

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD MEETING
Minutes of March 27, 2018

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair Kenneth W. Goslant, Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich (absent), K. David Maxwell, and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Sally Davidson (Recreation Committee), Ken Hepburn, Pam Hepburn, Leslie Striebe, Elaine Stehel, Josh Sanders, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Goslant called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

- a. Ordinance 2018-1 (Regulation of Town Parks).** Manager Schulz said he drafted an ordinance establishing rules governing use of Northfield's public parks and addresses such issues as motor vehicle use; littering; excessive noise; use of illicit drugs and/or alcohol; animal control; etc. The impetus for this was the completion of the new natural park on Water Street and concerns users were leaving trash, damaging the flora, etc. The current draft has seen changes included due to feedback from Select Board members, the Recreation Committee, etc. This public hearing is to allow members of the public to comment on the proposed ordinance before the Select Board can formally approve it. Once approved, the ordinance would go into effect in sixty (60) days. Chair Goslant asked if there was no ordinance governing use of the public parks before now. Manager Schulz said the municipality's public nuisance ordinance did cover disturbances at the parks but this new ordinance is specific to the public parks and has detailed descriptions of prohibited behavior. Sally Davidson confirmed the Recreation Committee did have input on the ordinance wording and its suggestions have been incorporated in the finalized version. Board member Doney suggested there should be dispensers with dog waste bags available in the parks. Manager Schulz agreed and said there already are such dispensers at the Water Street Park. The federal grant paying for much of the park's construction costs also covered this expense.

There being no other questions or comments, the public hearing closed at 7:06 p.m.

- IV. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. Ken Hepburn: "Welcome to Northfield" Signs.** Mr. Hepburn and Leslie Striebe have been the main trailblazers for the current movement to install new and improved signage to replace the current "Welcome to Northfield" signs on Vermont Route 12. Mr. Hepburn began by thanking those who have donated over \$2,000 to date for the new signs as well as the Northfield voters who authorized the expenditure of \$15,000 in economic development funds for new signage on Town Meeting Day (03/06/18). The original timeline was to have the new signs in place for Norwich University's commencement in mid-May but Mr. Hepburn now understands the authorized public funds will not be available until the start of the next fiscal year (07/01/18). He noted Ms. Striebe first brought up the suggestion of new signage about five (5) years ago but the process escalated over the past year in the wake of local efforts to conform with the Vermont Downtown Action Team's suggestions regarding town branding, improved signage, etc. Ms. Striebe confirmed the V-DAT Final Report (08/01/14) did emphasize the importance of new gateway signage in marketing Northfield to potential new businesses, new residents, etc. This is one reason why Ms. Striebe thought it appropriate to use existing local economic development funds to achieve this purpose. In fact, the aforementioned Town Meeting article was put on the ballot through petition and the article wording clearly stated the intention to use economic development funds in this project. Like the old ones, the new signs will have a depiction of a covered bridge as the presence of five (5) publicly-owned covered bridges in Northfield is one of the community's major claims to fame. There also is a plan to rehabilitate the current signs, which are in poor condition, and re-site them on Cox Brook Road and Vermont Route 12A.

Board member Maxwell made a request at the last Select Board meeting for a project budget and is pleased Mr. Hepburn and Ms. Striebe have provided handouts tonight including this. He does still have concerns whether it is appropriate for economic development funds to be used for this project and whether the municipality's purchasing policy has been followed with the proper number of potential vendors contacted for quotes, etc. In addition, the Select Board said municipal employees would provide some in-kind services in order to keep project costs down but there has not been a full discussion of what this would entail. He also would like written permission forms from the landowners where the new signs will be sited (and where the old signs will be re-sited). Ms. Striebe said verbal permission has been given but written permission will be obtained. Mr. Hepburn admitted he did try to expedite the process for NU commencement but now understands the need to follow the procedures set up by the municipality when public funds are involved. He will be working more with Manager Schulz in the future to ensure everything is done properly in the future with written agreements, etc. Board member Miller hopes the Select Board can do its best to expedite the process and get the new signs up as soon as possible.

Board member Doney still has concerns about who will maintain the signs and the flowers to be planted near them. He doesn't want the Highway crew made responsible as they already have enough to do. Mr. Hepburn said at least three (3) residents have volunteered to take care of the perennials to be planted. There also will be a three-year warranty for treating the signs' wooden sections. After then volunteers will have been trained to do the work themselves. Chair Goslant said additional questions will need to be answered before the Select Board can authorize the release of economic development funds but he is pleased Mr. Hepburn and Ms. Striebe will be working with Manager Schulz to address the Select Board's remaining concerns.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **March 13, 2018 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #19-18.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve Warrant #19-18 in the amount of \$159,854.14. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through March 11, 2018.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$93,445.54. Board member Doney asked about an increase in the amount of Northfield Police Department (NPD) overtime. Manager Schulz said this was mainly due to officers taking vacation time and a prolonged criminal investigation requiring several out-of-town interviews, etc. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VIII. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

- a. **Liquor License Renewal**
1. **Depot Square Pizzeria.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

IX. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Approval of Ordinance 2018-1 (Regulation of Town Parks).** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the ordinance. Board member Maxwell asked if the Recreation Committee members had any objections to the ordinance. Ms. Davidson said there were none. **Motion passed 4-0-0.** The ordinance will go into effect in sixty (60) days. In the interim, Northfield residents have the right to petition to hold a special town meeting in order to disapprove the ordinance.
- b. **Appointment of Various Town Officials.** The terms of several Select Board-appointed Town positions will expire at the end of this month. The vacancies were advertised to the general public and the current office holders were contacted to determine whether they would like to be reappointed.
1. **Conservation Commission.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to reappoint Russ Barret to another four-year term. **Motion passed 4-0-0.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to appoint Deborah Zuaro to serve out the remaining year of a four-year term. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
2. **Development Review Board.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to reappoint Paul Brown to another five-year term. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
3. **Recreation Committee.** There are five (5) applicants for four (4) open positions on the Committee. The current Recreation Committee members have provided the Select Board with the following recommendations: that Christopher Cummings be reappointed to another three-year term; Marc Bard be appointed to a three-year term; Josh Sanders be appointed to a three-year term; and Sarah Capron be appointed to serve out the remaining two years of a three-year term. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to accept the recommendations of the Recreation Committee. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
4. **Tree Warden.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to reappoint Russ Barrett for an additional year as Tree Warden. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
5. **First Constable.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to reappoint Richard Wobby for an additional year as First Constable. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
6. **Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) Representative.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to reappoint Laura Hill-Eubanks for an additional year as Northfield's representative to the CVRPC. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- 7. CVRPC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Representative.** Manager Schulz has served as the CVRPC TAC Representative for the past couple years but is unable to attend their monthly meetings since they conflict with Select Board meetings. Since he has heard of a couple residents who might be interested in serving, he asked for this appointment to be postponed for now.
 - c. Revised Municipal Pool Fees.** Manager Schulz said during the last budget process, there was a decision by the Select Board to revise the fees charged for use of the Municipal Pool in order to partially offset wage increases for the Pool Director and lifeguards. Manager Schulz researched the fees charged at public pools in five (5) other Vermont municipalities (Barre City, Essex, Middlebury, Randolph, and Waterbury). He found the fees to be comparable to those charged at the Municipal Pool last year. There may be some upward revisions possible for swimming lessons, etc. and Manager Schulz will provide recommendations at a future Select Board meeting. Board member Maxwell noted the Select Board based the pool's budget on \$9,000 in additional revenue during FY 2018/2019. Manager Schulz said this \$9,000 increase was broken down into \$6,000 from raising existing fees and \$3,000 in additional revenue from potential new sources such as private swimming lessons, etc. He will work with Pool Director Shannon Palone to create a proposal for Select Board approval before the pool opens in mid-June. Board member Maxwell was pleased to receive the information regarding other Vermont public pools but does not feel what other pools charge should be the determining factor when Northfield sets its fee structure. He also would like some hard numbers, based on past pool usage, regarding how much additional revenue should be expected if a certain fee is increased. Chair Goslant said he had gotten the impression during the budget process Northfield's fee structure was far below what was charged in other comparable communities. This now doesn't seem to be the case. Board member Doney noted the Barre City Municipal Swimming Pool provides free lunches as part of a federally-funded program. If this program really is no cost to the municipality, he recommended Northfield also should look into this as a way of attracting additional residents to the pool. Elaine Stehel asked if it were possible to establish a sliding scale for the pool fees so lower-income residents won't be prevented from using the pool. Manager Schulz will look into this. Board member Maxwell noted private parties have donated funds in the past to provide free pool passes for those of limited means.
 - d. Brown Public Library Painting Proposals.** Manager Schulz said the municipality received two (2) bids to paint the exterior of the Brown Public Library before this afternoon's deadline. The bids received (\$4,995 and \$7,680) were much lower than the estimates he obtained last year, which were in the \$35,000 to \$40,000 range. Manager Schulz now will check references, etc. and make sure the bidders actually can do the specified work for the bid amounts. Chair Goslant said he never saw bids come so far below what was expected. Board member Maxwell cautioned additional work may be discovered when the old paint is removed, etc. Board member Doney would like to be sure the contractors have proper certification for safely removing and disposing of old lead paint. Board member Maxwell would like Manager Schulz to properly research the bidders, their expertise, past work experience, etc. before bringing a recommendation back to the Select Board.
 - e. Northfield Representative to the Central Vermont Internet (CVI) Communications Union District.** Manager Schulz said there was a request from CVI for the Select Board to appoint a representative to attend their meetings, serve on their committees, etc. CVI is asking for a representative and one or more alternates to be appointed to one-year terms prior to April 30, 2018. There was no objection to the municipality advertising for letters of interest with a deadline of 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 19, 2018. This would allow the representative and possible alternates to be appointed at the following week's regular Select Board meeting (04/24/18).
 - f. Norwich Commons Drainage Issue.** As this matter involves legal issues, Manager Schulz would like its discussion held in executive session. There was no objection.
- X. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS**
- a. NU Women's Hockey Team Celebration.** Board member Doney saw a local celebration of the newly-crowned NCAA Division III Champions on or around Depot Square is under consideration and he feels this is a good idea. Manager Schulz said the planning for this remains in the preliminary stages but will keep the Select Board members informed as it develops.
 - b. Union Street Stormwater Treatment Project.** Chair Goslant noted the Select Board members received a communication from a resident objecting to siting the collection area in the middle of a field. Josh Sanders confirmed he saw the stakes in the middle of a field and was concerned this possible recreation area would be wasted as a result. He felt another site on the east side of the street made more sense. Board member Maxwell said the east side of the street had been the initial site but its proximity to the riverbank was considered problematic by the engineers. This meant the collection area was moved to the current location. Board member Maxwell noted the stormwater collection structure would be underground, which meant the field could be used for other purposes. Manager Schulz will check with the engineers if the field can be used for recreation.

- c. **Congressman Welch Visit.** Manager Schulz noted Vermont Representative Peter Welch paid a visit to Northfield yesterday. He and his staff first met with Manager Schulz and Chair Goslant to discuss some local concerns, such as the impact of new stormwater regulations on municipal governments, etc. They then had a brief tour of the downtown area and met with local business owners, etc. Chair Goslant said he also raised with Congressman Welch the issue of keeping young Vermonters from moving away as adults as well as attracting new residents from other states.
- d. **Vermont Village, etc.** Chair Goslant said he and Manager Schulz toured Vermont Village's operations in the former Chouinard's facility and were very impressed. Processed apple-based products (vinegar, cider, applesauce, apple butter, etc.) now are shipped in from their main plant in Barre and packaged in Northfield for shipment to retail stores such as Tops Market, Shaw's, Wal-Mart, etc. The facility has two (2) work shifts employing between twenty (20) and twenty-five (25) people. Manager Schulz felt it was good to see the building again in use. Chair Goslant also heard someone may be moving into the vacant stores next to Tops Market. Nothing is certain at this time but he hopes the Select Board will encourage this possibility.
- e. **NAVI Invitational Golf Tournament.** Chair Goslant noted Northfield Ambulance Volunteers, Inc. (NAVI) will hold their third annual benefit golf tournament at the Northfield Country Club (2066 Vermont Route 12A) on Sunday, June 3, 2018, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Prizes will be awarded to the top three teams and proceeds will be used to support the Betty Podgwaite Scholarship Fund and EMS training activities.

XI. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Mayo Block Sidewalk Paving.** Manager Schulz said the RFPs for this project will be sent out this week. The bid proposals will be due by Tuesday, April 24, 2018. Chair Goslant would like the section of North Main Street sidewalk by the Common Café included in the bid specifications. Manager Schulz will do this.
- b. **Ford One Ton Truck Problems, etc.** Manager Schulz has researched further the problem with the vehicle's cracked front frame, which seems to be a common problem with this particular year's model. He next will file a complaint with the State over Ford's refusal to repair the damage under warranty. Manager Schulz has learned a number of Vermont municipalities have had a similar experience with this exact Ford truck. This particular vehicle now has a carbon monoxide leakage problem so is out of service. Chair Goslant said this and other matters, such as current road conditions, were discussed during the most recent Highway Subcommittee meeting. Manager Schulz added we also have received some positive feedback regarding the backroads.
- c. **Bull Run Solar Farm Project.** Manager Schulz reported the solar farm is close to beginning operations. About two thousand (2,000) solar panels will be installed in April and the Three-Phase Power upgrade to the electric lines feeding the site is scheduled for July. Some final paperwork also needs to be completed with the municipality regarding the sale of produced power to the Northfield Electric Department, etc. If all goes well, the solar farm should be online this August.

XII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED). There was none.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a legal matter with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:25 p.m.

Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Miller, to come out of executive session.
Motion passed 4-0-0.

The Board came out of executive session at 10:25 p.m. No action was taken

XIV. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to adjourn.
Motion passed 4-0-0.

The Board adjourned at 10:25 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 April 10, 2018.