

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD MEETING
Minutes of May 8, 2018

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair Kenneth W. Goslant, Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, K. David Maxwell (absent), and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Peter J. DeMasi (Fire Chief), Ken Hepburn (GO! Northfield), Leslie Striebe (GO! Northfield), Debbie Zuaro (Conservation Commission), Howard Anderson (Turkey Hill Maple), Lydia Petty, Steve Davis, 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. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)

- a. Ken Hepburn, GO! Northfield: "Welcome to Northfield" Signs Update.**

Mr. Hepburn said one of the new signs has been completed and delivered to Northfield. The sign is four feet by eight feet (4'x8') and it was brought here to the Community Room so the Select Board members and others could view it themselves. Board member Doney thought it looked very nice. Mr. Hepburn said donations for this project still are being solicited from local businesses and residents. The donation thermometer sign will be relocated to the Common next Tuesday (05/13/18) when this year's first summer Northfield Farmers Market is held. \$4,000 has been collected so far. Mr. Hepburn also is seeking contributions of the material needed (i.e. pressure-treated wood) to install the sign as well as sign-lighting options. Manager Schulz said local zoning ordinances require businesses to turn off their lit signs overnight but he is seeking an exemption from the Development Review Board (DRB) since this is a different situation. He added the DRB already has approved siting the new signs at the current locations (Vermont Route 12 South and North) and next will be asked to approve the new sites where the old signs will be relocated (Vermont Route 12A and Cox Brook Road). Chair Goslant asked if the old signs would be lit. Mr. Hepburn said they would not since these locations do not have accessible power supplies. He added he is having problems getting the slate down from Paine Mountain that Norwich University (NU) has donated. NU is requiring whoever transports the slate down the mountain must have appropriate workers compensation coverage and Mr. Hepburn is working to resolve this. However, Mr. Hepburn has achieved another of the Select Board's requests by obtaining written permission from landowners for the locations where the new and old signs will be installed. When the public funds for this project (approved at Town Meeting Day) become available after July 1, 2018, the payment will be made to the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN), which then will write any checks for new signs, installation costs, etc. Mr. Hepburn noted NCDN is a registered non-profit organization so all donations for this project are tax deductible. Chair Goslant asked how much each sign will cost. Mr. Hepburn said about \$4,500. The first sign was purchased with the donations collected to date. Work on the second sign will begin when the public funds become available. Chair Goslant thanked Mr. Hepburn for the update and for bringing in the new sign for all to view.

- b. Debbie Zuaro, Conservation Commission: "TDS Land Purchase" Update.**

Ms. Zuaro said she is the newest member of the Conservation Commission and therefore has been put in charge of the fundraising effort to raise the balance of the estimated \$35,000 purchase price of this parcel. This is after Northfield voters authorized the expenditure of \$25,000 in public funds for this purpose. Ms. Zuaro said a fundraising flyer has been distributed around the community employing the slogan "Save our Summit." Logo stickers designed by Sarah Wright also are being sold for \$1.00 apiece; sixty (60) have been sold already. \$4,500 has been raised to date with the fundraising effort technically starting on May 1, 2018, and concluding July 31, 2018. The next plan is to sell t-shirts illustrating Paine Mountain highlights. There also is consideration of republishing the "Paine Mountain Guidebook" (1997) written by William E. Osgood (with illustrations by Rebecca Merrilees) that shows the various trail routes, describes the mountain's flora and fauna, etc.

Mr. Hepburn asked if mountain bikers would be allowed to use the trail system. Ms. Zuaro said non-motorized vehicles are permitted by state law. Board member Miller said the municipality will need to write its own rules for the new property once the purchase has been completed. Chair Goslant thanked Ms. Zuaro for the valuable information provided tonight and wished her and the other members of the Conservation Commission good luck with their fundraising efforts.

V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

- a. **Peter J. DeMasi – Northfield Fire Chief.** Chief DeMasi reported all has been quiet with the Northfield Fire Department (NFD) over the past few weeks. He added NFD has received a grant for aerial training in conjunction with the Montpelier, Barre, and Williamstown fire departments. Each will be hosting training sessions this August. Chief DeMasi said NFD equipment is in good condition with the exception of the aerial ladder truck, which is now out of service due to a problem with its hydraulic fluid system. Replacement valves are on order and the repairs will be done at the Fire Station when they arrive. If needed in an emergency, the Williamstown Fire Department will send over its aerial ladder truck as part of the local Mutual Aid agreement. Board member Goodrich noted the new agreement between the municipality and Norwich University requires annual aerial ladder truck training on campus. Chief DeMasi confirmed this will be done later this summer as most students are away. Chair Goslant asked about plans to upgrade the Fire Station. Chief Demasi said the most urgently needed rehabilitation will be done over this summer. He added a damaged overhead door panel recently was replaced. Manager Schulz asked about the current NFD roster. Chief DeMasi said there now are twenty-two (22) members, which is a fairly average number. Out of this, he said there are between six (6) and eight (8) long-standing members who usually respond to every fire call.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **April 24, 2018 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **May 3, 2018 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #22-18.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve Warrant #22-18 in the amount of \$368,183.97. Board member Doney saw another legal bill related to the Tops Market bankruptcy filing. He asked if we should expect more. Manager Schulz said this was unlikely since Northfield's formal claim has been submitted to have the local Tops Market's utility bills paid off. Board member Goodrich saw a payment for a vehicle insurance claim deductible. Manager Schulz said this was for damage done to a parked vehicle by the sidewalk sweeper. Chair Goslant noted of the total warrant amount, about half (\$179,588.52) was to purchase power for the Northfield Electric Department (NED). **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through April 22, 2018.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$90,407.14. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Road Discontinuance Process.** Manager Schulz said there has been serious discussion over the past few years of discontinuing public maintenance of some of the one- and two-house roads that serve mainly as driveways. It is costly for the municipality to maintain these Class 3 roads as they are dead ends outside of the main traffic arteries. There now are about thirty (30) of these roads under consideration for discontinuance. After considering a number of factors, the Highway Subcommittee has created a short list of eight (8) roads it recommends the Select Board should start the process of discontinuing this year. Highway Foreman Trent Tucker has estimated the winter maintenance costs for these eight (8) roads at about \$25,675. Chair Goslant noted this figure includes the cost of materials (i.e. fuel and sand) and wear and tear on the highway trucks but does not include the cost of driver overtime, etc.

Manager Schulz noted road discontinuance is a lengthy process laid out in state statute that begins with notifying the affected property owners and followed by site visits and public hearings. The final step is a formal vote of the Select Board members for road discontinuance. The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) also will need to be contacted in case it would like to keep one or more of the roads as public trails. Manager Schulz estimated the process from beginning to end should take about three (3) months. Even though the property owners might object, the short list focuses on those roads that are basically long driveways.

Board member Miller serves on the Highway Subcommittee and he confirmed the funds saved by the municipality could be put to better use elsewhere. Board member Goodrich noted the annual amount Northfield receives from VTrans will go down if the municipality's total amount of Class 3 roadway decreases. Manager Schulz said this has been taken into consideration. Board member Goodrich believes this action may be necessary but she would like to make sure the process is equitable for everyone involved. For example, she wondered if it would be fair for a property owner's one-house road to be discontinued this year when a similar one nearby is maintained for another year or two. Manager Schulz said other municipalities have gone through this before without too much difficulty. His feeling is it would be logistically impossible to discontinue all thirty (30) roads in one year. The Highway Subcommittee considered these eight (8) to be the most justifiable for discontinuance.

Chair Goslant understands this process will be difficult for those who have had their "driveways" publicly maintained for several years but discontinuing these roads will save money and allow the Highway crew to focus on heavily-travelled roads. Board member Miller added the eight (8) roads under consideration are in relatively good shape and could be privately maintained without too much difficulty. After further discussion, the consensus was the Select Board would get the full list of thirty (30) roads targeted for future discontinuance before moving forward with the process. Elroy Hill doubts the cost savings will be as much as predicted. He also is concerned about what would happen if one of Northfield emergency services had a callout to a house on a since-discontinued road.

- b. South Main Street Stormwater Separation Project – Engineering Services Agreement.** Manager Schulz said Northfield has received state grant funds for three (3) stormwater projects to date. Two (2) have been completed and the third near the intersection of Water Street and Union Street will be done this summer. The next project planned would be to resolve the stormwater problems associated with South Main Street's side streets (Slate Avenue, Elm Street, and Prospect Street) in order to direct the runoff to the collection location behind Holland Place. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) will reimburse the municipality for half of the engineering costs for this project. Manager Schulz noted Dufresne Group Consulting Engineers have submitted an agreement for Select Board approval in the amount of \$36,480. He added the municipality's share of this cost is in the budget when the next fiscal year begins (07/01/18). Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to authorize Manager Schulz to sign this agreement. Board member Goodrich noted the needed repaving of Slate Avenue has been delayed for a couple years because this stormwater project needs to be done first. Manager Schulz added the ANR permit for the Northfield Wastewater Treatment Facility will expire in 2020 and the municipality's willingness to address stormwater concerns could be an important factor in whether the permit is renewed, what the permit conditions will be, etc. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. VTrans Bike and Pedestrian Program.** Manager Schulz said there is a state grant now available that would provide funds for bike lanes and sidewalks. The primary intent is to create new bike lanes and pedestrian paths within the existing infrastructure but there may be funds to bring some areas up to full ADA-compliance. Manager Schulz brought this matter up tonight to determine if this is something the Select Board members would like him to pursue. There was no objection. The grant application is due June 22, 2018, and Manager Schulz will be meeting with VTrans representatives soon to determine what type of grant proposal would be more likely to succeed.
- d. Norwich Commons Drainage.** As this matter involves legal issues, Manager Schulz would like its discussion held in executive session. There was no objection.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Clean Up Day.** Board member Doney reported over one hundred and ten (110) local volunteers showed up to help clean up Northfield's public parks. This included eleven (11) future Marines from Norwich University. Board member Doney said some additional work still needs to be done before summer but a lot was accomplished.
- b. **Building Renovations.** Board member Doney noted this summer will see a number of renovations to the Fire Station, Town Garage, Police Station, and Municipal Building. He has already met with a contractor interested in the exterior painting job at the Police Station. He is hopeful good progress will be made to get these various projects done by September. Fire Chief DeMasi noted the work at the Fire Station will include installing a new sprinkler system and smoke alarms. Board member Doney said the proposed installation of new flooring at the Municipal Building will be scheduled to cause as little disruption as possible. Chair Goslant would like the drainage problems in the building's basement resolved so the space can be used for storage and other purposes.
- c. **Brown Public Library (BPL) Exterior Painting Project.** Board member Goodrich saw a letter from the BPL Trustees questioning whether the painting contractor awarded this project would be able to properly remove the existing lead paint. The contractor's bid proposal amount was considerably less than had been anticipated. Manager Schulz met with the BPL Trustees last week and assured them this contractor has had considerable experience dealing with lead paint and he has been informed of specific BPL concerns. The contractor should be in town to start the project in the next couple days. Manager Schulz noted the Water/Sewer crew already have pressure washed the front of the building in anticipation of this. The contractor also has pledged not to work around the building's entrance area during business hours.
- d. **Elm Street Retaining Wall.** Chair Goslant asked if it were possible to reconfigure this long-delayed project since only one residence would be directly affected. Manager Schulz said there is a possibility of reducing the scale of the project as well as its estimated cost. He would like an updated engineering study in hand before the next budget sessions so funds can be set aside for the construction phase. VTrans grant funds also might become available once the total project cost is determined.

X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **FY 2018-2019 Electric, Water, and Sewer Budgets.** Manager Schulz said the Utility Commissioners have spent many hours drafting the proposed budgets the Select Board members received tonight. There was a special focus on the Water and Sewer budgets and, due to their efforts, a rate increase is not needed this year. The Select Board members will be asked to approve the Water and Sewer rates at their next regular meeting (05/22/18). Any change in Northfield Electric Department (NED) rates would require Public Utility Commission (PUC) approval and the proposed budget doesn't call for this. The Utility Commissioners next will be looking at upgrading the NED infrastructure through the purchase of "smart" meters, etc.
- b. **Smith Hill Culvert Replacement Project.** Manager Schulz said the municipality received a \$175,000 state grant to replace the culvert. The local match amount has been budgeted but an engineering study has to be done before the construction phase can begin. The engineering study RFP should go out soon and the whole project should be completed by August.
- c. **Norwich University (NU)-Northfield Ambulance Volunteers, Inc. (NAVI) Agreement.** As discussed at a previous meeting, NAVI has reached an agreement with NU by which NU will pay NAVI \$20,000 for the purchase of a new ATV for the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS). In return, the current ("older") ATV will be stored on NU property near the bottom of Paine Mountain for the sole use of NAS members. Board member Goodrich thinks this is a good thing NU is doing for the community. Board member Miller asked who would determine what kind of ATV will be bought. Manager Schulz said NAS Chief Lawton Rutter will make the recommendation. Chair Goslant thought having an ATV nearby would cut down on the response time for any emergency on the Paine Mountain trail system.

- d. **Mayo Block Sidewalk Project.** Manager Schulz said the project is well underway and the municipality has hired the same contractor doing the work for Northfield Savings Bank (NSB) to do the sidewalk work adjacent to the front of the NSB building. The bid to do this was very favorable (\$22,000) and will include replacing the bad sidewalk on the other side of the street by the Common Café. An area in front of the Municipal Building will be repaved for an additional \$5,600. Manager Schulz believes residents will be very pleased with the results when the project is complete.
- e. **Union Brook Road.** Manager Schulz said there is a depression in one stretch of the road that has been a problem for several years. He has submitted three (3) separate state grant applications for funds to fix this once and for all. Two (2) were to VTrans and the other was to Vermont Emergency Management due to the depression's proximity to Union Brook. Manager Schulz now is waiting to hear back regarding the applications. Chair Goslant concurred this has been a problem for some time and it is good Manager Schulz is being pro-active with these grant applications.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Lydia Petty: Paine Mountain Trail Footrace.** Ms. Petty is organizing a foot race along the Paine Mountain Trails for later this summer (08/18/18). She already has spoken to Norwich University about having the footrace go through its property and now would like the Select Board's permission to use the trails going through the Town Forest. Chair Goslant said these kind of off-road footraces are being very popular and could bring a lot of people into the community. He asked if this would be a footrace only or if mountain bikers could participate. Ms. Petty said the focus now is on runners but the event could be opened up to mountain bikers in the future. The plan is to keep the initial event small and, if all goes well, expand it in future years. Ms. Petty already has spoken to the Conservation Commission about this proposal. Manager Schulz asked Ms. Petty to put her request in the form of a letter including the footrace route, insurance coverage, etc. Should the letter be received in time, Manager Schulz will put this matter on the next regular meeting agenda (05/22/18) for formal approval of the request.
- b. **Howard Anderson, Turkey Hill Maple: Request to Alter Lease Agreement.** Mr. Anderson has a lease agreement to tap maple trees located on municipal property on Turkey Hill. The lease began in March 2016 and will terminate on June 1, 2021. Mr. Anderson has been paying the municipality \$1 per tap per year and this came to about \$1,650 for the first two (2) years of the agreement. Mr. Anderson now would like to expand his operations by an additional 4,000-6,000 taps by using additional trees now set aside for possible harvesting. He has looked at these trees and doesn't feel they really are worth harvesting. Mr. Anderson also would like to add a trail to access the new tapping sites. Board member Goodrich was not on the Select Board when the lease agreement was made so she would like to review it before any decision is made. Manager Schulz also will do some additional research on these requests and bring back a recommendation for the Select Board. Mr. Anderson would like a decision within the next couple months while the cost of tapping equipment is still low.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Miller, 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 9:15 p.m.

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

The Board came out of executive session at 9:50 p.m. No action was taken.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:55 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 May 22, 2018.