

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of January 25, 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, Chris Bradley, 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.** Manager Schulz said at the previous budget meeting (01/23/18), the Select Board members had discussed several possible revisions of the proposed budget. These included raising the annual appropriation for the Senior Center from \$20,000 to \$25,000 as well as increases for the road paving, sidewalks, and park improvements. The Select Board members also asked Manager Schulz and Finance Director Laurie Baroffio to provide financing options that would lessen the impact of these increases on the tax rate. Such options included use of prior year surplus funds, borrowing, etc. The scenarios provided by Ms. Baroffio included the sale of the Fire Pumper truck, sale of the street sweeper, and borrowing \$60,000 to improve the Fire Station roof. Selectman Maxwell felt this roof needed to be fixed as soon as possible as its poor condition threatened the stability of the whole building. Ms. Baroffio usually opposes borrowing funds but in this case sees some advantages as it would be for a specific project and would free up surplus funds that could be used to lower the tax rate. If it is decided not to address the roof problems in the next fiscal year, the \$60,000 would roll over into the next one. Selectman Johnson believes this borrowing would create a commitment to have this problem resolved in the near future while informing voters of the urgency.

Selectman Goodrich doesn't feel the additional \$16,000 for park improvements as Selectman Johnson has requested is necessary. Selectman Maxwell also has concerns that the need for these funds has not been fully explained. He would like to understand this better himself before asking the public to approve this. Selectman Doney noted a number of both major and minor repairs and improvements that are needed in Memorial Park. This included repairs to the ballfields' dugouts and bleachers, configuring a new soccer field, etc. Ms. Baroffio noted a \$5,000 balance in the "Safety Issues" Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) account that hasn't been used for some time. She suggested this amount could be transferred to the "Design/Update Parks" CIP account, which already has a \$3,133.85 balance. Given this, Selectman Johnson asked the amount of new funding set aside for park improvements in the next fiscal year's budget be set at \$5,000 rather than the \$16,000 he previously requested. Selectman Maxwell felt the new total amount should be sufficient to address the concerns Selectman Doney listed. Selectman Doney noted much of the actual labor will be performed by community volunteers. There was no objection to this proposal. In addition, \$1,000 in the Recreation Committee's operating budget will be transferred to the Grounds/Parks/ Facilities CIP budget in a "Holiday Enhancements" account. Selectman Maxwell would prefer these funds came from donations but will not quibble on this matter.

Ms. Baroffio then suggested that some of the Fire Station's internal improvements could be funded from the Northfield Fire Department's donation account. This would include such minor improvements as a new washer/dryer, bathroom upgrades, etc. Selectman Maxwell would like the municipality to develop a blanket policy regarding use of donation funds as there have been some concerns how donations to the Northfield Fire Department (NFD), Northfield Ambulance Service, Brown Public Library, the Recreation Committee, etc. have been collected and how they are spent. The consensus of the Select Board was \$5,000 from the NFD donation account would be used for building improvements.

There followed a discussion of relocating CERV's food and clothing supplies to municipal facilities on Kent Street, specifically the storage shed and the Municipal Building basement. This would provide CERV with more storage capacity while freeing up the space it now occupies in the Town Garage. Chair Goslant believes donations should cover most of the cost of any needed renovations.

Chair Goslant asked if the Town-owned property on Western Avenue ever would be sold. It was noted the property has been assessed at \$32,000 and the only offer to date was for \$8,000. It was the consensus of the Select Board to wait for a better offer. Manager Schulz noted the property is located in a floodplain so any new structure would have to be raised at least one foot (1') above the base flood elevation. This would add at least \$15,000 to the cost.

Ms. Baroffio said the proposed \$60,000 borrowing for the Fire Station roof would free up that amount from prior year surplus. In addition, the reduction the appropriation in the park improvements from \$16,000 to \$5,000 would free up another \$11,000. If these funds were used to lower the tax rate, it would result in a 5.05¢ increase in the tax rate. Manager Schulz asked if this was acceptable. There was no objection from the Select Board members. The proposed FY 2018/2019 budget as amended tonight was approved. This will be formally ratified at the Special Select Board Meeting next Tuesday night (01/30/18). The 2018 Northfield Town Meeting Warning also will be approved and signed at that time. Ms. Baroffio will need to draft the main budget article as well as special articles seeking voter authorization for the \$60,000 in borrowing, the transfer of funds from dedicated CIP accounts, etc.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled).

- a. **Chris Bradley: H.715.** Mr. Bradley said a bill has been introduced in the Vermont House of Representatives that would permit municipalities to impose property taxes on the buildings of private colleges and universities. State college and universities already pay into a PILOT program that reimburses host communities and this legislation is an attempt to level the playing field. Mr. Bradley will provide the Select Board members with copies of the bill and hopes they will support its passage.

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

The Board adjourned at 7:45 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.