**

**Fire Department.** This department's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget has an additional \$13,000 set aside for building improvements. When the architect created the combined facility study, significant problems were found in the Fire Station. Chair Goslant wants to make sure the building doesn't deteriorate further or there could be massive expenses down the road. In the Capital Equipment Plan (CEP), \$20,000 will be put towards future replacement of the aerial ladder truck. Funds received through the agreement with Norwich University will supplement this amount.

**Police Department.** Manager Schulz said \$1,000 will be added to the CIP budget for building improvements as the Police Station will be repainted next year. In the CEP account, there is a \$2,000 increase in the office equipment budget for a new photocopier. Also, the 2010 Dodge Charger is scheduled for replacement next year. Although Chief Jennings also wanted to replace the 2012 Ford Explorer, Manager Schulz would prefer to keep it as a backup vehicle. This allows the NPD fleet to remain at four (4).

**Ambulance Department.** The CEP budget is up \$18,100 to set funds aside for future ambulance unit replacements, the purchase of power stretcher loaders, etc. In recent years, as Ms. Baroffio noted, ambulance units have been remounted rather than being entirely replaced as a cost-saving measure.

**Highway.** Manager Schulz said this department's CIP funds have been moved around to provide more funds for bridges and sidewalks. \$150,000 has been budgeted for paving in the next fiscal year and this includes use of previous year surplus funds. Chair Goslant asked if Slate Avenue's problems will be addressed in this budget. Manager Schulz said an additional \$20,000 will be put into the drainage account. Chair Goslant would like to reconsider contracting out backroad winter maintenance and possibly privatizing some one- and two-house roads as this could potentially have great cost savings.

**Cemetery.** \$2,000 has been added to the CIP account so the Mount Hope Cemetery wall can be repaired.

**Town Buildings/Grounds.** The CIP account was reduced by \$75,000 since the BPL painting was completed during the current fiscal year.

**Grounds/Parks/Facilities.** The Recreation Committee has asked for an additional \$10,000 for a new pavilion and bathrooms at Memorial Park. The total cost will be about \$40,000 so the Committee will be seeking donations and grant funds to cover the balance.

**Pool.** The thirty (30) pool skimmers need to be replaced in the near future. They cost about \$2,000 each and Manager Schulz has added \$10,000 to replace five (5) in the next fiscal year. Selectman Maxwell suggested checking to see if there would be a discount if all were replaced at the same time.

**MISCELLANEOUS.**

**"Welcome to Northfield" Signs.** Manager Schulz said there is a \$7,500 budget request from the group looking to replace the two (2) "Welcome to Northfield" signs. Selectman Maxwell believes the municipality already has promised various in-kind services, i.e. installing the signs, etc. that would equal to this amount. In any case, he would like to see a project budget before any public funds are promised. Manager Schulz noted this group is making a separate request for public funding through a Town Meeting article.

**Main Street Bridge.** Manager Schulz said the Recreation Committee is asking electric service be restored to the bridge so Christmas lighting can be installed. The estimated cost is \$9,500. Manager Schulz has not yet put this in the proposed budget. Selectman Maxwell noted this bridge is on priority lists for significant repairs so he would like this request postponed. Selectman Doney suggested since the holiday lights would only be up for a few weeks, perhaps extension cords could be used for now.

**V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled).** There was none.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Doney, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:17 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.