

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**SELECT BOARD MEETING**  
**Minutes of August 14, 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, Ambulance Chief Lawton Rutter, Highway Foreman Trent Tucker, Howard Anderson (Turkey Hill Maple Farm), Brian P. Monaghan (Monaghan Safar Ducham PLLC), Linda Barrows, Candace Beaudette, Charles Beaudette, Andrew Beaudette, Jodi Payette, Maryann Beaupré, Raymond Payette, Brenda Chamberlin, Randy Chamberlin, Robert Beaupré, Peter DeMasi, Angela DeMasi, Sandra Davis, Karen Davis Locke, Colin Bright, David Black, Gerard LaVarnway, Chandler Stowell, Lisa Page, Cary Halsted, 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. Road Discontinuance (Payette Drive, Hutch Road, Horse Lane, Jerry Road, & Staples Road).** Prior to the meeting, the Select Board members, Highway Foreman Trent Tucker, and Manager Schulz attended site visits starting at 5:30 p.m. at the roads under discussion tonight. Manager Schulz said the Select Board members have been discussing possible discontinuance of several Class 3 roads that currently serve one or two homes. He said these roads serve more as driveways than as public thoroughfares. It was the decision of the Select Board to pursue the possible discontinuance of fifteen (15) of these roads this year with the possibility of another fifteen (15) going through the process next year. As part of the process, property owners served by these roads were sent certified letters thirty (30) days prior to the first site visits and public hearing. In addition, public notices were posted, printed in the local newspaper, and posted online more than two (2) weeks before the first site visits and public hearing. If the Select Board members decide to discontinue any of these Class 3 roads, the discontinuance would go into effect sixty (60) days after the decision. The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) also would be contacted by the municipality so the discontinued roads could be removed from the list of publicly-maintained roads in Northfield.

Angela DeMasi lives on Staples Road and was not present to meet with the Select Board for the site visit as she had assumed they would not reach her road until at least 6:00 p.m. Board member Maxwell did not oppose holding additional site visits if property owners were not able to attend the first one. Peter DeMasi has been told this discontinuance process was being done to save money but he would like to see hard numbers that indicate real cost savings for the municipality. He also would like to know how discontinuing these roads would affect the tax rate. Chair Goslant said cost cutting was one reason behind this proposal but another was to allow the Highway crew to focus their time and efforts on the more heavily travelled roads. Board member Maxwell said discontinuance of one- and two-house roads has been under discussion in this municipality for several years. He asked Mr. DeMasi how he felt the Select Board should proceed in this matter. Mr. DeMasi believes the municipality should continue to maintain these roads until ownership changes. If that is not possible, he felt property owners should be given at least a year or two to prepare for their road's discontinuance as sixty (60) days is not enough time.

Chandler Stowell lives on Jerry Road and he also was unable to be present for the site visit. Like Mr. DeMasi, he also would like to see evidence these road discontinuances would achieve real cost savings for the community. Mr. Stowell said it didn't take long to plow his road so he doubts it costs the municipality much to do it. He also would like any road discontinuance postponed until ownership changes hands (i.e., "grandfathered").

Colin Bright noted Kingston Road is one of the roads targeted for discontinuance this year. He is concerned because he uses this road to access the Town Forest. He felt it might be better to reclassify Kingston Road as Class 4 rather than throwing it up entirely.

Cary Halsted lives on Potato Hill Road, which is another Class 3 road under consideration for discontinuance this year. He thought it might be a problem for property owners to find private contractors to maintain their roads who are as skilled and reliable as the Highway crew. Mr. Halsted said Potato Hill Road has a sharp incline and has icing problems during the winter. Unless he can find someone to sand it on a regular basis, he might have to move elsewhere.

Maryann Beaupré rents the lower section of the house on Payette Drive. She said there now are a number of problems with Payette Drive such as the stormwater flowing onto it off Bean Road. If the municipality does throw up Payette Drive, it should fix this stormwater problem first. In addition, she works as a nurse and sometimes has to leave for work at 4:00 a.m. She is uncertain if she will be able to find a private contractor to plow her driveway that early in the morning.

Sandra Davis lives near Payette Drive on Bean Road and she sometimes uses Payette Drive to access an otherwise landlocked field she owns. She also has concerns about the stormwater problems in the area. Ms. DeMasi said there is a culvert on Staples Road that the municipality doesn't always clear out before a storm. She is worried runoff from the culvert will create glare ice should it get onto Cox Brook Road. Ms. Demasi said she and her husband purchased their property knowing the access road was publicly maintained and doesn't feel it is fair it should be singled out for discontinuance. She felt if some roads are targeted for discontinuance, they should all be discontinued at the same time.

Randy Chamberlin isn't personally affected by this process as he maintains his own driveway but he does have some concerns whether the Select Board members are doing this discontinuance process properly. Chair Goslant said although road discontinuance has been discussed by previous Select Boards, this is the first time action is being taken on this. Therefore, this should be a learning experience for all involved. Mr. Chamberlin asked what cost savings could be realized by the proposed road discontinuance. Board member Miller serves on the Highway Subcommittee and he said it has been estimated the municipality will save about \$100,000 per year if the thirty (30) roads under consideration for discontinuance over the next two (2) years are thrown up. Board member Maxwell said the Select Board members have been looking for budget savings and road discontinuance was considered one possibility. He felt \$100,000 per year would be significant cost savings.

Jodie Payette asked if the appraised property value would decrease if the adjacent road was discontinued. Board member Maxwell said this probably would not happen. Ms. Barrows has heard from Lister Chris Bradley that the appraised amount might increase since the area encompassing the former road would be turned over to the parcel owner. She then asked if there are any written "grandfather" agreements related to the roads now under consideration. Manager Schulz has looked into this and found none.

Brenda Chamberlin feels bad for the property owners whose roads are being considered for discontinuance. She would like to know the length of these roads. Board member Maxwell said this could be provided along with a full list of the roads under discussion for discontinuance over the next couple years.

Ms. Barrows said this would be such a hardship for the property owners affected that cost savings should not be the sole consideration whether this is done or not. She asked if the Select Board members had thought of subcontracting the winter maintenance of selected backroads as has been done in the past. Chair Goslant said this possibility will be discussed during the next budget sessions.

There being no additional comments or questions, the public hearing closed at 8:05 p.m.

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

**V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT**

- a. Lawton Rutter, Ambulance Chief.** Chief Rutter provided the Select Board members with updated statistics for the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) for the 2017/2018 fiscal year. For example, during the last completed fiscal year NAS had 913 calls for service and of this amount, 668 were billable. Chief Rutter said he added a new category for his annual statistics this year: "Unable to Respond." He explained there were five (5) instances when NAS could not respond to a call because both units were employed at the time. In each case, a neighboring service was contacted and able to respond in a timely manner. Chief Rutter also provided a five-year summary indicating NAS calls for service have increased from 699 in FY 2013/2014. Even though some invoices may be outstanding, Chief Rutter is confident his department completed the last fiscal year in the black.

As more people are working second jobs and employers are less willing to release their workers for call responses, Chief Rutter has been trying out some new ways to keep up his staffing levels. There are additional strategies that he will be discussing with Manager Schulz in the near future.

Chief Rutter also serves as Health Officer for Northfield and as such he reported two (2) open cases involving potential fire hazards in rental units that required him to bring in the Fire Marshall for assistance. The problems included questionable electric wiring, etc. Chief Rutter then noted a new state law now allows health officers to impose fines when recognized safety and/or health code violations aren't corrected in a timely manner. He added the Select Board would need to approve an ordinance to enforce this so he will provide more information about this at a future meeting.

As the local E-911 Coordinator, Chief Rutter has been creating addresses for a number of new structures lately. He also wanted to remind residents to properly display their addresses to make them clearly visible from the street so there aren't any possible delays during an emergency response.

As Northfield's Emergency Management Coordinator, Chief Rutter has been working with Norwich University regarding its upcoming bicentennial celebration plans. He noted this year's homecoming weekend is expected to attract an additional 2,000 visitors and as many as 6,000 next year. Chief Rutter also noted the Vermont Department of Public Safety will be revising the format for local emergency management plans so he will have to implement these changes before our local plan is next submitted to the Select Board for annual approval. Chair Goslant and the other Board members then thanked Chief Rutter for tonight's report and the outstanding job he has been doing. Chair Goslant said Northfield was very lucky to have Chief Rutter's services.

#### **VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **July 23, 2018 (Public Hearing).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Board member Doney abstaining.**
- b. **July 24, 2018 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **August 6, 2018 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

#### **VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. **Warrant #03-19.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve Warrant #03-19 in the amount of \$498,413.28. Board member Goodrich noted eight (8) pool-side chairs were purchased for \$100, which is much less than had been anticipated. She thanked whoever was responsible for this. Chair Goslant noted of the total warrant amount about half of this was spent on purchasing power for the Northfield Electric Department (NED). **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through July 29, 2018.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$95,917.41. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

#### **VIII. SELECT BOARD**

- a. **Road Discontinuance.** Manager Schulz said he put this item on the agenda not because he expected the Select Board members to make any decisions tonight but in case there was any follow-up discussion after the public hearing. Board member Maxwell would like all the questions and concerns expressed tonight researched and answered at an upcoming meeting. He also would like a full list of the Class 3 Roads under consideration for discontinuance in the next couple years or beyond. Chair Goslant would like to schedule a Highway Subcommittee meeting in the near future to discuss this matter fully.
- b. **Cheney Farm Solar Project.** Manager Schulz said it seems to be the consensus of the Select Board members to allow a public vote on whether or not to proceed with this project. Although there had been some thought to put this on the November General Election ballot, due to time constraints the Electric Utility Commission recommended at their meeting last night to put this matter on next year's Town Meeting warning as a non-binding article. There was no objection to this proposal. Manager Schulz also said he has received a legal opinion stating the Cheney Farm property transferred from the Village of Northfield to the Town of Northfield upon municipal merger. Therefore, the Town Select Board will be the agency to make any decisions regarding its future usage, possible sale or lease, etc.
- c. **Crushed Clean Stone and Plant Mix Bids.** Manager Schulz solicited bid proposals from road material suppliers in the Central Vermont area and received three (3) responses before this afternoon's deadline: Pike Industries (Berlin, VT), Tough Country Excavating & Trucking (Barre, VT), and RE Tucker (Randolph, VT). Chair Goslant asked if more than three (3) suppliers had been contacted for proposals. Highway Foreman Trent Tucker confirmed he had reached out to additional suppliers but some chose not to provide bid proposals.

It is Manager Schulz's recommendation to proceed with the bids submitted as these companies did follow the proper procedures. Mr. Tucker said he is unfamiliar with Tough Country's operations so he would like to inspect their pit to be sure their road material will meet our standards.

Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to award the ¾" Plant Mix bid to Pike Industries for the delivered price of \$17.53 per cubic yard. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to award the 1¼" Plant Mix bid to Tough Country Excavating & Trucking for the delivered price of \$17.95 per cubic yard. This award is subject to Highway Foreman Tucker's approval of the material in the pit. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to award the 1¼" Clean Stone bid to Tough Country Excavating & Trucking for the delivered price of \$18.95 per cubic yard. This award also is subject to Highway Foreman Tucker's approval of the material in the pit. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to award the 1¼" Clean Stone bid to RE Tucker for the pit price of \$11.55 per cubic yard. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- d. Dole Hill Culvert Replacement Grant.** Manager Schulz said the municipality received a \$26,000 Better Backroads grant in order to address stormwater problems on Dole Hill Road. He solicited bid proposals from contactors and received three (3) responses: Dale Percy (\$35,950); Josh Fenoff (\$22,115); and Extreme Excavating (\$10,200). As their bid was much lower than the others, Manager Schulz reached out to Extreme Excavating and they are confident they can do the work properly at their bid price. Board member Maxwell asked if references were checked. Mr. Tucker said they were and he is confident Extreme Excavating would do a good job if awarded the bid. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to authorize Manager Schulz, in consultation with Highway Foreman Tucker, to negotiate a contract with Extreme Excavating to perform the stormwater work on Dole Hill Road for an amount not to exceed \$10,200. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- e. Turkey Hill Maple Farm Lease Agreement (Town Property).** Manager Schulz has been working with Howard Anderson from Turkey Hill Maple Farm to revise the current lease agreement in order to install an additional 6,000 to 8,000 taps on maple trees located on municipal property on Turkey Hill. This agreement would be for five (5) years but can be extended by the lessee for an additional five (5) years if all the municipality's conditions have been met during the initial period. Turkey Hill Maple Farm will pay the municipality \$1.25 per tap per year. The Water Department owns the property and will receive this revenue. Manager Schulz said local forester Rose Beatty and Tree Warden Russ Barrett have reviewed the contract and approve. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve and authorize Manager Schulz to sign this contract. Colin Bright is concerned the new tap lines will impede use of the hiking trails on the site. Mr. Anderson said he would not put lines across any trail on public property. (If the lines are located on private property, he cannot make this same commitment.) **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- f. Norwich Commons Drainage Issue.** As this matter involves legal issues and possible contract negotiation, Manager Schulz would like to hold this discussion in executive session. There was no objection.

**IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS.** The Board members had nothing to add at this time.

**X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

- a. Bull Run Dam Removal.** Manager Schulz said the Friends of the Winooski River are working with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) on a proposal to remove the old dam on Bull Run. The dam is close to Camp Wihakowi and the adjoining land owners have no objection. The goal is to restore the stream to its natural condition. Since this project would result in additional traffic on the road, there is a chance of reclaiming sand and gravel for municipal use, etc., there will be a presentation to the Select Board on this matter in the near future. Board member Doney wants the weight limit on the Bull Run Road respected and any road damage repaired right away by the offender.
- b. Cross Brothers Dam Removal.** Manager Schulz said this proposal was brought to the Select Board's attention several months ago. The project is ongoing but sufficient funding must be secured before it proceeds much further.

- c. **“Welcome to Northfield” Signs.** Manager Schulz stated the lighting on the first sign has been installed. The second sign, to be located in Northfield Falls, has been completed and is in town but will not be installed until some remaining issues have been resolved. For example, there are residences in close proximity to the sign’s location and the neighbors may not want it lit at night. Once this matter has been resolved, the sign should be installed by mid-September.
- d. **Northfield Labor Day Weekend Festivities.** Manager Schulz said the Highway crew has been preparing for the big holiday weekend by cleaning in and around the Common, mowing roadsides, etc.
- e. **Central Street Stormwater Basin.** Manager Schulz viewed the basin recently and found its bottom area overgrown with grass, weeds, etc. He has asked the Water/Sewer crew to clear it out within the next two weeks. Board member Maxwell felt this should be done at least twice a year.
- f. **Water Street Stormwater Project.** Manager Schulz said ANR is still considering providing additional grant funds so this project can be completed. He will be meeting soon with ANR representatives along with the contractor and Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) consultants next week to get some resolution on this. Manager Schulz hopes the project can still be completed this year.
- g. **Bull Run Solar Farm.** Manager Schulz said this private solar project should be completed and generating power within the next month. There still needs to be an accounting protocol put in place to account for the power and energy credits that will be forwarded to the municipality.
- h. **Northfield Bridge Inventory.** Manager Schulz and Mr. Tucker will be working together to create an inventory and status report for the many bridges located in Northfield. A priority list will be developed for those bridges requiring special attention.

**XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)**

- a. **Gail Hall: Northfield Energy Resources.** Ms. Hall would like the Select Board to consider all possible options for meeting the municipality’s renewable energy requirements rather than focus solely on solar power. Manager Schulz said the Planning Commission now is working on an update of the Northfield Town Plan that will include a revised chapter on local renewable energy sources, etc. The elected Electric Utility Commissioners also will discuss these matters at their monthly meetings, which are open to the public. There is another group, Northfield Energy’s Future, which has been meeting and will seek voter authorization at the next Town Meeting to become an official municipal body. Ms. Hall said she has been attending these meetings and will try to attend Planning Commission and Electric Utility Commission meetings in future.
- b. **Lisa Page: Cheney Farm Solar Project.** Ms. Page would like the Select Board to identify all other possible solar farm project sites in Northfield before the aforementioned Town Meeting Day vote. Manager Schulz said only two (2) possible sites on Northfield municipal property were identified: Cheney Farm and the Wellfield on Vermont Route 12A. Using the Wellfield was discounted quickly due to the possibility of groundwater contamination. Manager Schulz added private property owners will be contacted to see if they are interested in selling or leasing their land to the municipality in order to locate a solar farm. Chair Goslant warned if property owners want to put solar farms (or wind turbines) on their own private property, they would not need to obtain any public (or Select Board) approval to proceed.

**XII. 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 and Town Attorney Brian P. Monaghan present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:45 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 10:40 p.m. No action was taken.

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

The Board adjourned at 10:41 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 August 28, 2018.