

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
TOWN SELECT BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of November 29, 2018

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair Kenneth W. Goslant, Board members Lynn Doney (absent), Julie H. Goodrich, K. David Maxwell, and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Finance Director Laurie Baroffio, Charles Morse (Northfield Farmers Market), Cassie Morse (Northfield Farmers Market), and Elroy C. Hill.

Chair Goslant called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled):

- a. Charles & Cassie Morse, Northfield Farmers Market: Winter Market.** Mr. Morse reminded the Select Board members that there would be a special Winter Farmer Market held next Friday (12/07/18) as part of the annual Christmas Tree Lighting festivities on the Northfield Common. Due to the expected large crowd, Mr. Morse is requesting that the south side of the Common be closed to through traffic starting mid-afternoon. In addition, two (2) port-o-potties will be located on the Common. A new feature this year will be horse-drawn wagon rides that will travel around Depot Square and, depending on the driver's judgement, perhaps also traverse Central Street and Water Street as far as Mayo Healthcare. Also, alcoholic punch will be sold through The Woods Lodge's catering permit. Mr. Morse said the market will be open from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and he will personally notify Depot Square merchants of the proposed parking and travel restrictions, etc. He did not ask for a partial closure last year because he did not expect a crowd of about five hundred (500) people to show up. Mr. Morse believes the Farmers Market will be prepared if there is similar interest this year. He then invited the Select Board members to come and take part in the festivities. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to close the Common's south side to through traffic from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Friday, December 7, 2018. **Motion passed 4-0-0.** Chair Goslant then thanked the Morses and the Northfield Farmers Market for organizing this special event.

IV. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Warrant #10-19.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve Warrant #10-19 in the amount of \$175,523.70. Board member Goodrich asked about a \$9,325 expense to purchase a "swinger coupler and grading bucket" for the excavator. Manager Schulz said the vehicle's wing had been damaged, which required the entire unit to be replaced. He spoke to Highway Foreman Trent Tucker about this and was informed this was fairly standard due to the heavy wear the excavator takes. He added many hours were put on the machine recently due to grant-funded work done on Dole Hill and other locations. Manager Schulz said the expense is covered in the current year Highway Department budget. Board member Goodrich then inquired about a \$1,484 invoice to install power on the Common. Manager Schulz said during the previous budget sessions there had been discussion of upgrading the power lines feeding the Common in order to allow for additional nighttime activities and enhanced seasonal lighting. Board member Maxwell asked about \$20 charged by SecurShred for shredding services at the Police Station. Finance Director Baroffio said the municipality has been outsourcing bulk document shredding for a couple of years. She added that before his retirement, former Police Chief William Jennings had identified and set aside a number of old documents suitable for mass shredding.

Board member Maxwell asked if the \$1,170 spent on consulting costs related to the update of the Northfield Town Plan was part of a grant award. Manager Schulz confirmed the Planning Commission did apply for and receive an \$11,000 grant to be used to revise the Town Plan, which is required every five (5) years. Board member Maxwell then asked about a \$12,810 expense for "Well Field Rehabilitation." Manager Schulz said some low water flows were found in one of the pumps during a recent inspection so an engineer was hired to determine the best course of action. Board member Maxwell noted invoices totaling about \$80,000 for relining sewer lines and the installation of new manholes. He asked on which streets this work was done. Manager Schulz checked and found it was Union Street and Water Street. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through Nov. 18, 2018.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$100,993.70. Manager Schulz noted the \$6,000 in Highway Department overtime expenses for this pay period was due to some unexpected heavy mid-November snowstorms. He hopes this is an anomaly and will not continue regularly through the winter months. Chair Goslant has concerns about Northfield Police Department (NPD) holiday overtime expenses related to provisions in the current union contract. Manager Schulz said negotiations on a new contract are ongoing and he hopes the new contract will address this. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

V. BUDGET WORK SESSION

- a. **Overview of Proposed FY 2019/2020 Municipal Budget.** Manager Schulz said he and Ms. Baroffio have been working on the proposed budget over the past month and this process included input from the various department heads. He noted some of their budget requests have been "whittled down" in order to create a more manageable budget. With the current budget draft, the tax rate would increase five and one-half cents (5.5¢) for an additional \$175,000 in tax revenues. This is after using \$65,000 in previous year surplus funds including \$40,000 from the General Fund and \$25,000 in HRA rollover funds. Manager Schulz does not expect any surplus Highway Department funds this year.

Operations & Management (O&M). Manager Schulz said O&M will see a 4.2% increase in the next fiscal year primarily due to scheduled wage and benefit increases. These increases average three percent (3%) for most departments but NPD officers will see a 5.9% increase due to their current union contract. Chair Goslant said there was an attempt in that contract to make NPD salaries competitive with those offered by other law enforcement agencies in the region.

Manager Schulz said the major new expense for the Northfield Fire Department (NFD) in the next fiscal year was the purchase of a replacement tanker, which should cost about \$185,000 if a good used vehicle can be located. This would be funded by cash on hand and some borrowing. Chair Goslant is concerned about the rising equipment costs for this department in recent years. Board member Maxwell noted most firefighters (and other emergency responders) want to deploy the latest and best equipment when needed. However, this probably isn't economically feasible in smaller communities and it is the Select Board's responsibility to impose some fiscal restraint.

Manager Schulz said other than the aforementioned salary increase, the NPD budget is fairly level funded. He added some debate remains over the optimal size of the NPD vehicle fleet. There now are seven (7) full-time NPD officers (including the NPD Chief) so there is an argument that a NPD fleet of four (4) vehicles isn't really necessary. Manager Schulz said in his past experience with police chiefs, all try to retain an extra vehicle for contingency purposes. Manager Schulz understands this but doesn't feel the extra vehicle needs to be as new a model as the ones used for regular patrols, etc.

Chair Goslant would like a future discussion of the possibility of equipping NPD officers with Tasers. Board member Goodrich said should this happen, they also would have to be provided with specialized body cameras that would document Taser usage. Manager Schulz said Taser technology has improved in recent years and additional law enforcement agencies are employing them to allow non-legal responses to imminent threats. He added our new police chief, John Helfant, is a proponent for providing our officers that option.

Manager Schulz said there is a proposed \$13,740 budget increase for the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) that includes slight increases in run pay to reflect the fact most emergency responses happen in the evening hours and over weekends. He added due to recent growth in NAS revenue, this is the only municipal department that even comes close to covering its own expenses. The proposed NAS Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget does include increases for replacing defibrillators, which have limited shelf lives. In addition, NAS Chief Lawton Rutter has been advocating again this year for purchasing PowerLoaders for stretchers as this helps reduce the risk of back injuries for NAS personnel. This could be an expensive proposition and will be discussed further when the NAS budget is reviewed in detail.

The proposed Highway Department budget would increase by \$51,670 and much of this increase is due to a 9.7% rise in personnel costs in order to add a part-time employee to help with winter plowing. Chair Goslant feels this could lead to reductions in full-time employee overtime expenses and thus pay for itself in the long run. He would like to look again at additional outsourcing of certain road maintenance tasks in order to achieve similar savings. Manager Schulz said the current plan is to level fund the department's road material budget. Board member Miller would favor increasing the gravel/stone budget, which currently remains at \$66,000. He would like more road material put on some of our deteriorating backroads. Manager Schulz said he has been working with Dan Currier from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) on updating our Road Surface Management System (RSMS) Plan in order to get a better sense of what is needed to better maintain the backroads. Board member Maxwell has been advocating for some time for a comprehensive long-term plan for our infrastructure and he hopes this RSMS Plan update will provide this for our highway system. He added since a lot of long-term municipal debt will be coming off the books over the next couple years, this will be a good time to address our infrastructure problems without significantly raising tax rates. Chair Goslant believes a lot of progress has been done recently with the roadside cleaning program, grant awards for various road projects, etc. He also believes it should be possible to reclaim some road material from the backroad culverts, etc.

- b. **Miscellaneous.** The next budget meeting originally was scheduled for next Tuesday (12/04/18) but since Chair Goslant has a conflict that night, it will be rescheduled for Monday, December 3, 2018, at 6:00 p.m. In addition, with the exception of the two budget meetings that precede regular Select Board meetings (12/11/18 & 01/08/18), all future budget meetings will be held in the Municipal Building's Conference Room.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled): There was none.

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

The Board adjourned at 8:01 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.