

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of January 18, 2018

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Kenneth W. Goslant, Selectmen Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, Kenneth Johnson, and K. David Maxwell (via phone). Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Finance Director Laurie Baroffio, Matthew Gadbois, 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. FY 2018/2019 Town Budget Recap.** The Select Board members were provided with updated budget pages with all suggested changes to date. There also were summary pages highlighting the differences between the current draft budget and the one initially presented to them when the budget meetings begin in early December 2017.

In terms of revenue, the anticipated amount of Ambulance fees to be collected during FY 2018/2019 has been lowered from \$532,000 to \$510,000. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio feels this is a more accurate projection based on actual figures for the past few months. Manager Schulz said with the increase in the per capita rate Roxbury and West Berlin will be paying for Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) coverage, an additional \$930 in revenue can be added to the budget. He contacted the leadership of both towns and the fee increase was considered acceptable. The budget also has been revised to include an additional \$9,000 in revenue from the municipal pool in the next fiscal year. \$6,000 of this increase will be from higher charges for daily entrance fees, seasonal pool passes, and swimming lessons. The other \$3,000 will come from new programs. Manager Schulz will work with Pool Director Shannon Palone to revise the user fees for the pool based on what neighboring communities charge for similar services.

The other major change on the revenue side is the transfer of prior year surplus funds to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) accounts for Fire Station building improvements (\$104,000) and Town Garage building improvements (\$103,000). Both buildings were inspected recently by the Select Board's Town Buildings & Energy Subcommittee and found to have significant deficiencies. Chair Goslant had no objections to the revisions proposed for FY 2018/2019 revenue projections but may want to revisit this at a later date.

In the Operating Budget, Ms. Baroffio said there are minor revisions in VMERS and workers compensation amounts throughout the budget due to policy changes approved since the proposed budget was drafted in late November 2017. Manager Schulz noted the initial "Heating Fuel" budget for the Fire Station has been lowered from \$3,400 to \$2,500 to better reflect current fuel costs. The line item for NAS part-time employees has been raised from \$64,200 to \$69,550 to cover the hourly wage increase previously authorized by the Select Board. Chair Goslant noted the Select Board also increased the Highway Department's "Gravel/Stone" account from \$50,000 to \$66,000 to reflect actual costs in recent years. He added the Highway Department will be crushing more stone in its own pit in order to keep costs down. The Municipal Pool part-time employee account has been increased from \$24,000 to \$29,000 to cover an hourly rate increase for the lifeguards.

In the CIP budgets, the funding for improvements to the Fire Station have been increased from \$13,000 to \$15,000. An additional \$104,000 from prior year surplus funds also will be added to this account. Selectman Johnson is very concerned about the poor condition of the building's roof and how it might undermine the whole structure. Selectman Maxwell said the architect who inspected the building a couple years ago said bad insulation and poor ventilation were the main problems with the building. Chair Goslant doesn't want to spend \$60,000 on a new roof if the current one can last another year or two. Selectman Maxwell said the problem has been identified so he would like funds set aside to fix it. It is possible a professional inspection would yield a different recommendation.

Manager Schulz said the Highway Department CIP would have an additional \$103,000 from prior year surplus for improvements to the Town Garage. In addition, the amount of new funds for sidewalks has been raised from \$12,334 to \$19,834. With the current balance in this account and after deducting the cost of paving the East Street sidewalk, there would be about \$43,000 available for other sidewalk work. Chair Goslant said the sidewalk on Main Street is in bad condition from the Central Street intersection (by Norwich University) northward to Cumberland Farms. The current plan is to repave the west side of South Main Street. Selectman Maxwell would like a comprehensive highway infrastructure plan so long-term decisions can be properly made.

Manager Schulz said the \$16,984 in the Northfield Center Drainage CIP account, which hasn't been touched for several years, will be transferred to the Road Surface Management System (RSMS) account. This will increase this account to \$179,316 and the bulk of this will be used for highway paving. There are plans to use \$49,000 to pave the ends of Lovers Lane and Berlin Pond Road. Another \$45,000 will be used to fix the dip on Union Brook Road. Selectman Johnson noted this would be a temporary solution as this road needs a total reconstruction.

In the Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) accounts, Manager Schulz said the amount set aside in the Fire Department budget for tanker replacement has been increased from \$12,000 to \$25,000. With all the budget revisions to date, about \$156,000 has been added to the tax levy.

Ms. Baroffio would like a few issues resolved that the Select Board members discussed earlier. For example, there had been some discussion of increasing the amount the municipality provides the Northfield Senior Center each fiscal year from \$20,000 to \$25,000. After reviewing the Senior Center's financial statements, Selectman Maxwell isn't sure if this should be a budget priority. Selectman Johnson said the appropriation has been set at \$20,000 for several years and he had suggested an additional \$5,000 due to the rising costs of providing in-house and delivered meals to local senior citizens. After further discussion, there was a consensus to approve the increase largely due to the important role the Senior Center serves in this community.

Another issue was whether to set aside funds to purchase new backboards for the municipal pool. After a short discussion, it was decided not to set aside any funds in the budget specifically for this purpose. Ms. Baroffio noted there are about \$9,000 in recreation donation funds that could be used for this if the need is demonstrated at a later time.

Ms. Baroffio cannot provide the exact figure for the new tax rate until the Grand List is finalized but she estimated there would be a five cent (5¢) increase based on the proposed budget to date.

Selectman Goslant does not feel the current budget provides enough funds for sidewalks or highway paving. Ms. Baroffio said if the Select Board would like to go to the bond bank for funds, she would need to know the amount to be requested, the number of years for repayment, etc. Selectman Maxwell said this is one reason he has requested a comprehensive highway infrastructure plan so this type of long-term planning would be possible. He believes highway paving and sidewalks have been underfunded for several years, which has created a backlog of problems.

Selectman Goodrich asked how to start working on this plan. Manager Schulz said the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) can assist. The first step would be an inventory of the roads and sidewalks that would prioritize those in the worst condition. Chair Goslant said Highway Foreman Trent Tucker does update the RSMS program each spring after mud season is over. He agreed with Selectman Maxwell that previous Select Boards did not provide sufficient funds for maintaining the highway infrastructure as they had been obsessed with keeping tax rates low. As a result, our highways and sidewalks have been allowed to deteriorate. Chair Goslant conceded that Highway Foreman Tucker and his predecessors did outstanding jobs given the inadequate budgets they were given.

Selectman Maxwell left the meeting at this time.

According to his figures, Chair Goslant said \$43,000 has been allocated for the sidewalks and \$112,000 for highway paving. Manager Schulz said the latter figure was what was left after immediate problems were fixed on Union Brook Road, Lovers Lane, and Berlin Pond Road (as indicated previously). Ms. Baroffio said Town General surplus funds also are available. She added state rules regarding highway budget spending are rather flexible. Selectman Goodrich noted if \$60,000 was borrowed for the Fire Station roof, this would free up \$60,000 in surplus funds for sidewalks and highway paving. Chair Goslant would like to add another \$45,000 to the sidewalks account in order to repave with blacktop the South Main Street sidewalk. Ms. Baroffio said this addition would raise the anticipated increase in the town tax rate to about 8.3¢. Chair Goslant said this budget will take care of a number of problems that have been ignored for several years. Now the municipality will be run like a business that takes care of its assets. Manager Schulz said the proposed budget will be finalized with the additional changes discussed tonight and prepared for approval at next week's regular meeting (01/23/18).

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled).

- a. Matthew Gadbois: Labor Day Weekend Police Coverage.** Mr. Gadbois said vendors on the Common over this long holiday weekend now have to breakdown their stalls, pack away their wares, etc., each night because there is no nighttime security. He felt this was discouraging new vendors from participating in the festivities. Manager Schulz said last year Police Chief William Jennings did bring in additional part-time officers over the weekend. He is unsure about nighttime coverage. Mr. Gadbois and the Labor Day Weekend Festivities committee would like a constant police presence there from 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Selectman Maxwell felt this was a reasonable request. He would like Manager Schulz to work with Chief Jennings to provide this twenty-four (24) hour coverage on the Common over the holiday weekend. This should be done within the budget the Select Board members already have approved. Manager Schulz will discuss this with him. Mr. Gadbois said having just one officer on the Common would serve as a deterrent.

VI. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Selectman Goodrich, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:46 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.