

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD MEETING
Minutes of June 26, 2018**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair Kenneth W. Goslant, Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, K. David Maxwell, and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Bonnie Donahue (Northfield Promise Community), Brianna Howard (Northfield Promise Community), Anne Todar (Northfield Promise Community), Sue Todar (Northfield Promise Community), Russ Barrett (Tree Warden), Wendy Rea (Northfield Observances), Matt Gadbois (Northfield Observances), Gail Hall (Brown Public Library Trustee), Chris Lynch (Matrix Design), 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. Bonnie Donahue, Northfield Promise Community: Playground Projects.** Ms. Donahue wanted to update the Select Board regarding the Promise Community's plans to install new playground equipment at the Northfield Falls Park as well as their plans to site a new playground next to the Brown Public Library on Slate Avenue. Ms. Donahue said the new Falls Park playground equipment would include a See-Saw, Friendship Swing, Butterfly Spring, etc. New picnic tables also will be installed for parents to relax while their children are playing. The area under and around the playgroup equipment will be mulched to protect the children from any fall injuries. In addition, a new four foot (4') tall fence will be installed to separate the park from the adjacent ballfield. There is a sharp slope between the ballfield's outfield and the new fence that effectively makes it eight feet (8') above the playing field. The Promise Community did receive a \$20,000 quote to install fifteen feet (15') of safety netting but this was considered excessive precaution. Chair Goslant said he coached youth baseball for several years and never saw a ball hit where the new playground equipment will be installed. Board member Doney saw the preliminary park plans and suggested adding a secondary access point in case of emergencies. Ms. Donahue agreed and she added the main pathway (now rather steep) will be re-graded to meet ADA standards. Board member Maxwell asked what would be the next steps the Promise Community members will be taking regarding the new playground equipment. Ms. Donahue said they have received many quotes from suppliers so those will need to be evaluated. The plan is to have all the new equipment purchased and installed by November 2018. Board member Doney asked who would be installing the equipment. Ms. Donahue said there probably would be a mix of professional installers and community volunteers. Board member Doney suggested advertising for volunteers as the Recreation Committee has had great turnouts for its annual spring cleanups, etc. due to proper prior notice, by providing refreshments, etc. Ms. Donahue also confirmed the Promise Community will be addressing the Development Review Board (DRB) this coming Thursday night (06/28/18) regarding the installation of the playground equipment, the new fencing, etc. That same night there will be a request to install a "Story Time Reading Pavilion" along with fencing and landscaping for the new Slate Avenue Park. Chair Goslant asked if there were any concerns the DRB might withhold permission in either case. Manager Schulz said this was unlikely as the DRB members merely want to review the site plans. Abutting property holders also have been contacted about the meeting in case they have any concerns. Gail Hall asked if the new equipment and new park would create increased liability insurance costs for the municipality. Manager Schulz said the municipality obtains its liability insurance through the Vermont League of Cities & Town (VLCT) and the new equipment, park, etc. would be under our current policy, which covers the municipality up to \$10,000,000. A VLCT adjustor will be made aware of the new items but Manager Schulz did not feel this would increase our insurance costs. Chair Goslant then thanked Ms. Donahue and the other Promise Community members for the excellent work they have done. It was noted the cost of the new equipment, etc. will be covered by a \$150,000 state grant the Northfield Promise Community was awarded in order to "improve the educational and developmental outcomes for children" in the community.

- b. Russ Barrett, Tree Warden: Emerald Ash Borer Concerns.** Mr. Barrett was present tonight to provide an update on the spreading range of the emerald ash borer, which is an invasive beetle that already has devastated North American ash trees in thirty (30) states and three (3) Canadian provinces. The ash borer recently was found in Montpelier so Northfield now is considered in a high risk area. On their own, the ash borers would need a year or two to reach Northfield but infected lumber in the back of a pickup truck could be transferred here in less than half an hour. Once an ash tree is infected, it usually dies within three (3) to five (5) years. Due to this threat, Mr. Barrett would like the Select Board's permission to form an Emerald Ash Borer Management Team to be comprised of local officials, municipal employees, and members of the public. The team would focus on informing the public of the dangers of moving wood from infected areas; educate residents on how to spot signs of infected trees and how to inform the proper authorities; etc. He added the Town Forest does contain a good number of ash trees and this is a valuable commodity for harvesting, etc. Board member Doney asked if there are any insecticides that can be used to protect ash trees. Mr. Barrett said there is an injection that can be applied to healthy trees. The cost is about \$20 per inch of tree diameter. He added some ash trees have proven resistant to ash borer infestation and there is consideration of selectively breeding these resistant trees to replace infected ones. Chair Goslant thought it might be a good idea to inventory the Town Forest to determine how many ash trees are there. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to authorize Tree Warden to assemble an Emerald Ash Borer Management Team for Northfield. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. Wendy Rea, Northfield Observances: Labor Day Weekend Requests.** Northfield Observances has made its annual request to the Select Board to grant various permissions that would allow the 2018 Labor Day Weekend Festivities to operate successfully. The specific requests are to block the Northfield Common from through traffic from the evening of Friday, August 31, 2018, through Monday, September 3, 2018; to close a section of Water Street on Sunday, September 2, 2018, so a car show can be held in Kenyon Hardware's parking lot; permission for a coin drop fundraiser on Labor Day morning; and a parking ban on Main Street from the Crescent to Kenyon's Hardware Store before and during the Labor Day Parade. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve all the requests. Board member Doney noted a reference to a craft beet tent during this year's festivities. Ms. Rea said this is now in the planning stages but she wanted to make the Select Board aware of the possibility. If it is decided to go forward with this, the local business involved with be contacting the Select Board later with an outside consumption permit request, etc. Ms. Rea felt this might be a positive development for the community as it could bring a whole new set of people to the festivities. She felt the same regarding the possibility of holding a bicycle race on the holiday weekend, which also is in early planning stages. There also are thoughts of altering the footrace route to include more of the local streets and footpaths. Included with the request letter this year was a "checklist" of various tasks Northfield Observances would like the municipality to perform over the holiday weekend. This includes 24-hour police coverage on the Common. Ms. Rea said some crafts people had been concerned about leaving their wares on the Common overnight without police protection. Having this coverage would help retain some crafts people as well as possibly attract new ones. Manager Schulz said the Select Board members had been forewarned of this request during their last budget sessions so the funds needed for this are in the Police Department's operating budget. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. June 12, 2018 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Warrant #25-18.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve Warrant #25-18 in the amount of \$1,209,473.01. Board member Goodrich noted this warrant includes payments for the bulk of the special article funding requests approved by voters on Town Meeting Day. She then asked about \$3,200 payment for "permit fees" for the Sewer Department. Manager Schulz said this included the quarterly payment to the state for the operation of the Wastewater Treatment Facility and for a separate stormwater runoff permit. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. Warrant #01-19A.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve Warrant #01-19A in the amount of \$41,895.72. This warrant is comprised of the municipality's annual tax payment to Washington County and a payment to the State of Vermont Revolving Fund related to an old water project (i.e. "West Phase"). **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- c. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through June 17, 2018:** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$97,098.55. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Road Discontinuances Process.** Manager Schulz said the Highway Subcommittee provided the full Select Board with a recommendation at its May 8, 2018, regular meeting that some thirty (30) backroads should be discontinued since they were of short length and almost all served just one household. The original plan was to discontinue ten (10) of these roads each year over the next three (3) years. However, since some Select Board members felt it was unfair to those residents whose road might be discontinued first, the plan was altered to discontinue fifteen (15) roads this year and the rest next year. The roads targeted for discontinuance this year are (alphabetically) Apple Lane, Beaudette Road, Bellemore Road, Boardman Road, Horse Lane, Hutch Road, Jerry Road, Kingston Road, Morning Star Lane, Payette Drive, Potato Hill Road, Staples Road, Storti Road, Thrush Lane, and Tracy Hill Road. There is a fairly elaborate process for road discontinuance specified in state law that includes notifying the adjacent property owners by certified mail, site visits, public hearings, etc. The affected property owners have the right to petition to overturn any Select Board decision and put this matter before Northfield voters. Manager Schulz said more and more Vermont municipalities have been taking this action with the cost of road maintenance rising each year. This also allows road crews to focus on more heavily traveled and connector roads. He added some of the backroads now under consideration are basically driveways only used by the property owner. Board member Maxwell asked how discontinuing these roads affect property values and the Grand List. Manager Schulz said this was not an exact science but he did not see any significant impact to property values. Board member Maxwell asked how some of these roads became publically-maintained in the first place. Manager Schulz speculated the adjacent landowner probably approached the municipality several years ago with a request. There now are municipal standards for adopting a road that largely preclude this by requiring, among other things, the road must serve at least three (3) households. Board member Maxwell said he has personally driven a number of these roads and he agrees most truly are driveways. Board member Miller serves on the Highway Subcommittee and he became an advocate for this process when he learned it cost the municipality about \$25,000 a year to maintain just eight (8) of these backroads. If all thirty (30) roads were discontinued over the next couple years, this could realize savings for the Highway Department of about \$100,000 per year. Chair Goslant added there also would be reduced wear and tear to the highway vehicles and the highway crew. Manager Schulz felt this also was a fairness issue because many residents living on the backroads maintain their own driveways that might be identical to a nearby publicly-maintained one-house road. Board member Goodrich asked why these fifteen (15) roads were chosen for discontinuance first. Board member Miller said these roads were the shortest and all but one serve just one residence. Manager Schulz said the next fifteen (15) are longer and some serve more than one house. Board member Maxwell asked how long the discontinuance process would take and when would it begin. Manager Schulz said the process from beginning to end should take about three (3) months and would start once the Select Board members authorize it. Board member Maxwell would like some more backroad information on how these roads became publicly-maintained as part of the discontinuance process. Motion by Board member Miller, seconded by Board member Doney, to authorize Manager Schulz to begin the discontinuance process for the fifteen (15) roads named above. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Road Paving Projects.** Manager Schulz said the Highway Subcommittee met last week and among other items developed a priority paving list for the coming fiscal year. The list includes both ends of Lovers Lane; the paved section of Berlin Pond Road where it intersects with Vermont Route 64; all of Cemetery Street; and part of Water Street. The total cost of this paving is about \$201,720 and this is covered in the next fiscal year's paving budget. There also will be smaller paving projects on Mill Street, etc. Manager Schulz added he spoke with Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi recently and learned it was part of his five (5) year plan to install new waterlines on Water Street. Therefore, it may be necessary to rethink which sections of Water Street will be paved this year. If the decision is made to defer some of the paving to a later date, it might free up as much as \$69,000 for other paving projects. Board member Maxwell was very disappointed by this development and he renewed his request for the drafting of a comprehensive infrastructure plan in order to avoid such surprises in future. He did not feel this was the correct way to do business. Board member Goodrich remembers a discussion of paving priorities during the budget process and doesn't remember Berlin Pond Road coming up then. Manager Schulz said the area was reevaluated since then and is considered to be in great need of repair.

Board member Maxwell asked if the paved ends of Lovers Lane really need work at this time. He believes it was done fairly recently. Manager Schulz said this is a heavily-travelled road and the paved section does need repaving at this time. Board member Miller asked if there was any thought of paving the whole of Lovers Lane. Board member Maxwell said this road always has problems during Mud Season so this might be worth consideration. Board member Miller would favor paving the Lovers Lane in its entirety but for the great expense this would entail. He asked if grant funds might be available to do this project. Manager Schulz said the upper limit for such grants is about \$170,000 and he estimated paving all of Lovers Lane would cost about \$450,000. Board member Maxwell still would like a comprehensive plan as he felt the municipality was now dealing with problems that should have been resolved twenty (20) years ago. He then asked if there were any thoughts on where the funds diverted from Water Street could be used. Manager Schulz thought Union Street might be a possibility. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to authorize the paving priority list as recommended by the Highway Subcommittee. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- c. **Elm Street Wall Project Engineering Agreement.** Manager Schulz said he has contacted the engineering firm Dufresne Group about updating the existing twenty-plus (20+) year engineering plan to rehabilitate/replace the deteriorating retaining wall on Elm Street. The Dufresne Group will update the existing plans as well as prepare bid documents, etc. for the construction phase of the project for a fixed fee of \$2,500. The engineering costs for this project will be covered by state grant funds already on hand. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the agreement and authorize Manager Schulz to sign it on behalf of the municipality. Board member Maxwell noted there is a new resident living near the retaining wall and he suggested Manager Schulz should reach out to him to explain the situation. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **Norwich Commons Drainage.** As this matter involves legal issues, Manager Schulz would like its discussion held in executive session. There was no objection.

VIII. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **"Night on the Crescent."** Board member Maxwell wanted to thank the Northfield Farmers Market, the Northfield Community Development Network, and all those who organized and hosted this event on the Crescent last week. It was a special event and very well attended.
- b. **Norwich University-Northfield Municipality Agreement.** Board member Maxwell attended the ceremony last week when Norwich University (NU) President Richard Schneider presented the first \$200,000 annual payment to the municipality as specified in the agreement between the two entities renegotiated last year. He added NU also provided another \$20,000 to purchase new equipment for the Northfield Ambulance Service.
- c. **Municipal Facilities Rehabilitation Update.** Board member Maxwell asked about the progress on the various plans to work on various municipal facilities this year. Manager Schulz said the exterior painting of the Brown Public Library has been completed and contractors now are working on the Municipal Building roof. He will be completing and sending out the RFP for the exterior painting of the Police Station. The replacement of the Municipal Building carpets will be scheduled soon for a time that won't disrupt property tax payments, etc. Another upcoming project will address lighting problems at the Town Garage. Board member Maxwell asked if all the problems identified and reported by the Town Buildings & Energy Subcommittee will be resolved in the coming fiscal year. Manager Schulz confirmed they would.
- d. **Damaged Third Covered Bridge.** Board member Doney asked when the bridge would be repaired. Manager Schulz has found someone willing to make the repairs within the next three (3) weeks. This section of Cox Brook Road will need to be closed during repairs but there will be proper prior notification and detour signs put in place.
- e. **Street Sweeper.** Chair Goslant said the Highway Department budget approved for the next fiscal year presumed the sale of the street sweeper since this work now is contracted out. He asked about the status of the sale. Manager Schulz said there had been a local person who claimed interest but would not commit to the purchase. He was given a deadline to decide and that time has passed. Manager Schulz now plans to advertise the vehicle for sale with a minimum bid amount of \$15,000.

- f. **Water Street Park update.** Chair Goslant noted the pavilion now has been installed in the park and it looks very good. He added the park itself also looks great and while the cost of the park was mainly covered by FEMA funds, it was public donations led by the 1957 Northfield High School Class which paid for the pavilion.

IX. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Police Chief Search.** Manager Schulz stated with William Jennings recently resigning as Northfield Police Chief, the municipality will be advertising for members of the community to serve on the search committee for his replacement. Letters of interest should be sent to Manager Schulz no later than Monday, July 9, 2018. Chair Goslant felt Mr. Jennings did an excellent job during his brief time here and will be sorely missed.
- b. **South Main Street Sidewalk Paving Project.** Manager Schulz has submitted grant applications to the state for this project and should be getting some feedback in the next six (6) to eight (8) weeks. The cost estimates for paving the west side sidewalk from the Common to the Central Street intersection are about \$200,000. The indication so far is this grant application will be competitive with those from other communities.
- c. **Proposed Cheney Farm Solar Project.** Manager Schulz noted the public hearing held last night on this matter was well-attended and informative. The second public hearing will be scheduled soon.
- d. **Turkey Hill Maple Lease Agreement.** Manager Schulz said he and other municipal employees met with Mr. Anderson about amending the current lease agreement but have not heard back from him. He still needs to identify which new trees he would like to tap.
- e. **Kenyon's Hardware Proposed Expansion.** Manager Schulz said Kenyon's Hardware is looking to build a new storage structure near its business but there may be difficulty with state permits due to the business' proximity to the Dog River. Kenyon's has contacted the municipality to see if it can help with a letter of support, etc. Board member Miller believes Kenyon's is doing its best to address the state's concerns. Board member Maxwell thinks the Select Board should do whatever it can to support local business expansion.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Chris Lynch, Majors Design Group: High-Speed Internet.** Mr. Lynch's company builds high-speed fiber internet networks in partnership with local municipalities. He would like to work with Northfield on this if possible. Chair Goslant said Northfield voters authorized the municipality's membership in Central Vermont Internet at Town Meeting Day in order to bring high-speed internet to underserved parts of our community. He suggested Mr. Lynch should contact CVI about this. Mr. Lynch already has been in contact with CVI and hopes to work with them on engineering projects.

- XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, 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 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:40 p.m.

Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 10:15 p.m. No action was taken.

- XII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 10:16 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 July 10, 2018.