

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of January 23, 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, Sally Davidson (Recreation Committee) Matthew Gadbois, Wendy Rea (Northfield Labor Day Weekend Festivities), 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.** Prior to the meeting, the Select Board members had been supplied with updated budget sheets incorporating all the changes to date in the proposed FY 2018/2019 budget. At the previous budget meeting (01/18/18), there has been some discussion of increasing the Road Surface Management System (RSMS) account by about \$60,000 and the sidewalks account by about \$45,000. There also were \$16,000 increases for public park upgrades/maintenance and \$5,000 for the Senior Center. Manager Schulz would like the Select Board to confirm these changes tonight.

Chair Goslant noted Highway Foreman Trent Tucker has estimated it would cost about \$65,000 to pave 2,600 feet of sidewalk on the west side of South Main Street. This would be from the Common to the intersection with Central Street. He asked what the amount now dedicated for sidewalk work was. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio noted \$54,834 already has been added to the sidewalk account. Added to the existing balance of \$63,610, this would provide about \$118,000 for sidewalks in the next fiscal year. She said about \$40,000 already has been committed to paving the part of the East Street sidewalk near the Northfield Savings Bank.

Chair Goslant noted Mr. Tucker also has identified the roads most in need of repaving, which are Union Brook, Slate Avenue, Vine Street, and Cemetery Street. The work on Slate Avenue has been postponed until after drainage issues have been resolved. Selectman Johnson felt the large drop off on Union Brook Road needs to be fixed as soon as possible. Manager Schulz said the municipality was applying to the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) for a Hazard Mitigation grant that might cover the cost of this (\pm \$45,000). Selectman Maxwell asked what was the total amount for RSMS at this point. Manager Schulz said the current figure is \$239,316. In addition to the roads listed above, Selectman Goslant said Mr. Tucker would inspect the roads again after mud season to finalize the RSMS priority list. Selectman Maxwell asked if there were any cost estimates for the roads already mentioned. Manager Schulz felt Union Brook Road would need a total reconstruction that would cost in excess of \$1,000,000. The estimate for Slate Avenue is about \$130,000 and he felt fixing both Vine Street and Cemetery Street would have a total cost of about \$200,000.

Ms. Baroffio noted \$27,000 was left over from the Winch Hill paving project. Subtracting the cost of urgent repair work needed on Union Brook Road (\$45,000) and Lovers Lane (\$20,000) would leave about \$202,000 in the RSMS account. Chair Goslant said the Vine Street and Cemetery Street work probably would be patching bad parts and not the whole street. He felt whatever the total RSMS budget turns out to be, Mr. Tucker will use most if not all of it in the coming year. Selectman Maxwell still would like the municipality to create a comprehensive highway infrastructure plan so all needed paving can be budgeted properly.

Manager Schulz said other problems areas need to be addressed with some patching, such as Central Street. Selectman Goodrich got the impression at the last budget meeting the current plan is to fix the immediate problems on Union Brook Road, Lovers Lane, Vine Street, and Cemetery Street but to hold off on any major road reconstructions until the comprehensive plan has been developed. Selectman Maxwell asked who would put the plan together. Selectman Johnson thought management could work with the Highway Subcommittee and any highway expert VTrans would be willing to provide. Manager Schulz said the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) also would be of assistance.

Selectman Maxwell would like the Select Board to look into the possible financing options for the major highway projects under consideration. Since we are looking at mainly patch work for the time being, the impact on the tax rate might not be as bad as feared. Chair Goslant said these major projects include the Slate Avenue stormwater drainage, the Elm Street wall repairs, a stormwater project on Union Street, etc. He felt some progress has been made in getting expenses under control, such as selling the street sweeper. Selectman Johnson noted a lot of old debts would be coming off the books in the next couple of years so this probably is a good time to focus on minor projects.

Selectman Maxwell asked if the \$121,000 increase in highway infrastructure spending would result in an eight and a half cent (8½¢) increase in the tax rate. Manager Schulz confirmed this. He added it was possible to borrow some funding in order to limit this budget's immediate impact on the tax rate. Ms. Baroffio said four (4) highway infrastructure loans were still being paid off. Three (3) were for RSMS funding and the other was the Depot Square Reconstruction project. Prior to merger, she noted, the Town and Village had separate highway budgets and there wasn't always the best coordination between the two local governments. Manager Schulz felt the municipality hasn't been budgeting enough for highway infrastructure in recent years. Selectman Maxwell said even though this budget might move up Northfield's slot as one of the highest taxed communities in Vermont, it will be addressing some serious concerns that have been ignored for some time. He still would like to consider alternative funding sources in order to lessen its impact on Northfield taxpayers. This would include borrowing funds. Ms. Baroffio noted this would require a separate article on the Town Meeting warning. Manager Schulz said the warning is scheduled for approval at a Special Select Board Meeting on Tuesday, January 30, 2018. Selectman Goodrich felt working out all the details would require another budget meeting to be held this coming Thursday night (01/25/18). Ms. Baroffio said other articles would need to be drafted to authorize shifting designated Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) funds to other accounts. Selectman Goodrich would like Manager Schulz and Ms. Baroffio to develop different financing options for discussion at the budget meeting that might lessen this budget's impact on the tax rate. Chair Goslant also would like the budget finalized at that time.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled).

- a. **Matthew Gadbois: Labor Day Weekend Police Coverage.** Mr. Gadbois had asked at the last budget meeting (01/18/18) about possibly putting additional funds in the Northfield Police Department (NPD) budget so there can be twenty-four (24) hour NPD security over the Labor Day weekend. Manager Schulz felt this would require bringing in additional part-time officers at the cost of \$2,000 but this could come out of the NPD budget as proposed.
- b. **Matthew Gadbois: Grant Applications.** Mr. Gadbois would like the municipality to apply for as many state and federal grants as possible in order to lower the tax rate. He felt this might require hiring someone who focused solely on finding grant opportunities and writing the applications. Manager Schulz feels the current municipal staff does apply for all the grants for which Northfield is eligible so he didn't see the need for an additional employee. Should Mr. Gadbois suspect any missed grant opportunities, he is asked to contact Manager Schulz as soon as possible.

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

The Board adjourned at 7:03 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 February 13, 2018.