

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD MEETING
Minutes of October 9, 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, Lauren Weston (Milone & MacBroom), Michele Braun (Friends of the Winooski River), Fred Satink (VLCT PACIF), Larry Smith (VLCT PACIF), Jim Carrien (VLCT PACIF), John Helfant, Steve Davis, Steve Tiersch, Sally Davidson (Recreation Committee), Carolyn Stevens (Northfield Community Development Network), Jane Pekol, Gail Hall (Northfield's Energy Future), Arlington Supplee, 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. Michele Braun, Executive Director, Friends of the Winooski (FOW): Camp Wihakowi Dam Removal Project.** Ms. Braun said FOW has received grant funds for projects that would improve aquatic passage through the removal of dilapidated dams. There are several of these dams located throughout Vermont and Ms. Braun became aware of the old dam located on Bull Run Brook near Camp Wihakowi during her tenure as Northfield's Zoning Administrator. She added FOW has hired the engineering firm Milone & MacBroom to design the project and work with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) to expedite the dam removal process. Lauren Weston is a Water Resources Engineer for Milone & MacBroom and is working on the final design of this project. She said the dam was built in the 1920s in order to create a swimming area for nearby Camp Wihakowi but has not been maintained for several decades. The dam has been breached as several sections of concrete are missing, which raises the threat of total structure collapse. This would result in the build-up sediment behind the dam to move downstream and further damage its flow. The sediment is up to eight feet (8') in depth at some locations and the stagnant pool behind the dam also is clogged with Japanese knotweed, which is invasive and must be bagged and buried to prevent it from becoming re-established elsewhere. Ms. Weston said removing the dam would restore the river's natural flow, which would be a great boon to the local trout population. Ms. Weston estimated about twenty-six thousand (26,000) cubic yards of sediment had built up behind the dam and of this about twenty-two thousand (22,000) cubic yards would have to be trucked out as part of the dam removal process. Ms. Weston said the sediment has been tested and found to contain traces of arsenic. However, the arsenic level is relatively low and shouldn't be a problem. The plan is to restore about eleven thousand feet (11,000') of the stream to natural conditions, which would also assist with current flood mitigation problems. Ms. Braun noted the dam has made the river unpredictable and heavy rainstorms, including Tropical Storm Irene, have resulted in the inundation of nearby fields. The current property owners (Jonathan and Lisa Burr) are very supportive of this project as they hope, among other benefits, it will allow their business (the Woods Lodge) to become a destination accommodation for trout anglers.

Ms. Braun said the removal of the sediment would require about fourteen thousand (14,000) dump truck loads. Although the property owners will have the first claim to the material, there is potential for the municipality to reclaim the bulk of the sediment for use on the backroads. Chair Goslant is concerned the bridge on the access road might not be able to handle the heavy loads. Ms. Weston said this factor would be taken into consideration when the project plans are developed. Manager Schulz said Highway Foreman Trent Tucker reported the bridge is in relatively good shape with new decking but he still has concerns that many truck loads might cause too much stress to the structure. He recommended having the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTTrans) conduct an inspection and provide a recommendation.

Board member Maxwell had questions about the removal and burial of the knotweed. He thought it might be best to have this included in the scope of services for the project contractor. Chair Goslant suggested the knotweed could be buried in or near one of the municipality's gravel pits in return for some consideration when the destination of the reclaimable sediment is negotiated. Manager Schulz asked what permits would be required. Ms. Weston said there would be several including an ANR Stream Alteration permit, a Historic Preservation permit, and whatever local permits are required.

Chair Goslant asked when the actual dam removal would begin. Ms. Weston said the full funding for the project still needs to be secured but she hopes it can be done next summer when the river's level is low. Ms. Braun said there were several state and federal grant opportunities but, as indicated earlier, there are many such old dams located throughout Vermont so there is some competition. Board member Maxwell asked what the Select Board can do to facilitate the process. Ms. Weston said the Select Board members would have to approve any local permits and also agree to take some or all of the removed sediment. Chair Goslant thanked Ms. Braun and Ms. Weston for their presentation and he looks forward to hearing more as the project develops.

- b. Fred Satink et al., Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT): Property and Casualty Intermunicipal Fund (PACIF) Coverages, Services, and Programs.** Mr. Satink is the VLCT PACIF Manager for Underwriting and Safety & Health Promotion. He and his colleagues wanted to provide the Select Board with an overview of the various services VLCT PACIF provides to member communities.

Larry Smith is the VLCT PACIF Manager for Member Relations and he said VLCT PACIF was created in 1986 when it became difficult for Vermont municipalities to obtain workers compensation, property, and liability insurance from private insurers at reasonable rates. VLCT PACIF works out of its Montpelier office and its staff is comprised of many former and current municipal officers. VLCT PACIF is especially useful to municipalities as it provides affordable flood insurance even for structures located in flood plains. Mr. Smith said VLCT PACIF provides risk assessment inspections of municipal facilities in order to keep coverage rates down by identifying and recommending ways to address unsafe conditions. It also helps with municipal employee issues by helping to maintain up-to-date job descriptions, assist with employee training procedures, develop policies for employee discipline, etc. VLCT PACIF also oversees the drug/alcohol testing protocols for municipal employees with commercial driver's licenses. In November 2018, VLCT PACIF will be hiring a law enforcement consultant to assist member communities with officer training, promotion, etc. VLCT PACIF also provides municipalities with "fifty-fifty" grants to assist with the purchase of safety equipment. Mr. Smith said this fund depletes rather quickly each year so early applications are advisable. There also are VLCT PACIF scholarships available in order to cover the cost of outside training.

Jim Carrien is a VLCT PACIF Loss Control Consultant and he services the northeast part of the state. He works with municipalities in order to reduce the number of claims filed by and against the municipality due to automotive accidents, workplace injuries, etc. Other services provided include flagger training, identification of hazardous materials and/or unsafe working conditions, etc. Mr. Carrien is now working with Manager Schulz to develop various policies for the municipality, such as random drug/alcohol testing, an incident investigation and reporting policy, etc.

Mr. Satink said VLCT PACIF provides coverage to ninety-two percent (92%) of Vermont municipalities due to the aforementioned problems in obtaining suitable and affordable insurance from private carriers. He said their underwriting system was revamped in 2018 in order to make non-compliant municipalities pay more for their services while reducing the rates for those who work with VLCT PACIF to reduce potential risks, report workplace accidents and/or injuries in a timely manner, etc. Mr. Satink said Northfield management has been very compliant and taken full advantage of its risk control programs so the municipality should see considerable cost savings in the future. There also are contribution credits provided to municipalities with minimal losses. Overall, the coverage rates should drop by 2.8% in the coming year. Board member Maxwell asked how VLCT dues are assessed. Manager Schulz said it was based on population.

Chair Goslant then thanked Messieurs Satink, Smith, and Carrien for the information provided tonight. Mr. Satink encouraged the Select Board members to contact either him or his colleagues should they have any additional questions or concerns.

- c. John Helfant – Northfield Police Chief (incoming).** After a wide search, the Town of Northfield has hired John Helfant of East Roxbury, Vermont, to be its new Police Chief. Mr. Helfant has twenty-eight (28) years of law enforcement experience with the majority of his time spent with the Vermont State Police. Most recently Mr. Helfant has been a patrolman with the Berlin Police Department and his service with the Northfield Police Department will start on Monday, October 22, 2018. Mr. Helfant thanked the Police Chief Search Committee, the Select Board members, and Manager Schulz for the opportunity to serve the people of Northfield and he pledged to keep this a safe community. Chair Goslant and his fellow Select Board members welcomed Mr. Helfant and they look forward to his first official report to them after he has assumed his responsibilities.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **September 25, 2018 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #07-19.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve Warrant #07-19 in the amount of \$874,983.45. Board member Goodrich asked if all the invoices have been paid for the municipal pool. Manager Schulz confirmed they have and the pool has been shut down for winter. He will have a detailed revenue report for the 2018 summer season for the next meeting. Board member Maxwell had questions about payments to cemetery contractor Bruce Wright. Manager Schulz said the contract with Mr. Wright has monthly payments and he is reimbursed separately for his sexton duties such as internments. Chair Goslant wondered what the Northfield Electric Department (NED) (and its customers) get in return for the \$27,000 monthly payment to Efficiency Vermont. Manager Schulz said the public utilities, who pay this fee out of customer charges, are negotiating to receive more services in order to justify this expense. He added Efficiency Vermont will be conducting a DIY Workshop for wintertime energy conservation here in the Community Room on Thursday, November 8, 2018, at 6:00 p.m. A flyer with full details will be sent out next week with the utility bills. Chair Goslant noted of the total warrant amount, about \$225,000 was spent to purchase power for NED. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through September 23, 2018.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$105,174.62. It was noted there was an increase in the Northfield Fire Department (NFD) part-time employee expense for this pay period due to the payment of the annual stipend to the NFD officers. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Board of Listers Appointment.** Manager Schulz noted there was a vacancy on the Board of Listers due to resignation of longtime member Arlington Supplee. The vacancy was advertised and two (2) letters of interest (Kenneth Hepburn and David Ritzer) were received by last week's deadline. The remaining two Listers (Thomas Alsheimer and Christopher Bradley) recommend the appointment of Mr. Ritzer due to his longtime involvement in the Northfield community as well as extensive experience in the residential construction industry. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to appoint Mr. Ritzer to fill the vacancy on the Board of Listers. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Pleasant Street Bridge.** As discussed at the previous meeting, Manager Schulz said VTrans inspected the bridge and found one of its abutments in poor condition. VTrans sent a letter to the Select Board asking it to acknowledge receipt of the letter and confirm the municipality would address the problem as soon as possible. Manager Schulz and Highway Foreman Tucker met with VTrans and ANR representatives recently and discussed a number of options up to and including replacing the whole bridge. VTrans agreed to perform a hydraulic study on the bridge to help determine the best course of action. In the meantime, VTrans would like its letter formally acknowledged along with a summary of work done to date and a commitment to remedy the problem. Chair Goslant asked why the bridge isn't posted for a lower weight limit. Manager Schulz said this could be done. He also noted the bridge was temporarily closed for repairs a few years ago without too much disruption as there are alternate routes. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to acknowledge receipt of the VTrans letter and commit to addressing the matter in the near future. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Main Street Stormwater Project – State Revolving Loan Funding Applications.** Manager Schulz has been in contact with ANR representatives on possibilities for obtaining state funding for this project. Since this project has been under consideration, a new grant application form has been developed for funds to be obtained through the State Revolving Loan Program. Manager Schulz is asking the Select Board members to approve and sign the new loan application form. Chair Goslant saw on the form the projected start date for the project is 2020. Manager Schulz said he is trying to move this up to next year. Chair Goslant hopes this will be the case as the badly-needed repaving of Slate Avenue and its sidewalks has been delayed for about five (5) years so this infrastructure project can be done first. He would like ANR made aware of this so there is a greater chance the work will be expedited. Chair Goslant noted asphalt prices have risen sharply in recent months so any more delays will result in a much more expensive project.

Board member Maxwell noted the total project cost is estimated at \$2,414,180 and asked how the municipality planned to pay for this. Manager Schulz said this has not yet been determined. However, ANR has mandated the stormwater problems in that part of town be addressed as soon as possible. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve and sign the State Revolving Loan Program grant application. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- d. **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. Manager Schulz noted there has been some major progress in this matter recently and it is possible it could be resolved tonight.

VIII. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **New Police Cruiser.** Chair Goslant asked why the new police vehicle wasn't on the street yet. Manager Schulz said some equipment still needed to be installed. He has delayed this so the new police chief will be able to provide his input.
- b. **Select Board Recognition of Arlington Supplee.** Chair Goslant asked his fellow Select Board members and all others present to express their appreciation to longtime Northfield resident Mr. Supplee, who is moving out of state in the near future after serving for several years on the Planning Commission and the Board of Listers. Chair Goslant said Mr. Supplee would be sorely missed in this community.
- c. **Water Department Infrastructure Update.** Chair Goslant attended a meeting of the Northfield Joint Utility Commission last week and learned from Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi there are some water mains on South Main Street over one hundred and fifty (150) years old and need to be replaced as part of his five (5) year plan. Manager Schulz said Mr. DeMasi did identify these mains for replacement but this is part of a long-term plan and no action is needed at this time. Chair Goslant also learned the underground reservoirs on Cheney Hill Farm will need to be replaced (not just relined) within the next twenty (20) years.
- d. **Gold Star Families Memorial Monument Dedication Ceremony.** Chair Goslant attended the ceremony last Friday and found it well-attended and very moving. World War II Medal of Honor recipient Hershel "Woody" Williams was in attendance. Through his foundation, it is his goal to have at least one of these monuments located in every state. Chair Goslant said Mr. Williams was headed next to a ground-breaking ceremony in Omaha, Nebraska.

IX. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Health Insurance Rates.** Manager Schulz recently received the Blue Cross/Blue Shield insurance premium rates for 2019 and reported there would be a three percent (3%) increase in the cost of the plan the municipality offers its employees. This is compared to the seven to nine percent (7-9%) increases in recent years. There also was a slight increase in deductible amounts. Board member Maxwell said rising health insurance costs each year appears to be the new norm.
- b. **Mountain Alliance Meeting.** Manager Schulz will be attending tomorrow night's Mountain Alliance meeting in Randolph. This is the first meeting in over a year and among the discussion topic will be a new state requirement for solid waste management districts to hold a minimum of four (4) household hazardous waste collections each year. The Mountain Alliance has been holding three (3) each year with two in Randolph and one in Northfield. In addition, the Town of Randolph has been handling all the Mountain Alliance's paperwork load since its founding and there has been discussion of outsourcing this responsibility.
- c. **NED Power Outages Penalty.** Manager Schulz reported the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) imposed a \$1,957 fine on the Northfield Electric Department for an excess number of power outages during the 2017/2018 fiscal year. It was noted almost all of these outages were localized (not system-wide) and caused by trees taking down power lines and other weather-related occurrences. Manager Schulz said the municipality had the option of deciding where the penalty funds would go and he recommended sending them to CERV. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to forward the \$1957 PUC fine to CERV. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. Sally Davidson, Recreation Committee Update.** Ms. Davidson said the Committee members recently discussed the new pavilion in Memorial Park and whether it should be painted, stained, etc. Their recommendation was to weather-proof the pavilion and maintain its natural appearance. There was no objection from the Select Board members. She also reported some Norwich University Rooks will be returning to the park this coming Sunday to complete the fall cleanup work.

Ms. Davidson then announced the Recreation Committee, with the assistance of the Northfield Savings Bank, will be holding their 2nd annual Trunk-or-Treat on Halloween night, Wednesday, October 31, 2018, on the on the south side of the Common. If you would like to participate in this, please call Susan Wright (485-6227) for a slot and for details. This event runs from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and she asks if you usually park your vehicle on the south side of the Common on Wednesdays, please find a different location for it after 12:00 p.m. as this side of the Common will be closed off in the afternoon in preparation for the nighttime activities.

- b. Carolyn Stevens, Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN): Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) Community Visit.** Ms. Stevens would like the Select Board to request the VCRD hold a Community Visit in Northfield in order to assist the community in setting priorities for future action as well as determining the best methods for achieving such goals. She noted VCRD last visited Northfield in 2001 and some of the goals set then, such as municipal merger, have been achieved but others were not. VCRD is now scheduling its community visits for 2020 so Ms. Stevens felt the municipality shouldn't delay too long to get on their schedule. She said NCDN would organize the community events and she felt best to focus on three (3) or four (4) achievable goals. Board member Maxwell suggested this matter be put on a future Select Board meeting agenda for full discussion. Manager Schulz will contact VCRD in the meanwhile. Gail Hall and Jane Pekol are members of the Northfield's Energy Future committee, which has been meeting periodically to discuss ways to encourage local energy conservation. They felt a VCRD Community Visit could be very helpful in achieving this goal.

- c. John Stevens, Brown Public Library (BPL) Board of Trustees: Insurance Coverage.** Mr. Stevens serves as the Treasurer for the BPL Board of Trustees and he asked if it were possible for BPL to obtain its property, liability, and workers compensation insurance through VLCT PACIF. Manager Schulz will check on this and let him know.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss legal matters and possible contract negotiations with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:15 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 9:40 p.m.

Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to authorize Manager Schulz to sign the Norwich Commons settlement agreement as presented to the Select Board. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

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

The Board adjourned at 9:40 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 October 23, 2018.