

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN  
SPECIAL MEETING  
Minutes of January 30, 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, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, and Finance Director Laurie Baroffio.

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. DISCUSSION**

- a. Approval of FY 2018/2019 Town Budget.** Manager Schulz said the Select Board informally approved this at their last budget meeting (01/18/18). The Select Board members now have been provided with a finalized budget document incorporating all the requested changes. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio said based on the estimated Grand List, this budget would add about five cents (5¢) to the tax rate, which would be a six percent (6%) increase. This does not include all the special articles to be voted upon at Town Meeting Day. For a homestead appraised at \$250,000, this would mean a \$125 property tax increase. Selectman Doney believes this is a good budget considering all the work that will be done this coming summer on the roads, sidewalks, public parks, etc. Motion by Selectman Goodrich, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve the FY 2018/2019 Town Budget. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. Approval of 2018 Town Meeting Warning.** Manager Schulz said the major issue with the warning that has been drafted is Article 11, which would ask voters to "authorize the expenditure of \$25,000 for the purpose of purchasing, at a total cost of \$35,000, the 48.9-acre parcel at the summit of Paine Mountain and adding it to the Town Forest, the remaining \$10,000 of the total cost to be obtained through fundraising and donation..." Manager Schulz recently spoke to a representative of the prospective seller, TDS Telecom, and was told the municipality would assume all potential site liability upon purchase. The TDS Telecom representative felt this was appropriate since the municipality would be buying the property at a discounted price. Manager Schulz told him this full assumption of liability would only be proper if TDS Telecom was to donate the property. The TDS Telecom representative was unable to make that commitment but would check with his superiors. Chair Goslant noted this is a large, nationwide company so a land donation might be possible. He then asked what the discount was. Manager Schulz said the parcel has been appraised at \$45,000. Selectman Maxwell doubts another buyer would come forward since the property is essentially landlocked. He also believes the article wording would authorize the Select Board to make the purchase but would not require it. Manager Schulz noted this article is not the result of a petition so the Select Board can alter its language or remove it entirely from the warning. Selectman Goodrich asked what was the potential liability. Manager Schulz said there probably wasn't any but nothing can be certain until the land has been inspected, soil tested, etc. Selectman Goodrich felt TDS Telecom bringing this up at this time might be a "red flag." Selectman Johnson suggested a slight alteration of the article wording to allow for some "wiggle room" should the Select Board still have concerns about this liability issue. After some discussion, the Select Board decided to change the article wording to "...for the purpose of the possible purchase..." of this parcel.

Manager Schulz noted Articles 4 through 6 seek voter approval for the transfer of CIP reserve funds to other CIP accounts, mainly to the RSMS program and the Sidewalks account. Selectman Maxwell is concerned voters won't know the acronym RSMS is short for "Road Surface Management System." There was no objection to spelling out the acronym the first time it appears on the warning.

Article 8 would seek voter authorization for "borrowing an amount not to exceed sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000) for a period of not more than five (5) years for improvements to the fire station roof..." Ms. Baroffio said the borrowing period is set at five (5) years because any longer than that would require an Australian Ballot vote. She added she actually expected the borrowing to be paid off over three (3) years. After discussion, it was decided to change the article wording to "not more than three (3) years..."

Manager Schulz said Article 9 seeks voter approval for the FY 2018/2019 Town Budget as approved earlier in the meeting. Manager Schulz said Article 10, which seeks voter approval for Northfield entering into "a communications union district to be known as Central Vermont Internet..." is the result of a petition so the Select Board cannot alter the wording, etc. Chair Goslant personally doubts this is needed because there already are at least three (3) internet providers in Northfield and if it were economically feasible to provide high-speed internet to underserved areas, they would have done so. He also is concerned about potential liability issues should Central Vermont Internet decide to run its cables on poles belonging to the Northfield Electric Department.

Article 12 would seek voter approval to "authorize the Select Board to use not more than \$15,000 of existing economic development funds to remove and replace the Welcome signs..." Manager Schulz said this article also is the result of a petition. Several of the Select Board members were concerned by this article's wording because when the group behind this effort addressed the Select Board last fall, it was said the proposed article would seek \$1,500 in public funds and there was no reference to using economic development funds. Selectman Maxwell felt even if this article is approved by the voters, the Select Board members should not feel compelled to spend the full authorized amount.

The Select Board then held a brief discussion of Article 13, which seeks voter approval for the expenditure of not more than \$21,000 for the continued operation of the Northfield-Montpelier commuter bus service. Although some members questioned whether the value of this service justified the stated cost, there was no change to the article.

Articles 14 through 32 have the requests of regional non-profits organizations seeking between \$250 and \$12,400. Selectman Doney would like voters to be aware how much approval of all these articles would add to the tax rate.

Motion by Selectman Goodrich, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve and sign the 2018 Northfield Annual Town Warning as amended. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

**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 6:58 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.