

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of January 11, 2018**

- 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, Ambulance Chief Lawton Rutter, and Elroy C. Hill.

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. Fire Department.** Manager Schulz said there was an unresolved issue with the Fire Department's Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget involving the 1993 Tanker, which was purchased used in 1995. The original plan was to replace this vehicle in the next fiscal year with an estimated replacement cost of \$250,000. Manager Schulz has researched this matter and found that a good used Tanker can be purchased for between \$150,000 and \$160,000. This includes trucks used as demonstration models. He also has spoken to some Northfield Fire Department (NFD) members who believe that, despite some overheating problems, the Tanker could remain in service for another year or two. In addition, significant debt payments (\pm \$100,000) will be coming off the books by FY 2020/2021. For these reasons, Manager Schulz would like to postpone the Tanker replacement for at least another year. In the interim, the NFD will be looking for a used Tanker in the \$150,000 to \$160,000 range for when the vehicle replacement is authorized. Selectman Maxwell saw a news report a few weeks ago about the Middlesex Fire Department purchasing a rebuilt Tanker from a company in Williamstown. The rebuilt truck cost about one-third as much as a new one. Perhaps this approach should be considered. Selectman Maxwell also agreed with postponing the Tanker replacement for a year or two but suggested increasing the amount allocated for its replacement in future years (\$12,000) in order to reduce the amount that would have to be borrowed when the purchase is authorized. After further discussion, the Select Board consensus was to postpone the Tanker replacement for at least one year; lower its expected replacement cost from \$250,000 to \$160,000; and to increase the future annual replacement allocations from \$12,000 to \$25,000.

In the NFD Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), Manager Schulz noted there is \$11,714 in the Building Improvements account with another \$13,000 to be added in the next fiscal year. \$11,000 of this will come from prior year surplus funds. There had been a proposal to move the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) into an expanded Fire Station but that has been shelved for the time being due to the high cost estimate (\pm \$1,300,000) provided by the project architect. Chair Goslant asked if NAS could continue to share the Town Garage with the Highway Department for the time being. NAS Chief Lawton Rutter said the current facility does meet minimum requirements. Chair Goslant asked if the current Fire Station could share space with other departments. Chief Rutter didn't see any available room for this.

Selectman Maxwell noted the architect said it would take at least \$1,000,000 to bring the Fire Station up to current standards and address severe structural deficiencies. Selectman Johnson would favor seeking voter approval for a bond that would fix all the building's problems at once rather than take a piecemeal approach. He felt the \$25,000 that would be available in the next fiscal year is only a drop in the bucket. Chief Rutter said it seems most municipal departments now are making do with facilities in poor condition with limited space. Selectman Doney estimated it would take about \$200,000 to fix all the problems with the Town Garage. Selectman Maxwell felt the structural problems at the Town Garage and Fire Station need to be addressed as soon as possible.

Selectman Doney would like to increase the \$13,000 proposed for the next fiscal year to \$20,000. He would like to start with repairs to the building's insulation and then work on the roof the following year. Chief Rutter warned about spending any money on the roof if expansion of the Fire Station's footprint was still under future consideration. He was concerned about spending money on sections of the roof that might have to be removed later if the building was redesigned. Selectman Maxwell would like to postpone any decisions regarding the NFD Building Improvements account until he and Selectman Doney, acting as the Town Buildings & Energy Committee, have been able to inspect the Fire Station and Town Garage. This is scheduled for tomorrow morning and afterwards they will provide a full report with recommendations.

- b. Ambulance Service.** At a previous budget meeting (12/14/17), there was a discussion about raising the hourly wage for NAS responders. The original proposal was to increase this from \$11.00 per hour to \$12.00 per hour. However, Chief Rutter feels an increase to \$13.00 per hour would be more reasonable given that Barre Town EMS now pays its responders \$17.00 per hour. Selectman Doney suggested a tiered pay scale with more experienced and better certified responders getting higher pay. Selectman Maxwell doesn't oppose this idea but would like to leave the particulars to Chief Rutter and Manager Schulz. He felt the Select Board should focus on establishing the line item amount for NAS part-time responders rather than get involved in day-to-day operations. Selectman Doney favors increasing the hourly wage to \$13.00 and allowing Chief Rutter to establish a tiered pay scale. Selectman Maxwell felt a \$2.00 per hour increase was fair at this time and would allow for another market adjustment during next year's budget process. After further discussion, the Select Board consensus was to increase the NAS part-time employee line item from \$64,200 to \$71,200. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio will make adjustments in the other accounts, i.e. Workers' Compensation, etc., affected by this decision.

In the NAS CIP budget, there is a \$2,333 balance in the Building Improvements account with another \$2,500 to be added in the next fiscal year. Selectman Maxwell would like to postpone any further discussion of this until the aforementioned building inspections have taken place. There was no objection.

In the NAS CEP budget, Manager Schulz said there were some remaining issues: the future replacement of the NAS ATV and Boggin as well as the possible future purchase of a PowerLoad System (which power lifts occupied stretchers into and out of an ambulance unit). At the previous budget meeting, Chief Rutter reported Norwich University's Center for Civic Engagement was willing to fund future replacements of the ATV and Boggin provided they are stored at the Shaw Outdoor Center. Chief Rutter confirmed this remains the plan but he has yet to receive the paperwork that would release these funds. Manager Schulz said nothing has been allocated in the coming fiscal year for the placement of these vehicles. Once Norwich University (NU) formally has committed to this, these accounts can be removed from the budget. Ms. Baroffio noted about \$8,000 already has been set aside in these accounts and these funds could be allocated elsewhere once the paperwork is completed. If this is not done in the next couple weeks, the transfer would have to wait until next year's budget process. Manager Schulz said he would reach out to NU and try to expedite the matter.

As for the PowerLoad System, Chief Rutter said it is required for all new ambulance units but that hasn't affected NAS so far since it has remounted its units in recent years rather than purchasing all-new vehicles. However, that approach cannot continue forever so Chief Rutter would like to establish CEP accounts for PowerLoad System purchases for when the need arises. Manager Schulz said there would be an initial \$6,710 allocation in the proposed FY 2018/2019 budget. Chair Goslant asked if NAS should have the PowerLoad System now. Chief Rutter said it would be nice to have one but no money has been set aside for the purchase. Selectman Maxwell suggested moving the aforementioned \$8,000 into this account when possible.

- c. Municipal Facilities, etc.** In the Municipal Pool CEP budget, Manager Schulz confirmed the amount allocated for replacing the pool filter has been increased from \$5,000 to \$7,500. Selectman Maxwell said when Pool Director Shannon Palone she addressed the Select Board at the last budget meeting (01/09/18), she reported that the two (2) lifeguard chairs need to be replaced. He researched this matter and found a \$1,600 lifeguard chair that would be perfect for the Municipal Pool. It is made of durable material and would last for several years. Manager Schulz remembers Ms. Palone asked for one chair to be replaced this summer and the other next year. In the Municipal Pool CEP budget, Manager Schulz noted \$6,000 has been allocated to the FY 2018/2019 for the Paint/Repair Pool account and \$10,000 for the Skimmer replacement account. Selectman Maxwell said these accounts have sufficient funds and are on schedule.

Manager Schulz said the Cemetery CIP budget is well-funded for the next fiscal year. The most urgent concern is the replacement of the Mount Hope Cemetery's front wall but there is more than enough money (\$11,131) in the account to cover this expense (\pm \$10,000). Selectman Doney asked about the new fence for the Falls Cemetery. Manager Schulz said CIP surplus interest funds would be used to cover this expense. Chair Goslant said if Bruce Wright, the cemetery care contractor, has no objections to this budget neither does he.

Manager Schulz noted in the Grounds/Parks/Facilities CIP budget, the big project in the coming year is the new pavilion for Memorial Park. The estimated cost is \$25,000 and the municipality will provide \$10,000 of this from prior year surplus. The balance will be covered by donations. Northfield Rotarians already have pledged to pay for the new bathrooms near the ballfields. Manager Schulz also will work with the Recreation Committee on any possible grant applications. Selectman Maxwell said there is about \$8,000 in this CIP budget for facility repair and park updates. Ms. Baroffio noted another \$5,000 in the "Safety Issues" account that hasn't been used in several years. Selectman Maxwell would like a written plan on what can and should be done in the parks with these budgeted funds as well as what can be raised through donations, grants, etc.

Chair Goslant would like to see if any savings can be reaped should the janitorial services for the Municipal Building, Brown Public Library, and Police Station be put out to bid. Manager Schulz said he has held off on this since there also was a recent suggestion that these services could be brought in-house and done by a part-time maintenance worker. Chair Goslant would like to keep the janitorial services as a contracted service. He also would like management to look into outsourcing maintenance of the exterior areas of the Municipal Building, Brown Public Library, and Police Station. This would include snow removal in the winter and mowing in the summer. The contract also would include maintenance of the Water Street buyout properties. Manager Schulz noted there already is \$7,500 in the Grounds/Parks/Facilities for contracted mowing of these properties. Manager Schulz suggested removing the \$2,000 allocated for the replacement of the Municipal Building furnace since this has been postponed.

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

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

The Board adjourned at 8:35 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 23, 2018.