

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD MEETING
Minutes of September 11, 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, Trent Tucker (Highway Foreman), Bonnie Donahue (Northfield Promise Community), Rebecca Pearish (Northfield Promise Community), Gretchen Dunn (GO! Northfield), Sally Davidson (Recreation Committee), Steve Davis, Jodi Payette, Linda Barrows, Candace Beaudette, Charles Beaudette, Andrew Beaudette, Sandra Davis, Chandler Stowell, Jan Van Eck, Brenda Chamberlin, Randall Chamberlin, Donald Boardman, Cary Halsted, Mukam Harzenski (Trijang Buddhist Institute), Trijang Rinpoche (Trijang Buddhist Institute), Kunsang Dechen (Trijang Buddhist Institute), Lobsang Youten (Trijang Buddhist Institute), Linda DeNeergaard, Russell Chamberlin, Kahwa Douoguih (Trijang Buddhist Institute), Mary Donnelly (Trijang Buddhist Institute), Pam Hepburn, Lobsang Supa (Trijang Buddhist Institute), Fernando Carvalhosa (Trijang Buddhist Institute), Lobsang Tharchin (Trijang Buddhist Institute), Tashi Jamyang (Trijang Buddhist Institute), Joseph Mountford (Trijang Buddhist Institute), Cheme Tsering (Trijang Buddhist Institute), David Adams, Scott Benoir (Scotty B's Trucking), Eric Davis (All Clean Waste Systems), Bernard Atwood, and Anne Donahue.

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 (Morning Star Lane, Potato Hill Road, Storti Road, Beaudette Road, and Boardman Road).** Prior to the meeting, the Select Board members 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 currently serving 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 potential of more roads going through the process next year. This will be the third and final scheduled public hearing on this matter.

Mukam Harzenski works with the Trijang Buddhist Institute (TBI) on Morning Star Lane and she noted TBI is registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit religious organization. Ms. Harzenski said TBI holds regular prayer services, educational courses, and retreats open to the public and pays about \$50,000 each year in local property taxes. TBI also works with students at the local schools and Norwich University on comparative religion, etc. and contributed to the greater community in many other ways throughout the year.

Charles Beaudette owns the house on Beaudette Road with his brother Andrew. He noted the road has a bridge and railroad crossing and he is concerned about liability issues should Beaudette Road be privatized. Mr. Beaudette said the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) inspects the bridge every two years and he is unsure what would happen and who would be responsible for maintaining the bridge in the future. In addition, Mr. Beaudette worries the property might be unsellable due to these unanswered questions should the road be thrown up. He also doubts he would be able to find a private snow plow operator who is as skilled or dependable as those employed by the Northfield Highway Department. In addition, Mr. Beaudette believes it is unfair to homeowners who purchased houses on publicly-maintained roads in good faith and then withdraw that service afterwards. He felt residents who purchased homes on long private driveways also knew the facts before making their purchases. Mr. Beaudette hopes the Select Board members will look at a number of factors when making their decision rather than focusing solely on the balance book.

Andrew Beaudette disputes the figure provided by Manager Schulz (\$48,135.80) for annual savings should the fifteen (15) roads under discussion this year be discontinued. He noted the annual highway budget is approximately one million dollars (\$1,000,000) and dividing that amount by the eighty (80) miles of public road shows about \$13,000 is spend annually per highway mile. Since the length of the fifteen roads under consideration totals 2.17 miles, he felt the actual savings would be less than \$30,000. Mr. Beaudette believes the adverse impact on the community of this road discontinuance including reduced property values (thus resulting in lower tax payments) and loss of VTrans financial aid did not justify taking this action for such a low amount of savings.

Jan Van Eck does not live on any of the roads under consideration but has concerns that by throwing up these roads Northfield may be losing opportunities to create bicycle and pedestrian trails that would be safe alternatives to the busy state highways leading into and out of town. Mr. Van Eck believes the State of Vermont will be encouraging and perhaps funding the creation of such trail systems in order to encourage tourism and he doesn't want Northfield to reject this opportunity by privatizing these roads.

Cary Halsted lives on Potato Hill Road and he also doubts he would be able to find someone reliable and skilled enough to plow and sand his steep road during the winter months. He is concerned about what would happen should he require an emergency response to his home if Potato Hill Road is not maintained properly throughout the year.

Diane McKain lives on McKain Road, which appeared on a preliminary list of roads suggested for discontinuance next year. She believes the municipality has a responsibility to serve all its residents and worries other public services, such as emergency response, might be also be withheld from those living on the backroads.

Conrad Motyka lives on Apple Lane and he also doesn't believe the projections of cost savings are accurate. He doubts his road gets anywhere near the sixty-five (65) visits per year that the \$48,135.80 figure is based upon. Because of these faulty figures and other poor assumptions, he is prepared to go to court should the Select Board members decide to discontinue Apple Lane. Mr. Motyka would like to know the exact criteria for focusing on the fifteen (15) roads under discussion this year as well as those suggested for discontinuance next year.

Brenda Chamberlin lives on Smith Hill Road and strongly feels this whole road discontinuance process has been unfair to residents who live on one- and two-house roads. She has repeatedly requested hard figures that would provide indisputable evidence for the projected cost savings but hasn't received this information yet. Ms. Chamberlin doesn't want the Select Board members to proceed in this matter until they can provide proof of actual cost savings.

Anne Donahue lives on a private road off Turkey Hill Road and is one of Northfield's state representatives. She thanked the Select Board members for taking on this difficult matter because all opportunities for reducing the local tax burden should be explored. However, the residents of the roads under consideration did buy their homes on publicly-maintained road at the time of purchase. She felt it might be a good idea for the Select Board members to step back and reconsider whether or not they want to take this action.

Mary Donnelly also spoke on behalf of the Trijang Buddhist Institute, noting people regularly come to TBI from many Vermont communities to attend classes, religious services, etc. Morning Star Lane is therefore a heavily traveled road and she felt TBI is a very special place. Fernando Carvalhosa concurred with this and noted TBI might have to reduce its services if it has to assume the extra expense of maintaining Morning Star Lane. He believes all roads leading to houses of worship should be publicly maintained.

Donald Boardman lives on Boardman Road and has been a Northfield resident for all of his eighty-one (81) years. He has a public school pension and doubts he will be able to keep his house if required to pay for the future maintenance of Boardman Road. In addition, due to his advanced years, Mr. Boardman relies heavily on reliable emergency service response and he is very concerned this will be jeopardized should the road be privatized.

Chandler Stowell lives on Jerry Road and he agrees with what Chair Goslant said at an earlier public hearing that this whole road discontinuance process has been a learning experience. It seemed to him the Select Board members have focused too much on saving a little bit of money at the expense of antagonizing a large segment of the community. Mr. Stowell felt more money could be saved if the municipality outsourced to private contractors the winter maintenance of some of the backroads. However, should the Select Board members decide to discontinue some roads, he felt it would be fairer to “grandfather” the public maintenance of these roads for the current property owner or (alternatively) delay the discontinuance for five (5) to ten (10) years. Mr. Stowell hopes the Select Board members will consider all the views brought forward at these public hearings and be fair in their deliberations.

Linda Barrows has researched this matter and feels any potential cost savings to taxpayers would not justify the impact on the individual property owners on these roads. Ms. Barrows also suspects the original fifteen (15) roads were chosen because they would have to be upgraded to meet new stormwater runoff requirements and the Select Board members did not want to be responsible for this large expense. Manager Schulz said the original set of roads under consideration were chosen because all but one serve only one house and are under one thousand feet (1,000’) in length. Any future stormwater runoff requirements had no part in this determination. Manager Schulz added Vermont state statutes clearly provide the Select Board members with the authority to discontinue roads provided certain guidelines are met with proper public notification, site visits, public hearings, etc.

Ms. Barrows asked who made the decision to start the process to discontinue these fifteen roads this year. Manager Schulz said the Highway Subcommittee developed the list and made the recommendation to the full Select Board at an open meeting. The Select Board members then voted to authorize the process to proceed in accordance with state statutes. Now that the required site visits and public hearings have been held, the Select Board members will decide whether or not to proceed with actual road discontinuance. Ms. Barrows doesn’t believe the process should have been started without proper procedures in place.

Sally Davidson applauds the Select Board members for taking on the controversial subject of road discontinuance for certain one- and two-house roads. She agrees with Manager Schulz that a number of these publicly-maintained roads are nothing but short driveways.

There being no other questions or comments, the public hearing closed at 8:29 p.m.

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

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

- a. **Bonnie Donahue: Northfield Promise Community Update.** Ms. Donahue reported the installation of new playground equipment at the Northfield Falls Park would be a community effort on Saturday, September 22, 2018. She asked volunteers to bring their own tools, wheelbarrows, etc. Ms. Donahue and the other Northfield Promise Community members are very excited to get the process going. She then added the work at the new children’s park adjacent to the Brown Public Library probably will begin in late October after all the upgrades at the Falls Park has been completed. When the \$150,000 Promise Community grant was awarded by the state, one of the stipulations was that all work had to be completed before the end of this calendar year.
- b. **Bernard Atwood: Road Grading Concerns.** Mr. Atwood was very disappointed with the road grading this past summer. Manager Schulz has been assured by Highway Foreman Tucker that the grader is on the backroads at least three (3) days every workweek. Board member Doney suggested some of the Highway crew need to go back to grading school for refresher courses. Manager Schulz will have a list of roads already graded this summer and those scheduled to be done soon ready for the Select Board at their next regular meeting (09/25/18). Chair Goslant went on the backroads with Manager Schulz and Highway Foreman Tucker today and learned five (5) to seven (7) miles of backroad can be graded during a ten (10) hour summer workday. He added experienced graders are hard to find so we do need to train our employees to do better jobs. Chair Goslant would like the Highway Subcommittee to work on ways to improve the road grading and it is possible the Select Board will discuss hiring another Highway employee during the next budget meetings.

- c. **Sally Davidson, Recreation Committee: Park Use Application Form.** Ms. Davidson had some concerns with the revised park use application form as there appears to be some discrepancies between those groups asked to pay to use the fields and those who are not. She felt there was too much gray area as some groups have claimed to be non-profits and thus exempt even though they collect participation fees, etc. Ms. Davidson would like everyone charged or no one charged. Chair Goslant wants to encourage everyone to use our recreational fields but there had been a suggestion from the Recreation Committee that groups who charge for lessons, etc. should contribute towards the maintenance of those fields. Ms. Davidson would like to go back to asking for donations instead of requiring set payments. The \$100 per event deposit fee still would be imposed but the money would be returned if there is no damage to the field and no trash left behind. Board member Goodrich agrees with this. The consensus of the Select Board members was to authorize the Recreation Committee to revise the form to remove the field use charge and insert language asking for donations.
- d. **Sally Davidson, Recreation Committee: Fall Cleanup Days.** The Northfield Recreation Committee has scheduled its Fall 2018 Clean-Up Days for Saturday, September 22, 2018, and Sunday, September 23, 2018. Volunteers are asked to meet at Memorial Park at 10:00 a.m. and the work will be completed by 4:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided. Ms. Davidson asked participants to bring their own tools, etc. A full list of tools and other equipment needed will be posted on Front Porch Forum.
- e. **Gretchen Dunn, GO! Northfield: Third Annual "Night on the Common."** Ms. Dunn said this year's "Night on the Common" would be held on Tuesday, September 18, 2018. The event will be hosted by the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN), the Northfield Farmers Market, and GO! Northfield. It will begin at 5:30 p.m. and thus overlap with the normal weekly Northfield Farmers Market starting at 3:00 p.m. There will be music from the Vermont Fiddle Orchestra and a community photo will be taken at 6:15 p.m. A variety of food and drink choices will be available for purchase and free ice cream sandwiches will be provided to attendees.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **August 28, 2018 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #05-19.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve Warrant #05-19 in the amount of \$397,520.12. Board member Goodrich asked if the municipality would be reimbursed for the repair work to the damaged covered bridge on Cox Brook Road. Manager Schulz said the reimbursement funds already have been received from the responsible party's insurance company. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through August 26, 2018.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$83,473.59. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Road Discontinuance.** Board member Maxwell asked when the sixty (60) day deadline for taking action on this matter would begin. Manager Schulz said it started tonight with the conclusion of the final public hearing. Board member Miller said the Highway Subcommittee (i.e., Manager Schulz, Highway Foreman Trent Tucker, Board member Miller, and Chair Goslant) met last week and the consensus was to table the process for the time being and revisit it again next spring. In the interim, the Highway Subcommittee will research further how other Vermont communities handled this process, etc. Manager Schulz said if the Select Board members wanted to restart the process next year, they would have to start again at the beginning with notification letters, site visits, and public hearings. Chair Goslant said for him this process involved gathering as much information as possible on road discontinuance but he did not feel comfortable with making a decision at this time. He felt the upcoming budget process would be a good time for discussing possible other cost-saving options such as outsourcing winter maintenance of selected backroads. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to suspend the highway discontinuance process. **Motion passed 5-0-0.** Board member Maxwell would like to thank all those who attended the site visits and/or public hearings in order to voice their views on this.

- b. FY 2018/2019 Fuel Bids.** Manager Schulz said proposals for heating fuel, propane, no-lead gasoline, and diesel were solicited and five distributors (Blue Flame, Gillespie Fuels, Irving Energy, Suburban Propane, and White's Heating) submitted proposals by yesterday's deadline. Bidders were asked to submit floating as well as fixed and capped prices. Chair Goslant favors going with fixed prices as he suspects there might be some significant price hikes this winter. Board member Maxwell said he had no problem with awarding contracts to local providers even if their bid amounts were slightly higher. Manager Schulz agreed the municipality has had problems in the past with larger companies based out of town with delivery delays, etc.
- Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to award the heating fuel contract to Gillespie Fuels at a fixed price of \$2.60 per gallon. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to award the propane contract to Gillespie Fuels at a fixed price of \$1.38 per gallon. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- Motion by Board member Miller, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to award the diesel contract to Gillespie Fuels at a floating price of \$2.55 per gallon. It was noted no fixed or capped price bids were submitted for diesel fuel. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- Since no bid proposals were submitted for no-lead gasoline, the municipality will continue to spot buy gasoline from Jack Corse, Inc. (Cambridge, VT).
- c. Board of Listers Resignation.** Manager Schulz said Lister Arlington Supplee is planning to move out of state in the near future so he has submitted his letter of resignation effective September 30, 2018. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to accept Lister Supplee's letter of resignation with regret while thanking him for several years of dedicated service to the Northfield community. **Motion passed 5-0-0.** The municipality now will advertise for Mr. Supplee's successor with the expectation he/she will be appointed at the regular Select Board meeting of October 9, 2018. The successful applicant will serve until Town Meeting 2019.
- d. Northfield Transfer Station Agreement.** Manager Schulz said the company operating the Northfield Transfer Station (Earth Waste & Metal) said it couldn't continue to do so as the drop in the price of recyclables and local competition no longer made it economically feasible. The only compensation Earth Waste & Metal collected was from charging for bagged trash, tire disposal, etc. This notice was received at the very last minute so the municipality has been working hard to find a replacement operator in order to prevent long-term closure of the facility. Manager Schulz would like to go into executive session with the Select Board later in the meeting in order to discuss possible options for a new contract. Eric Davis from All Clean Waste Systems has agreed to operate the transfer station on an interim basis until a long-term solution is found. Chair Goslant noted Mr. Davis and Scott Benoir from Scotty B's Trucking were present tonight and asked if they had anything to say on this matter.
- Mr. Benoir said he has been in the local trash collection business for twelve (12) years and has been able to keep his prices level for the past five (5) years. If contracted to operate the Northfield Transfer Station, he would not seek any additional funds from the municipality and his business would cover any electric charges. Mr. Benoir said he would provide excellent service and he would continue his practice of offering discounts to local veterans and seniors. Board member Maxwell asked if Mr. Benoir would keep the two (2) local employees Earth Waste & Metal hired to work at the transfer station. Mr. Benoir couldn't provide any guarantees but would consider it.
- Mr. Davis said he was pleased to oblige when asked to operate the transfer station on an interim basis. If granted a contract to do so on a more permanent basis, he would do his best and would maintain his current pricing structure. This includes free disposal of most recyclable materials. Like Mr. Benoir, Mr. Davis could not commit to keeping the two current employees as he has sufficient staffing at this time.
- e. 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

- a. Tree Removal at Ambulance Bay.** Board member Doney would like some pine trees near the Ambulance Bay removed as their sap has damaged vehicles in the past and he doesn't want this happening to the new trailer and off-road rescue unit delivered recently. In addition, the shade these trees throw on the nearby parking area keeps it from drying out properly after a rainstorm. He suggested having Limlaw Chipping & Land Clearing take care of this when it is in town. Manager Schulz will first ask Highway Foreman Tucker if this is something the Highway crew can take care of. If not, he will contact Limlaw. Chair Goslant thought Limlaw might do the service for free if it can keep the lumber.
- b. Town Budget Process.** Board member Goodrich felt the budget process felt a little rushed at the end this past year in order to get the budget finalized in time for the Town Warning to be signed before the end of January. She asked if it were possible to start the meetings earlier this year. Manager Schulz said the practice in recent years has been to start the budget meetings in early December but it might be possible to move them up to mid-November. He will work with Finance Director Laurie Baroffio to get a draft budget schedule to the Select Board members soon reflecting this change.
- c. Northfield Police Chief Search.** Board member Maxwell asked about the status of the search process. Manager Schulz said the Search Committee held their first meeting last week (09/05/18) and will hold another meeting tomorrow night (09/12/18). He hopes to hold in-person interviews before the end of this month. The timeline is to have the Search Committee present a recommendation to the Select Board members at their first meeting in October (10/09/18).

X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. Pleasant Street Bridge.** Manager Schulz said VTrans engineers recently inspected the Pleasant Street Bridge and expressed some concerns about its condition. He and Highway Foreman Tucker will work with VTrans on this and there should be some state grant funds available to address this.
- b. Union Street Stormwater Project.** Manager Schulz said the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) recently agreed to provide an additional \$300,000 in grant funds in order to complete this project. There will be an attempt to complete all the paving work in the area by the end of November. If not, the affected areas will be patched until next spring.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED): None.

- XII. 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 and possible contract negotiations with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 10:00 p.m.

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

The Board came out of executive session at 10:20 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 10:20 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 are subject to approval at the next regular Select Board meeting.