

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING**  
**Minutes of January 21, 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 5:00 p.m.

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

**III. DISCUSSION**

- a. Appointment of Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Alternate Representative.** Although he repeatedly has tried to interest someone else in the position, Manager Schulz currently serves as Northfield's TAC Representative. Unfortunately, TAC meetings conflict with Select Board regular meetings so Manager Schulz has been unable to attend them. Since the next TAC meeting will have an important topic to Northfield on its agenda, Manager Schulz is asking the Select Board tonight to appoint Patrick DeMasi as the TAC Alternate Representative so he can attend. The topic under discussion is the regional priority list for state grants to repair/replace municipal bridges in poor condition. Northfield's Main Street Bridge currently is fifteenth (15<sup>th</sup>) on this priority list and Manager Schulz doesn't want to lose its slot if no one from Northfield is present. For example, the bridge on Montpelier's State Street is currently ranked forty-ninth (49<sup>th</sup>) and Manager Schulz fears it might rise on the list at our expense. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to appoint Patrick Demasi as Northfield's CVRPC TAC Alternate Representative. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

**IV. BUDGET WORK SESSION**

- a. FY 2019/2020 Town Budget Recap.** Manager Schulz noted the proposed budget as originally presented to the Select Board (and subsequently modified during budget meetings) would result in an additional \$321,390 in spending over the current fiscal year. This would result in the amount to be raised by taxes to be increased by eleven percent (11%). Based on the discussion at the previous budget meeting (01/17/19), Manager Schulz believes this meeting should be used to go through the proposed budget and (hopefully) trim this down. After reviewing the budget again, he thinks there are some areas for reduction that would not adversely affect public safety, etc.

In the Highway Department's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget, Manager Schulz recommends lowering the FY 2019/2020 addition to the "Bridges" account from \$35,000 to \$15,000. He noted this budget already has a \$150,000 balance and any significant bridge repair project (i.e. Main Street Bridge and/or Stony Brook Bridge) would require borrowing additional funding. After some discussion, this recommendation was accepted by Select Board consensus. Chair Goslant believes a lot of work does need to be done on Northfield's covered bridges and he felt there should be a stronger effort to make those truckers, etc. who damage them financially responsible for their repair.

Also, in the Highway CIP budget, Manager Schulz feels the RSMS Road Program budget, which originally was set at \$130,080 but tentatively raised by the Select Board to \$220,000, could be reduced. It was noted the priority list for paving in the next fiscal year now includes Central Street, Slate Avenue, and part of Water Street. After some discussion, the RSMS budget was set at \$170,003.

Manager Schulz also feels the Gravel/Stone line item in the Highway Department's operations budget could be reduced. The original amount proposed was \$66,000 but this was tentatively increased by Select Board consensus to about \$128,000 and split between the Gravel/Stone budget (\$88,000) and a new line item for Mud Season gravel/stone purchases (\$40,000). It was noted the amount of gravel road scheduled for resurfacing in the next fiscal year has been reduced from eight (8) to four (4) miles. After further discussion, the previous Select Board consensus was confirmed.

Returning to the Highway CIP budget, Manager Schulz feels the amount in the FY 2019/2020 budget for building improvements should be reduced from \$5,000 to \$2,500. There already is a \$106,000 balance in this account and no major repairs are planned in the near future. There was no objection. In the Fire Department CIP budget, its building improvements budget has a \$50,000 balance, which Manager Schulz said would cover the cost of planned roof repairs. He therefore recommends the FY 2019/2020 addition to this budget be reduced from \$5,000 to \$1,000. There was no objection.

In the Police Department's operations budget, the overtime line item now is set at \$40,000 but Manager Schulz feels this could be reduced to \$30,000 since the department now is fully staffed with a police chief and six (6) full-time officers. There was no objection.

In the Highway CIP budget, there is a \$150,000 balance in the sidewalks account and Manager Schulz feels this should cover the cost of planned work on East Street and South Main Street. Therefore, he would like to lower the FY 2019/2020 addition to this budget from \$20,000 to \$10,000. There was no objection.

Manager Schulz said these were his only suggestions he had prepared for budget reductions tonight and asked if the Select Board members had any of their own. Chair Goslant would like to look at reducing the number of municipal vehicles, especially in the Highway Department, and thereby outsourcing more services in the coming fiscal year. In the Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) for the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS), Board member Maxwell would like to postpone any purchase of PowerLoad systems until FY 2022/2023 when the 2014 ambulance unit is scheduled to be replaced. In the meantime, funds will be set aside each year for future purchases.

Board member Maxwell would like to review next the budgets of the Northfield Fire Department (NFD) and Northfield Police Department (NPD) for possible reductions. There remained some question amongst the Select Board members whether the 1993 NFD tanker truck should be replaced during the next fiscal year. Board member Doney would like the tanker truck inspected by an outside entity to determine whether it could be kept in service for a few more years. He believes the vehicle's main problem seems to be overheating on steep inclines so perhaps all that is needed at this time is a new radiator. Board member Maxwell endorsed this suggestion and his feeling is the vehicle replacement should be delayed at least one year. After further discussion, the Select Board consensus was to postpone replacement of the 1993 NFD tanker truck until FY 2020/2021 at the earliest. The \$35,500 in the brush truck replacement fund still will be transferred into the tanker truck replacement CEP account but the previously-discussed transfer of inactive Cemetery CIP funds will be delayed at least one year.

With these revisions and the others agreed to so far in this meeting, the additional spending in the proposed FY 2019/2020 budget has been reduced to \$199,600.

In the NPD CEP budget, the consensus at the previous budget meeting (01/17/19) was to authorize and fund the purchase of seven (7) Tasers during FY 2019/2020 but to delay the purchase of new body cameras until the fund balances in newly created CEP accounts are sufficient to cover their purchase. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio noted that by not purchasing the new body cameras, the \$3,500 annual maintenance contract will not be required next year. After some discussion, which included whether NPD officers should be equipped with Tasers, the previous consensus was confirmed.

Board member Maxwell felt there might be some future savings in the Cemetery Maintenance Contract if the municipal employee who mows the parks would also mow the cemetery lawns. He noted this was a discussion for another time and not a reflection on the person now contracted to maintain the cemeteries. There followed a discussion on whether it was likely the local schools would actually agree to share the cost of installing new dugouts at the ballfields. A meeting will be held soon with school officials to clarify this one way or another.

In addition, there was a consensus of Select Board members that future purchases of holiday decorations for the Common should come out of Recreation Department donation funds rather than taxpayer dollars. This will save \$1,000 in the FY 2019/2020 recreation CIP budget.

In the Pool operations budget, the line item for part-time lifeguards was kept at the same \$29,000 as the current fiscal year. The original proposed budget had a three percent (3%) increase in lifeguard pay (\$870) but since the previous fiscal year saw a significant increase in the hourly pay, this probably isn't needed. It was noted the Barre public pool will be closed this summer for major repairs so some of its regular customers may come to Northfield instead. Board member Maxwell would like the municipal pool to become more self-supporting in coming years. He doesn't feel it is right for taxpayers to be charged \$100,000 each year for the pool to operate seven (7) weeks each summer. Ms. Baroffio then suggested increasing the projected revenue in the "Interest from Investments" account from \$8,000 to \$10,000. In addition, \$5,000 will be set aside to cover the cost of tax abatement errors and omissions rather than \$7,500. This would mean \$2,500 in tax savings and Ms. Baroffio felt the \$5,000 figure was more accurate based on recent annual expenses. Ms. Baroffio also recommended lowering the amount in the Town Clerk's operations budget for office equipment from \$800 to \$300. She believes the \$800 figure started as a typo. Ms. Baroffio also suggested lowering the budgeted cost of electric payments for streetlights from \$21,000 to \$20,500. She felt the lower figure better reflected current electric rates. There were no objections to Ms. Baroffio's recommendations.

At a previous budget meeting (01/15/19), it had been the consensus of the Select Board to remove from the budget the \$21,000 local share amount for the Green Mountain Transit (GMT) Northfield-Montpelier weekday commuter bus service. There now was some question on whether this service would continue to operate at the end of the current fiscal year (06/30/19) when the local funding runs out. Manager Schulz will contact GMT about this. Chair Goslant would like the commuter riders informed long before the service is discontinued so they can make alternate arrangements. Board member Maxwell doesn't believe taxpayers should subsidize this service, which he felt had too few riders to justify the \$105,000 local expense over the past five (5) years.

There followed a brief discussion of perhaps reducing Highway Department overtime expenses but no changes were made. Board member Maxwell took this opportunity to praise the Highway crew for their outstanding work cleaning up after the most recent winter storm. Chair Goslant agreed with this and added he had received no complaints at all. Even the sidewalks were in great condition.

Ms. Baroffio had one last suggestion. The amount of interest for the CIP accounts had been higher than expected so she recommended including it as an additional \$24,000 in revenue. There was no objection. This will put the proposed budget increase over the current fiscal year to \$172,270. Although the Grand List has not been approved yet, Ms. Baroffio estimated this would mean a 5.4¢ increase in the municipality's share of the town tax rate.

Board member Goodrich and Chair Goslant then thanked everyone involved in helping put this budget together. The proposed budget will be formally approved at tomorrow night's Select Board regular meeting (01/22/19). The finalized 2019 Northfield Annual Town Meeting warning will be approved and signed at a Special Select Board meeting on Tuesday, January 29, 2019.

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

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

The Board adjourned at 8:30 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.