

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of January 15, 2019

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair Kenneth W. Goslant (5:40 p.m.), Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, K. David Maxwell (5:50 p.m.), and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Finance Director Laurie Baroffio, Highway Foreman Trent Tucker, and Elroy Hill.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

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

III. BUDGET WORK SESSION

- a. Highway Department.** He meeting started with a discussion of unresolved matters in the Highway Department Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget. After speaking with Highway Foreman Trent Tucker, Board member Miller understands the planned replacement of the 2009 International dump truck has been postponed until at least FY 2020/2021. This truck normally is used for salt distribution. There also has been discussion of reducing the anticipated service lives of the Western Star dump trucks from twelve (12) years to seven (7). The thinking is this would eliminate out-of-warranty repair expenses while increasing the trade-in value of these vehicles. Manager Schulz believes the Highway Subcommittee discussed eight (8) years as the minimum number. Mr. Tucker said even with eight (8) years of use, these vehicles would retain considerable trade-in value. He believes one of the 2014 Western Star dump trucks (known as the "Red" truck) should have a new chassis installed next year due to recurrent engine repair costs. The plan is to retain the truck body, wing, plow, etc. and have the chassis replaced. Mr. Tucker felt the chassis should have at least \$50,000 in trade-in value.

Board member Miller then turned to the issue of replacing the vehicle lift in the Town Garage. The vehicle lift was purchased in early 2011 with an anticipated thirty (30) year lifespan. Unfortunately, when Tropical Storm Irene struck Northfield later that year the Town Garage was flooded and the underground lift filled with silt and other contaminants. The vehicle lift now is a liability with rotting cylinders and valves. Mr. Tucker said it cannot be relied upon to lift and lower heavy trucks and, therefore, constitutes a safety risk. His proposal is to purchase two (2) portable above-ground vehicle lifts that working in tandem lift a vehicle. Mr. Tucker estimated the cost of two (2) lifts would be about \$22,000 and they would serve well for some time. It would require four (4) of them to lift one of the heavier trucks but this is rarely done. He would like the authority to purchase two (2) portable vehicle lifts in the next fiscal year and budget in subsequent years for the eventual purchase of two (2) additional ones. The current vehicle lift would be removed and the pit filled with concrete. Manager Schulz noted there is about \$18,000 in the Vehicle Lift CEP account with an additional \$3,500 to be added in FY 2019/2020. Mr. Tucker said the Highway crew would be able to install the new vehicle lifts themselves (as well as dispose of the old one). If the Select Board members authorize the purchase, the vehicle lifts would be installed after the next fiscal year begins in July 2019. Finance Director Baroffio said \$3,500 would be put in the Vehicle Lift CEP account in future years to fund the purchase of additional portable vehicle lifts. There was no objection to this proposal.

In the Highway Department Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget, Board member Miller noted the RSMS account will be renamed the "Paving" account and in the future will be devoted solely to rehabilitating paved roads. The current balance in this account is about \$30,000 and Board member Miller suggested transferring \$13,000 in unused funds in the Smith Hill Culvert CIP account towards paving projects. The target amount for the Paving CIP account is about \$220,000 so the FY 2019/2020 addition will be raised from \$130,000 to \$190,000.

Board member Miller noted the \$220,000 amount is arbitrary as the list of proposed paving projects for FY 2019/2020 has not been finalized. Manager Schulz said the current priority list for paving in the next fiscal year includes Cox Brook Road. The total cost of this project would be about \$225,000 and he has been informed the municipality should receive a VTrans grant to cover most of the cost either this year or the next. The municipality's share of the project costs would be about \$45,000 so this amount should be budgeted in case the grant is awarded for FY 2019/2020. Board member Miller noted sections of Union Brook Road requires complete road reconstruction so this very expensive project probably will be postponed until bond borrowing can be arranged.

Chair Goslant arrived at this time.

Manager Schulz said parts of Water Street and Union Street would be repaved after new waterlines are installed. In addition, Central Street is listed for repaving but some questions remain whether the asphalt sidewalk on the east side of the street will be repaired or removed. It was noted the concrete sidewalk on the other side of the street is fairly new and in very good condition. Slate Avenue also needs to be repaved after the stormwater project in the area is completed. Manager Schulz has been in contact with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) regarding this project and ANR will pay up to seventy-five (75%) of project costs if construction starts before July 1, 2019. The project engineer will address the Select Board members at their next regular meeting (01/22/19) with more details. Manager Schulz said ANR has imposed a number of new stormwater mandates over the past couple years but has been generous with grant funds to communities (like Northfield) that have been proactive in developing stormwater mitigation projects. He was unsure if this would continue should other communities start to catch up.

Board member Maxwell arrived at this time.

Manager Schulz said some other smaller paving projects also are planned, including Fairground Road.

Turning to the Highway Department's operations budget, Board member Miller had spoken at a previous budget meeting (01/10/19) of reducing some gravel/stone costs in the next fiscal year by reducing the length of gravel roads to be resurfaced from eight (8) to four (4). This would mean a total expenditure of \$128,500 for gravel/stone in FY 2019/2020. This amount includes \$40,000 set aside for Mud Season road maintenance. Mr. Tucker noted an additional three thousand (3,000) yards of gravel would be crushed in the Northfield Falls pit during the next fiscal year. This gravel would be used for culvert work, subbase installation, etc. and should be considered a bonus to the gravel purchased elsewhere. Board member Miller said the planned gravel road resurfacing would include sections of Berlin Pond Road, Loop Road, and Stony Brook Road. This would be roughly four (4) miles in length. Board member Maxwell would like to add an additional \$10,000 to the gravel/stone line item to cover the cost of crushing gravel in the pit. This would bring the gravel budget up to \$138,000.

Board member Miller then discussed the cost of renting a road roller to be used when the resurfacing work was done. According to the quotes Mr. Tucker received, rental cost would be \$443 per day, \$1,550 per week, or \$4,500 per month. Mr. Tucker said the roller would be used for a couple weeks if only used for the resurfacing work. If it were used to compact the backroads each time they were graded, it could be in use for about three (3) months. The cost of purchasing a used road roller would be about \$60,000.

Elroy Hill felt using a roller every time the backroads were graded would considerably reduce the amount of gravel loss. Mr. Tucker felt the roadside brush clearing also has contributed to gravel retention. He added road rollers are relatively easy to lease so the Select Board members would have to decide themselves whether or not to purchase one. There seemed to be no support for buying another piece of highway equipment at this time.

Returning to a discussion of the Western Star dump trucks, Chair Goslant restated his preference for reducing their scheduled replacement time to eight (8) years in order to avoid out-of-warranty repairs, increased trade-in value, etc. Board member Maxwell wondered why the "Red" Western Star is in such poor shape when the other one purchased around the same time has had no major problems. Mr. Tucker is unsure why one truck has had so many more issues than the other. Board member Maxwell then suggested looking into purchasing dump trucks other than Western Stars. Mr. Tucker felt these trucks usually are quite reliable so the "Red" truck really is an anomaly. After further discussion, the service life of the Western Star dump trucks was lowered to eight (8) years. It was noted this could be changed later if circumstances warrant.

As regards the vehicle lift at the Town Garage, the Select Board members asked Manager Schulz to contact the municipality's property insurance carrier to see if a claim could be made related to the storm damage. It was hoped some of the original purchase cost could be recouped.

- b. FY 2019/2020 Town Budget Recap.** Manager Schulz said only a few outstanding issues still need to be discussed. Some involve the Northfield Police Department (NPD) and NPD Chief John Helfant will be present at the next budget meeting to discuss them. This includes whether the municipality will budget for the purchase of Tasers and updated body cameras during the next fiscal year. Manager Schulz also has asked representatives from Green Mountain Transit (GMT) to be present at that meeting. They have requested \$3,351 in the FY 2019/2020 budget to support shuttle bus service as part of its Elderly, Disabled, and Medicaid service program. There also will be a request to put an article on the 2019 Town Meeting warning (as in the past three years) seeking voter authorization for the \$21,000 local share for the expense of operating the weekday commuter bus service between Northfield and Montpelier. Board member Maxwell supports the \$3,351 expenditure but totally opposes the commuter bus service as an unnecessary expense. He believes this service has low ridership and the \$21,000 would be spent better elsewhere. Chair Goslant and Board member Doney agreed with Board member Maxwell that Northfield taxpayers should no longer subsidize this service and the article be removed from the warning. Manager Schulz will contact GMT and let them know the Select Board members' views on this matter.

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 7:20 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 were approved at the regular Select Board meeting of February 12, 2019.