

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING**  
**Minutes of January 14, 2019**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair Kenneth W. Goslant, Board members Lynn Doney (6:40 p.m.), Julie H. Goodrich, K. David Maxwell, and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Finance Director Laurie Baroffio, Lawton Rutter (NAS Chief), Troy Seckington (NAS EMT), Chris Golder (NAS EMT), 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. Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS).** Manager Schulz said there were a few unresolved issues regarding the NAS Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget and he asked NAS Chief Lawton Rutter to attend tonight to answer any questions. Chief Rutter said his current proposal is to purchase two (2) used refurbished defibrillators during FY 2019/2020. He noted the ones now used by NAS are an earlier model that will not be supported by the manufacturer fairly soon. There is \$26,893 currently in the NAS CEP budget for defibrillator replacement with an additional \$20,110 to be added in FY 2019/2020. The expected service life of these used defibrillators is six (6) years and Finance Director Laurie Baroffio said the plan will be to budget for new replacement defibrillators that should last eight (8) years. Chief Rutter said it was important to purchase two (2) of the same model so NAS wouldn't have to keep separate supplies on hand. He added the demand for good used defibrillators is rather high so this purchase may not be made for several months even after the next fiscal year begins (07/01/19). Chief Rutter said the current defibrillators should be usable for some time. He will place the order and get on the waiting list as soon as the Select Board authorizes the purchase. There was no objection to Chief Rutter's proposal. There was some discussion of staggering these purchases in the future so the municipality wouldn't be asked to budget for two (2) new defibrillators in the same fiscal year.

Chief Rutter noted one of the AutoPulse units (i.e., portable, battery-powered cardiopulmonary resuscitation device) is scheduled for replacement in the next fiscal year but both of the devices remain in good operating condition. Ms. Baroffio suggested delaying replacement of both devices until FY 2021/2022 when there will be sufficient funds in the CEP account for AutoPulse replacement.

Board member Goodrich asked about the proposed refurbishment of the Jaws of Life. Chief Rutter said he has received a quote to refurbish this piece of equipment for about \$26,000. The cost of a new one would be about \$50,000. The balance in the Jaws of Life CEP account is \$23,910 with an additional \$2,000 to be added in FY 2019/2020. There also is a separate dedicated Jaws of Life CEP account with a \$9,160 balance but Ms. Baroffio was unsure if these funds could be used for anything but the purchase of new equipment. She added there are other, non-dedicated funds that could be transferred into this account if needed. It was noted NAS was compensated for use of this equipment through a \$150 flat fee for auto extraction. This fee is in addition to other NAS fees charged. Chair Goslant felt the fee was rather low given the cost of the equipment used. Chief Rutter said extraction usually takes no more than twenty (20) minutes and the Jaws of Life usually are used an average of three (3) times a year. However, it does need to be present at accident scenes because its absence (or waiting for Mutual Aid) could result in lost lives. Board member Maxwell would like to revisit the current NAS fee schedule as he felt this fee in particular should be perhaps doubled. Chief Rutter noted he does try to save money by refurbishing current equipment as much as possible rather than buying new. The refurbished Jaws of Life should last about twelve (12) more years since most of its basic components (i.e. hoses, etc.) would be replaced. Ms. Baroffio asked if \$50,000 should be budgeted as the eventual replacement cost. Chief Rutter said he could not predict this cost so far in advance. The consensus of the Select Board members was to authorize this equipment reimbursement.

Chief Rutter has advocated for the purchase of at least one PowerLoad system for lifting patients on stretchers into the back of ambulance units. One unit would cost about \$27,000 and there is a \$6,710 current balance in this CEP account with an additional \$5,040 to be added in the next fiscal year. The current plan is to purchase one when the 2014 ambulance unit is replaced in FY 2022/2023. Board member Maxwell favors purchasing one immediately to be installed in the 2017 ambulance unit. He felt that has become a vital piece of equipment (given current national obesity rates) needed to reduce the chance of EMT back and other injuries. Board member Doney agreed, saying "People aren't getting any smaller." Board member Maxwell suggested perhaps delaying the Jaws of Life refurbishment for another year. Chief Rutter did not recommend this because there now are some automobile chassis the Jaws of Life couldn't cut through in its current condition. Chief Rutter noted he suffered a recent minor injury when helping to lift a patient on wet ground. He felt the potential for serious injury is a real concern. He added PowerLoad systems are very popular with emergency responders, even those who had been skeptics when they were first introduced.

At a previous budget meeting (12/13/18), there had been discussion of purchasing at least one PowerLoad unit and taking advantage of the supplier's financing program to spread the cost over three (3) to five (5) years. Chief Rutter also felt there might be grant funds available to cover at least part of the purchase price. Ms. Baroffio now anticipates approximately \$92,000 in current fiscal year surplus funds that might be available for this purchase. She will not be sure of the exact amount until the current fiscal year ends on June 30, 2019 and all outstanding bills are paid. Board member Maxwell favors buying one on the installment plan and purchasing the other one when the 2014 ambulance unit is replaced. Chair Goslant would like an updated quote for one PowerLoad system prior to the budget meeting scheduled for next Thursday night (01/17/19). The current consensus of the Select Board members (pending the new cost estimate) seems to be to purchase one PowerLoad system during the next fiscal year making use of the supplier's installment payment policy.

Board member Maxwell asked if any additional NAS fees could be adjusted to help offset these equipment purchases. It was noted the per capita rate charged Roxbury and West Berlin has been increased and there has been consideration of switching our ambulance billing company in order to bring in additional revenue. Chief Rutter has looked into establishing a repetitive lift fee to be charged to non-transport patients who require assistance to be moved about in their residences. Chief Rutter noted this can take a lot of EMT time with no compensation. Another possibility is to start charging the insurance company when the EMTs respond to a home or accident scene where the patient has died before they arrive. He suggested a flat rate that would cover about one-third the cost of the callout but noted the authorizing paperwork might be difficult to obtain. Chief Rutter said some of the existing base rates could be adjusted upwards and he will provide a recommendation to the Select Board members in the near future. Board member Maxwell felt an annual adjustment of these fees might be a wise policy. Chair Goslant and the other Select Board members then thanked Chief Rutter for the information provided tonight and his good work throughout the year.

- b. Recreation Department.** Manager Schulz noted at a previous budget meeting (12/13/18) Recreation Committee Chair Sally Davidson had discussed new projects for the next fiscal year. This included resurfacing the basketball courts at Memorial Park for an estimated cost of \$3,800. She also felt the backboards, hoops, and poles also needed to be replaced for an additional \$3,500. Board member Doney would like to have metal backboards purchased instead of glass ones as they are less expensive and last longer. After further discussion, which included skepticism this really was needed at this time, the Select Board consensus was to delay this project for at least one year. There will be \$1,000 set aside in future fiscal years for this project.

Board member Maxwell would like to see better tracking of funds donated to the Recreation Department for specific projects. He noted the Northfield Rotarians provided a large sum towards the installation of new bathrooms at Memorial Park and this project still went over budget. Chair Goslant would like to see the local schools and recreation groups making heavy use of the playgrounds in Memorial Park and Falls Park pay more to cover the cost of field maintenance. While he appreciated their enthusiasm, he also felt the Recreation Committee members should cut back on some of their more ambitious plans.

Regarding the current proposal to install four (4) new dugouts at the ballfields, Ms. Baroffio said the Equipment/Facility Repair line item in the Grounds/Parks/Facilities Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget will be increased from \$1,000 to \$5,000 to cover the cost of two (2) of them. The Northfield schools will be expected to pay for the other ones. There already is \$2,158 in this account and the cost of two (2) new dugouts is estimated at about \$6,000. Board member Doney would like to be sure the contractor who is awarded this project has experience in recreational facilities so there is no wasted time or money. Ms. Baroffio noted Ms. Davidson also had mentioned the need for security cameras at the public parks. Board member Doney did not want to spend serious money on this in order to get fuzzy pictures of vandals. In conclusion, the Select Board consensus was to establish a new CIP line item for dugouts with \$3,000 budgeted in FY 2019/2020, another CIP line item for basketball courts repair with \$1,000 budgeted, and no money budgeted for security cameras.

- c. Northfield Fire Department (NFD).** Manager Schulz said the major remaining issue in the NFD CEP budget is the proposed replacement of the 1993 tanker truck that was bought used in 1995. NFD Chief Peter J. DeMasi's initial request at a previous budget meeting (12/18/18) was for a new four-wheel drive vehicle for the estimated cost of \$325,000. The other alternative he suggested was a new two-wheel drive vehicle for about \$250,000. The current budget now provides for the purchase of a used vehicle for about \$185,000. Board member Doney believes the municipality spends a lot of money on the NFD for building maintenance and new equipment. Ms. Baroffio noted accepting Chief DeMasi's suggestion to postpone replacement of the 1999 Brush Truck for another year by installing a new aluminum body would free up an additional \$42,000 for the tanker truck purchase. There also are unused funds in the Cemetery CIP account (i.e. Mount Hope Cemetery Expansion, etc.) that could be transferred for this purchase. Adding all these transferred funds would bring the balance in the tanker truck account to about \$185,000, which would mean this purchase would require no borrowing. Board member Goodrich doesn't feel right about shifting funds around different departments this way. Chair Goslant noted the cemetery care contractor, Bruce Wright, had confirmed these funds were not needed at this time. He still is opposed to buying a brand new vehicle.

Chair Goslant would rather set the \$185,000 aside for a good used vehicle that Chief DeMasi could look for in coming months. Board member Goodrich spoke to a former Williamstown fire chief and was surprised he strongly advocated for the purchase of new vehicles whenever possible. It was felt the long-term repair costs for aging used tanker trucks negated any initial cost savings. Board member Doney would like an outside expert to inspect the 1993 tanker truck to see if has any major problems or if it could be retained for an additional year or two. Manager Schulz noted this vehicle has not had any major repair expenses so far. Chair Goslant said even though it is used only about thirty (30) times each year, having a tanker truck on scene is critical for any structure fire that take place outside the municipal water system. Board member Doney also favors budgeting \$185,000 for the purchase of a good used tanker truck. Manager Schulz said he did an online search and found some tanker trucks less than six (6) years old for less than \$185,000. After further discussion, it was Select Board consensus to set the tanker truck replacement budget at \$185,000 even though Board member Goodrich still had reservations about buying a used vehicle. It was noted the current tanker truck probably has no or minimal resale value.

In addition, the Select Board members had no interest in paying for the software maintenance charge for the asset management program the NFD purchased with donation funds. It had been felt the \$1,420 annual charge was excessive.

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

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

The Board adjourned at 8:35 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.