

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of February 26, 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, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Trent Tucker (Highway Foreman), Sally Davidson (Recreation Committee), Richard Matheson (DeWitt Clinton Masonic Temple), Mike Charron (Vermont Center for Independent Living), Stacia Melick (Sexual Assault Crisis Team), Kreig Pinkham (Washington County Youth Service Bureau/Boys & Girls Club), Allison Levin (Community Harvest of Central Vermont), and Elroy Hill.

Chair Goslant called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

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

III. PUBLIC HEARING

- a. Northfield Town Meeting 2019 Australian Ballot Articles.** Manager Schulz said there is a state law requiring the Select Board to hold a public hearing prior to Town Meeting so members of the public can discuss or ask questions regarding articles to be voted upon by Australian Ballot. Most involve funding requests from regional non-profit organizations and all were invited by mail to attend this public hearing. Manager Schulz then went through the list of Australian Ballot articles to see if there were any questions or comments.

Article 5. Shall the voters authorize the Town to exempt from local property taxation, to the extent of 100% of the appraised value, the land and premises of the DeWitt Clinton Masonic Temple, located at 151 South Main Street, which has 501(c) status, for a period of ten (10) years, beginning July 1, 2019? (For informational purposes only, the FY 2018/2019 property taxes total \$7,927.81.) (Australian Ballot)

Richard Matheson is the Master of the DeWitt Clinton Masonic Temple. He said this was the oldest organized fraternal organization in Northfield (1848) and it provides many charitable contributions to the greater community such as providing health services for youngsters, providing shelter to those in need, etc. He noted many past Norwich University (NU) presidents and other local community leaders had been members of the DeWitt Clinton Masonic Temple. This includes David MacDougall, who passed away last year and is featured on the dedication page of this year's Town Report. Mr. Matheson said the Lodge has been attempting to build up its membership but this has been difficult as fewer young people are interested in joining organizations committed to community service, etc. This property tax exemption would help the Masonic Lodge get back on its feet financially. Mike Charron is Secretary for the DeWitt Clinton Masonic Temple and he said in addition to many visible contributions the Lodge provides to the community (i.e., hosting Boy Scout meetings, etc.), it also does a number of charitable activities behind the scene such as providing financial support for widows and orphans of former Lodge members. Most current lodge members are over fifty (50) years of age but there have been recent outreach efforts to attract more youthful members, especially from the NU community. Mr. Charron feared without this tax exemption, there would no longer be an active Masonic presence here.

Article 6. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$13,600 for the Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 7. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$3,000 for the Central Vermont Council on Aging? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 8. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$2,800 for the Good Samaritan Haven? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 9. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$2,500 for the Washington County Diversion Program? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 10. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$2,500 for Washington County Mental Health Services, Inc.? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 11. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,250 for the People's Health and Wellness Clinic? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 12. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,200 for Central Vermont Adult Basic Education? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 13. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,200 for the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 14. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for Capstone Community Action, Inc.? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 15. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for Circle? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 16. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for Good Beginnings of Central Vermont? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 17. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$1,000 for the Vermont Center for Independent Living? (Australian Ballot) Mr. Charron said the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL) was founded in 1979 and since then it has been assisting disabled and deaf Vermont residents to make better lives on their own. This includes helping individuals modify their homes to make them more user-accessible. In the last fiscal year, VCIL responded to 3,700 requests for assistance, which included providing information on available services, peer counseling, home delivery of meals to disabled senior citizens, etc. During this past year, five (5) Northfield residents directly benefited from these programs. Mr. Charron said VCIL's main office is in Montpelier and there are five (5) branch offices located around the state. He said VCIL is grateful for the support of Northfield in past years and hopes they will continue to support its efforts on Town Meeting Day.

Article 18. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$800 for the Family Center of Washington County? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 19. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$750 for the Sexual Assault Crisis Team of Washington County? (Australian Ballot) Stacia Melick said the Sexual Assault Crisis Team (SACT) provides its services to all Washington County residents and this includes a gender inclusive shelter for those affected by domestic violence. Ms. Melick is based in Northfield and she works with the NU community and local schools in providing informational programs on various sexual and/or domestic violence concerns.

Article 20. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$600 for Home Share Now? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 21. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$600 for the Washington County Youth Service Bureau/Boys & Girls Club? (Australian Ballot) Kreig Pinkham is the Executive Director of the Washington County Youth Service Bureau/Boys & Girls Club. He said this funding request was not on last year's warning due to the timing of the closure of the local teen center. His organization now provides general services to Northfield youth, which includes family counseling; substance abuse treatment programs; crisis intervention and counseling, etc.

Article 22. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$400 for Community Harvest of Central Vermont? (Australian Ballot) Allison Levin is the Executive Director of Community Harvest of Central Vermont (CHCV). Since its founding in 2014, CHCV volunteers have recovered foodstuffs through gleaning at forty (40) local farms. As a result, over 175,000 pounds of fresh produce (that otherwise would have been discarded) was delivered to local food banks, senior centers, schools, etc. CHCV has between two and three hundred (200-300) volunteers every harvest season and their efforts have benefited over 9,000 residents who otherwise might not have access to fresh produce. Last fall, Northfield High School students assisted with apple gleaning. Ms. Levin thanks Northfield voters for their past support and hopes this will continue in the future.

Article 23. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$400 for the Friends of the Winooski River? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 24. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$300 for Green Up Vermont? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

Article 25. Shall the voters authorize the expenditure of \$250 for O.U.R. House of Central Vermont? (Australian Ballot) There was no discussion.

There being no other comments or questions, this public hearing closed at 7:30 p.m.

IV. SET/ADJUST AGENDA. Manager Schulz said the original plan was to have two (2) representatives from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and the project engineer for the proposed South Main Street Stormwater/CSO Project present tonight in order to discuss financing options, possible scope reductions to cut project costs, etc. Unfortunately, they were not all able to attend tonight so this presentation will be delayed until the next regular meeting (03/12/19).

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED): None.

VI. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

a. Trent Tucker, Highway Foreman. Manager Schulz said the recent budget process disrupted the regular schedule of having department heads come before the Select Board members with updates. He now will try to put this back on track. As for the Highway Department, Manager Schulz noted increased usage of road sand and salt this winter has become a major issue both locally and statewide. Mr. Tucker confirmed a lot of salt was used on roads and sidewalks this winter and the municipality's supply is almost depleted. Dubois Construction hauls our salt supply and their source (American Rock Salt Company) has told them they cannot provide any more at this time. Mr. Tucker will find out tomorrow if another source is available. Chair Goslant believes this is only a temporary shortage and more salt should be coming to Northfield soon. Mr. Tucker noted the Town of Roxbury has used twice its normal amount of salt this winter. Chair Goslant said the current salt budget now has a \$27,000 overage. He added the Select Board members did their best to predict salt usage when the budget was developed but this has been a bad winter for both salt and road sand. Chair Goslant then asked about our road sand stockpile. Mr. Tucker said it has been going quickly but there should be enough for a while. There now is about six to seven hundred (600-700) yards left. Much depends on the weather and an early spring would be welcome.

Chair Goslant asked how the department's equipment was holding up. Mr. Tucker said it was doing well and so was the Highway crew. Board member Maxwell felt in the future the Select Board members should look at five (5) year usage averages when budgeting for salt and road sand. This would be better than just looking at the previous year or two. There is no shelf life for these road materials so overbuying is not a problem. Manager Schulz noted the proposed budget for the next fiscal year does have a \$12,000 increase in the salt budget. Chair Goslant thought it might be a good idea to discuss this when the FY 2019/2020 budget is up for approval next Monday night in the Open Session of the Annual Town Meeting. Regarding tree trimming, Mr. Tucker noted Limlaw Pulpwood currently is in town working for a private party on Hallstrom Road. He will contact them to see if they can do any work for the municipality while they're in Northfield. Chair Goslant asked if any trees came down during last night's bad windstorm. Mr. Tucker said one came down on Little Northfield Road. Board member Doney believes the Highway crew has done an outstanding job this winter and he singled out for praise the new employee (John Prentice) who has been operating the sidewalk equipment. Chair Goslant then thanked Mr. Tucker for the valuable information tonight and for his own good work.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. February 12, 2019 (Regular Meeting). Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the minutes. Thomas Brown from ANR had provided technical and financial information regarding the South Main Street Stormwater/CSO Project at this meeting. He subsequently reviewed the draft minutes online and forwarded some suggested revisions that would help clarify his statements. His suggestions will be incorporated into the minutes. **Motion to approve the amended minutes passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

a. Warrant #16-19. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve Warrant #16-19 in the amount of \$96,638.41. Board member Goodrich noted a \$1,000 insurance deductible payment. Manager Schulz confirmed one of our plow trucks sideswiped a parked vehicle on a narrow street last November. The total damage was about \$2,000 so the insurance company paid the balance. Board member Goodrich asked about a \$3,251 "radio site" lease payment. Manager Schulz said the municipality has a lease agreement with the owners of the Turkey Hill parcel where the local emergency services' radio tower is located. The annual payment increases three percent (3%) each year and the cost is split among the emergency services. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. Approval of Biweekly Payroll through February 10, 2019.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$96,071.54. Board member Goodrich noted a \$396 payment for the Highway Department's part-time employee. Manager Schulz said in order to reduce overtime costs and to hasten plowing of side roads, a local resident was hired to plow and sand after snowstorms. Mr. Tucker said the part-time employee usually puts in an average of five to six (5-6) hours of work per snowstorm. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

IX. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

a. Liquor License Renewals

- 1. Cumberland Farms.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- 2. Falls General Store.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

X. SELECT BOARD

- a. South Main Street Stormwater/CSO Project.** Manager Schulz noted a 1272 Order was received yesterday from ANR that puts the municipality on notice that the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) on East Street must be addressed within the next two (2) years. He noted the municipality has the design plans for the project that would resolve this problem. The major holdup is determining the best way to finance this project. As previously indicated, ANR representatives will be present at the next meeting to provide a number of options. Board member Maxwell said this stormwater problem at this location has been known for about ten (10) years so it seems strange ANR now is imposing an artificial deadline just when action is being taken to resolve it. He asked if the Water & Wastewater Commission has reviewed the proposed project. Manager Schulz said it has been discussed at their meetings but the Select Board is the ultimate authority when it comes to deciding on a funding structure, making agreements with contractors, etc. Board member Maxwell said although this has been described as a joint Highway/Sewer project, he believes this should be considered strictly a water and wastewater matter that should be financed by ratepayers (not taxpayers). He does not feel Highway Department funds should be used at all. Manager Schulz said this has been discussed and we are now looking at separate bond articles for the distinct components of the project. Board member Maxwell then noted the Sewer Department had a \$300,000 reserve fund at the time of merger (2014) but this has been reduced by about \$100,000 since then. He felt some long-term planning should be developed before the fund is further depleted. Chair Goslant noted some major infrastructure projects have been undertaken over the past five (5) years. Manager Schulz said in about ten (10) years, it probably will be necessary to bond again in order to finance a major rehabilitation of the Wastewater Treatment Facility in order to meet new ANR requirements.
- b. Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) 2019 Highway Grants.** Manager Schulz said with the new calendar year a new highway grant process has started. He plans to reapply for a Class 2 Highway Paving Grant that could be used to partially fund repaving of Cox Brook Road. Manager Schulz noted Northfield hasn't been awarded a paving grant for some time and he has been informed by VTrans that if the applications is not successful this year, we probably would get one next year. Manager Schulz also intends to apply for a VTrans Structures Grant that could be used to repair the Elm Street retaining wall. He would like the Highway Subcommittee to meet soon to determine whether this should be a higher priority than fixing the bridges on Pleasant Street or Stony Brook Road. Board member Goodrich noted a local contractor was able to repair the retaining wall at the United Methodist Church at a reduced price. She would like him contacted to see if he could do the same on Elm Street. Chair Goslant feels Northfield's covered bridges, especially those on Cox Brook Road, took a hammering over the winter so perhaps they should get some attention as well. He suggested there might be some Historic Preservation Grant funds available for this. Board member Maxwell noted VTrans inspects every local bridge over a two (2) year period so we should get some feedback from them on what should be our priorities.
- c. Approval of Grand List Lodging Certificate (No Appeal or Suit Pending).** Manager Schulz said this certificate needs to be approved and signed by the Select Board members before the Grant List can be lodged later this year. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve and sign the Grand List Lodging Certificate. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

XI. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Town Meeting Funding Articles.** Board member Doney noted if Northfield voters approve all the Australian Ballot funding articles that were the subject of tonight's public hearing, it would add an additional \$44,000 to the FY 2019/2020 budget. This doesn't include restoring the \$21,000 local share amount for the GMT Northfield-Montpelier Commuter Bus service (as some have suggested). Board member Doney doesn't want to discourage voters from supporting these organizations but just wanted them to be aware of the actual cost.
- b. **Recreation Committee BBQ Chicken Dinner Fundraiser.** Board member Doney issued a reminder that the Recreation Committee will be holding its BBQ chicken dinner fundraiser this coming weekend. The meals will consist of half a chicken, mostaccioli, coleslaw, roll, dessert, and a beverage for \$12. The meals can be picked up at the Kenyon's Hardware store parking lot on Sunday, March 3, 2019, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. One hundred and fifty (150) tickets will be sold beforehand and can be purchased from Committee members. The proceeds will be used to help refurbish the basketball court at Memorial Park.
- c. **Zoning Administrator Vacancy.** Board member Goodrich asked if there have been any responses to the advertisements for this vacancy. Manager Schulz said there had been a few including one from a well-qualified local person.
- d. **GMT Northfield-Montpelier Commuter Bus Service.** Board member Maxwell noted the local newspaper had a recent headline suggesting the Select Board members had thrown local commuters "under the bus" by removing the \$21,000 local share funding article from the Town Meeting warning this year. Board member Maxwell feels Northfield taxpayers have been the real victims in this matter by paying \$105,000 over the past five (5) years for a bus route that has always been plagued by low ridership. This bus service was reintroduced on a trial basis and Board member Maxwell felt it has not proved it deserves to continue. He is looking forward to the debate over this next Monday night. Board member Goodrich recently rode on one of the commuter bus's late afternoon round-trips and confirmed it is not being used anywhere near its capacity. The bus used could seat eighteen (18) riders but Board member Goodrich saw only five (5) individuals using the service. She feels GMT should do a better job of promoting this service or perhaps increase the fare amount in order to better cover expenses. Board member Miller has seen GMT's proposals to reduce the local share amount by reducing the number of round-trips each weekday (now set at two in the early morning, one mid-day, and two in the late afternoon). He felt the savings indicated did not match with the proposed route reductions. Manager Schulz thinks there might be provisions in the bus drivers' contracts that limit how much their compensation can be reduced. Chair Goslant would rather have the \$21,000 used on local paving projects or used to improve Northfield's sidewalks. He felt the low ridership did not justify the expense of this service. He felt encouraging carpooling would be a much more cost-effective alternative for the community. Elroy Hill felt the commuter bus service is going to be taxpayer supported in the future either through the local share amount or spread out through state and federal taxes. Board member Maxwell believes a restructuring of GMT's economic model is long overdue.
- e. **Norwich University Hockey Teams.** Board member Maxwell noted the NU Men's Hockey team has a fifteen (15) game unbeaten streak as they enter the championship playoffs. He wished them well as they advance. Chair Goslant wanted to extend the Select Board's well wishes to the NU Women's Hockey team who also are playing very well as they seek to repeat as NCAA Division III Champions.

XII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT. Manager Schulz had nothing to add to his written report.

XIII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED). There was none.

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

The Board adjourned at 8:40 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 March 12, 2019.