

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of January 8, 2019

- 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, Finance Director Laurie Baroffio, and Elroy Hill

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

- II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled):** None.

III. BUDGET WORK SESSION

- a. Cemetery Department.** Manager Schulz said the budget for the Cemetery Department had two (2) main components: the operations budget and the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The operations budget mainly revolves around the annual contract with Bruce Wright, who performs cemetery maintenance duties and also acts as Sexton for burials, cremations, etc. As in past years, there will be a slight increase in the contract amount (from \$53,740 to \$54,170). Manager Schulz said Mr. Wright appears to have done a good job since complaints about the cemetery care are rare. Chair Goslant agreed Mr. Wright has done well to address past maintenance concerns.

Chair Goslant then wanted to bring up the matter of Cemetery Department revenue. He noted the municipality only receives funds when cemetery lots are sold. The fees people pay for burials, cremations, grave openings, etc. are forwarded to the Sexton. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio confirmed all cemetery-related fees are collected at the Town Clerk's Office but only those involving lot sales are retained by the municipality. She noted when the Select Board members last adjusted cemetery rates in October 2016, only lot sale amounts were changed. Chair Goslant believes the current rate structure is fair and certainly doesn't want to cut into Mr. Wright's compensation. Board member Maxwell felt there was a long-term concern about what will happen when no additional lot space is available for sale but the municipality is still responsible for "perpetual care" grave maintenance, etc. Manager Schulz said the Select Board could revisit this issue over the next few months. He added he spoke to Mr. Wright regarding capacity and was told Mount Hope Cemetery has quite a few lots still available for sale. Some of the other public cemeteries have less space available but overall Mr. Wright believes there is sufficient lot space for the next twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) years. This does not include any planned future expansion of Mount Hope Cemetery. Chair Goslant noted the demand for cemetery space has declined in recent years as more people prefer to be cremated and have their ashes scattered. He added some cemeteries have added columbariums where cremains can be publicly stored (in a limited space) so there is location loved ones could visit. Board member Maxwell felt it might be worth looking into incorporating a columbarium or two into our municipal cemeteries.

A brief discussion followed regarding the municipality's cemetery perpetual care trust account, which now has a balance of about \$250,000. Under the conditions of the trust, the principal cannot be touched and only the interest earned can be used for cemetery care. Ms. Baroffio noted the trust account now is earning only about 1.75% annual interest. Manager Schulz felt this was too low and recommended moving the principal into a long-term CD account with a higher annual interest rate.

It was noted the Select Board members decided last year to suspend the previous policy of transferring fifty percent (50%) of lot sale amounts into the perpetual care trust account. There was no objection to suspending this policy for an additional year. Ms. Baroffio will adjust the FY 2019/2020 cemetery revenue amount to reflect this.

In the Cemetery CIP budget, Manager Schulz noted the Stone/Monument Restoration budget has a \$5,455 balance and an additional \$2,000 will be added in FY 2019/2020. He said Mr. Wright does this work over the summer months as time allows. In addition, the Mount Hope Cemetery Expansion CIP account has a \$12,331 balance and no funds will be added in the next fiscal year. As discussed earlier, the cemetery now has sufficient lot space to meet current demand. Manager Schulz said some CIP funds would be moved around to add \$2,500 for road repairs in the Mount Hope Cemetery.

- b. FY 2019/2020 Town Budget Recap.** Manager Schulz said after further discussions with Ms. Baroffio and affected department heads, he had changes to recommend for some FY 2019/2020 revenue accounts. For example, the Northfield Electric Department (NED) had been charged fourteen percent (14%) of the Accounting Fee allocation. Ms. Baroffio has recommended this amount be increased to seventeen percent (17%) to reflect the additional work her staff needs to perform to meet new Public Utility Commission (PUC) requirements. This increase should bring an additional \$10,000 into the Account Fee revenue account. In addition, Manager Schulz spoke to Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi and learned the Water/Sewer Department doesn't plan to use the Highway Department's dump truck during the next fiscal year. Therefore, the annual rental fee of \$4,500 will be eliminated in the FY 2019/2020 revenue budget. Should this change, the utility departments would be charged the FEMA per hour vehicle rental rate. Chair Goslant felt a higher rate that better reflected actual costs would be more appropriate.

Ms. Baroffio has distributed to the Select Board members a summary of approved adjustments to the initial draft of the FY 2019/2020 municipal budget to date. Only changes adopted by consensus of the Select Board members have been included so the proposed increase in the Highway Department's gravel/stone account from \$66,000 to \$200,000 is not incorporated.

- c. Future Budget Meetings.** Manager Schulz felt an additional discussion of the proposed Cemetery budget with Mr. Wright present was needed. This will be on the agenda when the next budget meeting is held on Thursday, January 10, 2019, at 6:00 p.m., in the Municipal Building. The balance of the meeting will be devoted to other unresolved budget items. Board member Maxwell would like a meeting dedicated to the proposed increase in the gravel/stone budget.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled). There was none.

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

The Board adjourned at 6:55 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 January 22, 2019.