

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of December 7, 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, Arlington Supplee (Lister), Chris Bradley (Lister), Stephen Hatch (Zoning Administrator), 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**

- a. **Listers.** Board of Listers Chair Arlington Supplee said during last year's budget meetings he requested the hourly wage for the Listers be raised to \$14 during FY 2017/2018 and to \$16 the following fiscal year. Although the Select Board only authorized an increase to \$13 for the current fiscal year, Mr. Supplee still wants the \$16 per hour rate for next year. The total amount for the year for the three (3) Listers would not exceed \$20,000. Mr. Supplee noted Listers in neighboring communities receive at least \$20 per hour so it might become difficult to get anyone to serve as a Northfield Lister without the pay rise. Selectman Doney asked how many hours the Listers put in each week. Mr. Supplee said it was no more than twenty (20) total. He is the only Lister who puts in regular hours each weekday morning. Mr. Supplee noted the other change in his department was the Listers' contract employee (Charlene Lathrop) will become a part-time municipal employee on January 1, 2018. Selectman Maxwell said this had been discussed at the previous budget meeting (12/05/17) and there had been no objections. Selectman Maxwell would like Lister pay increased to \$14 per hour for the rest of this fiscal year and raised to \$16 per hour starting July 1, 2018. There were no objections.

Listers Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Mr. Supplee said there was a surplus in the tax mapping account so the Listers are asking for a reduced amount in the next budget. There is \$81,000 set aside for the next town-wide reappraisal. The last reappraisal cost \$30,000 less than anticipated. Mr. Supplee doesn't know when the state will require another reappraisal but it should be a few years. Manager Schulz felt four (4) to five (5) years was a good estimate so the municipality is in good financial shape to pay for it. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio noted the state provides the municipality with funds each year based on the number of parcels to cover this expense.

- b. **Planning/Zoning.** Zoning Administrator Stephen Hatch said his department was running well at this time. Manager Schulz said the proposed budget provided for a three percent (3%) wages/benefits increase and allows Mr. Hatch to work twenty (20) hours per week. Selectman Maxwell asked Mr. Hatch if he was comfortable with this budget. Mr. Hatch said he was. He added some weeks he does have to work more than twenty (20) hours due to pressing business but he usually is able to balance this out. He added his workload does decrease a bit in the winter months when fewer building permits are submitted.

Manager Schulz said in the Zoning budget is the municipality's annual payment to the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC). The amount will increase 2.6% the next fiscal year to \$7,010 but the actual benefits from membership more than compensate Northfield for this outlay. Manager Schulz would like a CVRPC representative to address the Select Board during the budget process to describe the myriad of services provided to member communities. Selectman Maxwell noted zoning fees are expected to provide \$9,000 in revenue in the next fiscal year. Mr. Hatch said the major change recently was to reduce the cost of applying for a sign permit.

c. Administration (Manager, Town Clerk/Treasurer, Accounting, etc.)

Manager. Manager Schulz noted the line item for Select Board stipends remains unfunded. This department also will see a three percent (3%) increase in wages/benefits. In addition, the Health officer no longer receives a salary but does have up to \$500 in expenses reimbursed. The insurance coverage for public officials will increase from \$20,000 to \$30,000 but this is due to statewide and not local factors.

Town Clerk/Treasurer. This department also will have a three percent (3%) increase in wages/benefits. In the office equipment line item, there is a one-time increase to pay for modified standing desks.

Town Clerk/Treasurer CIP. Manager Schulz said there is a \$19,000 balance in the Town Clerk vault account. The vault has been running out of space for some time with no real room in the Municipal Building for expansion. Various options will need to be explored in the coming year. Ms. Baroffio noted some space has been freed up though some reorganization of the vault. Selectman Maxwell said this has been a concern for several years and it is time for the Select Board to determine a lasting solution. Selectman Johnson felt it might be necessary to discuss whether the building itself will be sustainable in ten (10) years or so. Selectman Maxwell noted currently there are no set plans to either rehabilitate or replace the Municipal Building. This probably would be a multi-million dollar project.

Board of Civil Authority (BCA). Manager Schulz said BCA members receive minimum wage payments to assist with elections so this amount will go up when the minimum wage increases to \$10.50 on January 1, 2018. In addition, since 2018 will have three statewide elections (Town Meeting Day, the Primary Election, and the General Election) rather than just one as in 2017, the amount projected for voting machine costs will increase by sixty-six percent (66%).

Accounting. Manager Schulz said this department also will have a three percent (3%) increase in wages/benefits. Ms. Baroffio asked for an increase in the office supplies account to cover the cost of shredding old documents. Unfortunately, the state sets very strict guidelines regarding what can be destroyed and what must be retained. Given our limited storage space, Ms. Baroffio has been working with the state on easing the rules. Selectman Maxwell asked if it were possible to digitalize some documents. Ms. Baroffio said this would require additional computer equipment and manpower.

Management Support. Manager Schulz said the line item amount for legal services is difficult to determine each year due to the number of factors involved. There have been substantial costs in recent years but a lot of this was due to one individual. He add the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) now provides four (4) free hours of legal assistance for each individual matter. This is especially helpful to smaller towns. Selectman Maxwell said legal expenses will be unavoidable no matter what we do.

Chair Goslant asked if \$15,000 was enough for a full year of legal services. Ms. Baroffio said allowing for reimbursements, the municipality has paid about \$5,000 for legal services in the current fiscal year. Manager Schulz said if this trend continues, we would be below this year's \$15,000 budget.

Chair Goslant suggested saving money on printing the Town Report by cutting the number ordered. The Town Report is put on the municipal website and there seem to be a few leftover boxes of reports after Town Meeting Day.

Manager Schulz noted the cost of monitoring the municipality's computer system has more than doubled in the past couple years (\$4,000 to \$9,000). The municipality put this out bid last year and SymQuest was awarded the contract. Selectman Maxwell felt however expensive this was a necessary service to keep the municipality's computer system from being hacked, etc. Ms. Baroffio confirmed the computer servers backed up work files overnight. Selectman Maxwell would like safeguards to ensure all files are being backed up properly.

Manager Schulz said Northfield hasn't received a lot of support from the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (CVEDC) since the new director came on board. He suggested cutting the amount of the voluntary dues the municipality pays from \$2,500 to \$1,500. Selectman Maxwell thought it might be better to inform CVEDC of our concerns before taking this action. This was the consensus of the Board.

The Conservation Commission has asked that its line item amount be increased from \$200 to \$400 to better cover the costs of photocopying, maps, etc. There was no objection. Manager Schulz noted Northfield's annual dues for VLCT membership will rise from \$8,080 to \$8,380 in the next fiscal year. Selectman Maxwell believes that the benefits Northfield receives from VLCT is well worth the membership dues.

Manager Schulz said since Northfield has a recycling center/transfer station, the municipality must belong to a solid waste management district. Over the past ten (10) years, Northfield has had membership in the Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District (CVSWMD) and the Mad River Resource Management Alliance (MRRMA) but left each in turn due to increasingly high membership costs. Several years ago, Northfield joined with Randolph, Braintree, and Brookfield to form the Mountain Alliance. The annual membership cost is \$7,000, which covers the expense of holding household hazardous waste collections, administrative costs, etc. Selectman Maxwell felt this was a good deal since Northfield probably would be paying over \$20,000 had we stayed with the MRRMA.

Manager Schulz said the proposed budget includes a \$3,350 payment to Green Mountain Transit (GMT) to operate the weekly shuttle bus, provide transportation services for seniors, etc. Selectman Maxwell felt this was a justified expense. GMT also will be seeking \$21,000 through a special article on the Town Meeting warning for continued operation of the Northfield-Montpelier Commuter Bus. Selectman Maxwell believes there should be a community conversation on whether the annual cost of this service is justifiable based on ridership, etc. He felt if the Select Board members decided it was not, they could advise voters to reject the ballot article. Chair Goslant hopes if a GMT representative comes to a future Select Board meeting regarding the ballot article, he/she would be able to provide real information and hard facts this time.

Manager Schulz said the cost of operating the streetlights will remain at \$21,000 in the next fiscal year. Chair Goslant believes the conversion to LED light fixtures resulted in significant cost savings. He asked if upcoming Green Energy requirements might increase this amount. Manager Schulz did not see this happening for several years.

Administrative Capital Equipment Plan (CEP).

Manager Schulz said a device that will allow for live streaming of Select Board meeting recently was purchased for \$700. This will come out of the "Video Camera" CEP account. Selectman Goodrich wanted to be sure that enough funds were being set aside for the replacement of staff personnel computers. Ms. Baroffio has a replacement schedule so not all computers are replaced at the same time. The current annual set-aside amount (\$6,830) should be sufficient.

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

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

The Board adjourned at 8:31 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 January 9, 2018.