

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of January 15, 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, Deb Partlow (Northfield Senior Center), Susan Boyd (Northfield Senior Center), Aaron Rhodes, and Elroy 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. Northfield Senior Center.** Manager Schulz said the budget allocation for the Senior Center has been \$20,000 for several years but there now is a request to increase this to \$25,000. Deb Partlow is the Treasurer for the Senior Center and Susan Boyd is the Vice-President and they are present tonight to explain this request. Ms. Partlow said the \$20,000 payment represents about one-sixth of the Senior Center's total budget. The Senior Center also receives funds from the Central Vermont Council on Aging (CVCOA) with this amount tied to the number of Meals on Wheels delivered in the community. The Town of Roxbury also makes a small contribution based on the number of its residents getting meals delivered. Ms. Partlow said about half the Meals on Wheels recipients pay for the service themselves. In addition, the senior citizens partaking in the meals served at the Senior Center are asked to provide a donation. However, since many local senior citizens have limited means, these donations do not fully cover the cost of providing the meals. In fact, the Senior Center usually runs a \$24,000 annual deficit on meals provided both in-house and delivered. The Senior Center does hold various fundraising activities throughout the year including Spaghetti Dinners, the annual Duck Race, etc. Ms. Partlow noted the Senior Center has limited overhead expenses with only two part-time employees. She then described the services provided at the Senior Center including a wide variety of entertainment and educational presentations. The topics are based on what the senior citizens request. Selectman Johnson added financial experts come in each year to help senior citizens prepare their state and federal tax forms. Ms. Boyd noted Gifford Medical Center soon will be sending representatives to provide health talks on diabetes, memory loss, etc. The Select Board members seemed receptive to raising the annual allocation from \$20,000 to \$25,000 given the important role the Senior Center serves in the community. However, Selectman Maxwell would like to see budget breakdowns for the last fiscal year before any final decision is made. Ms. Partlow will provide that information in the next day.
- b. Municipal Facilities (Fire Station, Town Garage, etc.)** Manager Schulz said the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget for Fire Station "Building Improvements" now has an \$11,714 balance with another \$13,000 allocated for FY 2018/2019. The Town Building & Energy Subcommittee (Selectmen Doney and Maxwell) recently inspected the Fire Station and found a number of deficiencies. The top five priorities (with price estimates to address) are: 1. Insulation (\$19,000); 2. Lights (\$10,000); 3. Windows (\$5,000 to \$7,500); 4. Roof (\$60,000); and 5. Upstairs Flooring (\$15,000 to \$20,000). Selectman Maxwell added a couple more concerns: the building siding (\$14,000) and bathroom renovations (\$5,000). He and Selectman Doney both feel addressing roof problems should be the top priority and done as soon as possible. Selectman Maxwell felt \$104,000 would take care of the most pressing problems. He feels the Select Board members need to stop just talking about the building's deficiencies and start taking action. Selectman Johnson noted a building like this does need constant attention to be maintained properly.

Selectman Maxwell said funding for these building improvements can come from a number of sources including past year surplus funds, CIP funds, higher property taxes, etc. He doesn't want to overburden the taxpayer but funds need to be raised. To begin with, he felt the \$13,000 allocation should be increased to \$15,000 for each of the next two fiscal years. Selectman Doney would like this increased for the next three years.

As regards the Town Garage, shared by the Highway Department and Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS), Manager Schulz said the Town Building & Energy Subcommittee also inspected this building and found a number of problems here as well. These include (also with price estimates) 1. New shower in the NAS section (\$5,000); 2. Windows (\$10,000); 3. Furnace replacement (\$10,000); 4. Insulation (\$80,000); 5. Wall ventilation (\$10,000); and 6. New washer/dryer in the NAS section (\$2,000).

Selectman Maxwell noted the municipality now has limited space for storing old documents. He saw a good vault-like area in the Town Garage now being used to store canned goods and other items for CERV. It might not be a bad idea to relocate CERV elsewhere so this space can be used for proper document storage.

Manager Schulz noted there is a \$10,003 balance in the Highway Department's budget for "Building Improvements" and another \$2,333 in the NAS CIP budget for the same purpose. Chair Goslant said Selectmen Doney and Maxwell put together an excellent report. Selectman Maxwell was grateful but said the hard job will be finding a way to pay for all the recommendations. Altogether, it would take over \$200,000 to fix all the identified problems in the Fire Station and Town Garage. Selectman Doney said the municipality would be paying a lot more in the future if these buildings are allowed to further deteriorate. He felt this should be explained to Northfield residents when they are asked to approve the budget on Town Meeting Day. Chair Goslant noted there also is the Municipal Building, which he considered a "dump." Selectman Maxwell cannot comment on this since he and Selectman Doney didn't inspect this facility. He also doesn't think all three buildings can be addressed in one night.

- c. Miscellaneous.** Manager Schulz said there were a number of items the Select Board discussed previously without making a firm decision. For example, when the proposed NAS budget was discussed, Manager Schulz had the impression that the Select Board would like to start setting aside funds in order to purchase a PowerLift stretcher when the next ambulance unit is replaced in FY 2021/2022 rather than purchase one sooner. Selectman Doney said despite the high cost (\$26,840), this really is a very useful piece of equipment that would save strain on NAS responders' backs. This could help cut down on potential workers' compensation claims. In addition, this has become more of a concern as adult Americans have gotten much heavier in the past few years. It used to be a patient weighing upwards of two hundred and fifty pounds (250 lbs.) was considered quite hefty but now ambulance services around the country often deal with patients more than twice as heavy. Selectman Doney would like to double the set-aside amount so that a PowerLift can be purchased in two years rather than four. Chair Goslant suggested raising the current \$25 per capita charge for ambulance coverage in Roxbury and West Berlin. The additional funds might offset the expense of such equipment purchases. Manager Schulz said this might bring in some additional funding but would not be a huge windfall. Selectman Maxwell felt NAS fees probably were at the optimal levels though some minor tweaking might be possible. After further discussion, the consensus of the Select Board members was to look into raising the per capita rate to \$28 while supporting management's recommendation to delay any PowerLift purchase until FY 2021/2020.

Another budget issue Manager Schulz would like resolved is in the Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget for the Northfield Fire Department (NFD). During a previous budget meeting, the Select Board seemed to favor reducing the expected cost to replace the used 1993 Tanker from \$250,000 to \$160,000. It was felt a good used truck could be found for the lesser price. The lower figure was confirmed by Select Board consensus.

In the Highway Department CIP budget, there were existing balances in the Northfield Center Drainage (\$16,984) and other dormant accounts for which there were no plans in the near future. It was suggested these funds could be transferred to other accounts in more need of funding but Manager Schulz would like to confirm the targets. Chair Goslant would like to split these funds between the Road Surface Management System (RSMS) and Sidewalks accounts.

Selectman Goodrich asked if the \$15,000 allocated for Legal Fees was sufficient given the high overages in recent years. Manager Schulz said these overages were due to one particular case that has been resolved. He felt the proposed amount would be sufficient especially since VLCT now will be providing some legal services free of charge.

Selectman Maxwell remembered during the discussion of salaries of the Municipal Pool lifeguards there had been some suggestion of also raising the Pool Director's compensation. However, this matter was left unresolved. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio said the Pool Director is set to receive a three percent (3%) increase this year. Selectman Maxwell felt four percent (4%) was more appropriate. There was no objection. Selectman Maxwell feels raising pool revenue would help cover these salary increases. He would like pool user fee revenue increased by \$9,000 with \$3,000 coming from the development of new programs. The other \$6,000 would be secured by increases in the amount charged for seasonal and daily passes as well as swimming lessons. Chair Goslant agreed that Northfield charges much less for similar services than other Central Vermont communities with public pools. A fee adjustment would bring in additional revenue without too harsh an impact on pool users.

- d. **Revenue.** Manager Schulz went through the anticipated revenue amounts and said most were about the same as the previous fiscal year. The major exception was NAS fees revenue budgeted at \$532,000, which is a \$52,000 increase. Also, if the Select Board does increase the per capita rate for Roxbury and West Berlin to \$28,000, this would bring in an additional \$3,000 in NAS revenue.

In addition to higher pool fees, Selectman Doney would like to see an increase in the amount collected for the Park/Pool Use Donations account by establishing set amounts that must be paid if the pool and park are used by private parties after normal business hours. Chair Goslant believes the Recreation Committee is working on a donation policy when the new pavilion is reserved for private events and this could cover after-hours pool use as well.

Manager Schulz noted the Water/Sewer Department purchased its own backhoe last year so no longer will pay the Town to rent the Highway Department's vehicle. The Water/Sewer Department will continue to rent the Town's dump truck for \$4,500 this coming fiscal year. Chair Goslant felt this amount should be increased since the FEMA rate doesn't take a lot of factors into consideration. Selectman Maxwell would like more information on this before changing the amount.

- e. **Next Budget Meeting: Thursday, January 18, 2018.** Although Selectman Maxwell will be out of town, he plans to take part in the next budget meeting by telephone. He added that in the next few months, he would like the municipality to develop a comprehensive capital infrastructure plan that would cover roads, sidewalks, bridges, etc. He would like this plan to include hard figures for what it would cost to address all the problems with our highway infrastructure. Selectman Maxwell believes such a long-term plan would better inform the public of the challenges ahead as well as assist the Select Board greatly during next year's budget process. He felt the current method of shifting CIP and CEP funds around was a "Band-Aid approach."

Manager Schulz said the Select Board members would be provided with updated budget sheets at the next meeting incorporating all the agreed changes to date. Selectman Maxwell would like a punch list of all the budget issues that still need resolution.

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 9:15 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 revised and approved at the regular Select Board meeting of February 13, 2018.