

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of March 12, 2019**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, Kenneth W. Goslant, K. David Maxwell, and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi, Lynnette Claudon (Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation), Thomas Brown (Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation), Brian Baker (Dufresne Group Consulting Engineers), Pam DeAndrea (Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission), Andres Torizzo (Watershed Consulting), Jo Krupa (Aldrich + Elliott Water Resource Engineers), Katrina DeMasi, John Stevens, Carolyn Stevens, Mark Fournier, and Elroy Hill.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

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

III. ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD

- a. Election of Chair.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to appoint K. David Maxwell as Select Board Chair. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. Election of Vice-Chair.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to appoint Julie H. Goodrich as Select Board Vice-Chair. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. Select Board Subcommittee Assignments.** Chair Maxwell recommended that the committee assignments be filled as follows: **Budget and Financial Review** (Board members Goodrich and Maxwell); **Town Buildings & Energy** (Board members Doney and Goodrich); **Economic Development** (Board members Goslant and Maxwell); **Norwich University** (Board members Goslant and Maxwell); **Highway Planning & Project Oversight** (Board members Goslant and Miller); **Public Safety Oversight & Planning** (Board members Doney and Miller); and **Labor Agreement & Bargaining** (Board members Goodrich and Maxwell). In addition, Chair Maxwell will serve as the Select Board's representative on the Water/Wastewater Utility Commission and Select Board member Miller will serve as the Select Board's representative on the Electric Utility Commission. Board member Miller and Manager Schulz again will serve as Northfield's representatives to the Mountain Alliance. Stephen Fitzhugh will continue to serve as Northfield's representative to Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) and Manager Schulz will remain the VPPSA alternate representative.
- d. Regular Meeting Schedule (Dates, Time, and Location).** The Select Board will continue to meet on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room located in the Brown Public Library.
- e. Designation of Official Newspapers.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to designate *The Northfield News*, the *Times Argus*, and the *Washington World* as the municipality's official newspapers for legal notices, advertisements, etc. The Front Porch Forum also will be used to post announcements, meeting agendas, etc. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- IV. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** Chair Maxwell said a representative from Kenyon's Hardware was to be present regarding their request for economic development funds but this has been delayed.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)

- a. State of Vermont – South Main Street Stormwater/CSO Project.** Present tonight to discuss this proposed project are Lynnette Claudon and Thomas Brown from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Also present is Project Engineer Brian Baker from the Dufresne Group. Since some Select Board members have expressed misgivings regarding the cost of the proposed project (\$1,742,400) and have suggested reducing the project scope, Ms. Claudon provided figures for two alternatives. The first would still go down South Main Street but no connections for side streets (i.e. Slate Avenue, Elm Street, Prospect Street, etc.) would be made. These would be hooked up and pipe installed at a later time.

It also would delay proposed work on North Main Street, Houston Street, and Sherman Avenue. The cost estimate for this proposal is \$827,200. The second alternative would include the work on South Main Street as well as Slate Avenue and the estimated cost would be \$1,013,100. All these estimates include design costs and a ten percent (10%) contingency amount. Each of these options would achieve the main objective of this project, which is to eliminate the Combined Sewer Outlet (CSO) on East Street by diverting and treating stormwater. Despite the added cost, Manager Schulz is reluctant to remove Slate Avenue from the project since stormwater diversion, paving, and other work have been needed on this street for several years but delayed due to cost.

Regarding the financing of this project, Mr. Brown said this is a unique time as revised grant award criteria and a new priority list for such projects will go into effect on July 1, 2019. Under the current system, this project is on the DEC priority list and is eligible for CWSRF GSI pilot program funds, which are revolving loan funds that do not have to be repaid (i.e., "forgiven"). There also are Green Infrastructure funds (\$205,000) that would be lost if the project doesn't start before then. Other grant funds might be available after that date but there would be no certainties. Therefore, Ms. Claudon recommends starting a reduced scope project before July 1, 2019 in order to retain these funds as well as Northfield's place on the priority list. Mr. Brown said the new priority list would be released on April 1, 2019 and would be subject to a two month public comment period (including a May 1, 2019 public hearing) before it is formally adopted on June 1, 2019. It was noted a particular concern now is the tight timeline for holding a local bond vote in order to meet the July 1, 2019 deadline. Mr. Brown said it would have to be held no later than April 30, 2019, as that would allow the needed time to have the final project design approved by the State of Vermont. He understood this is a big decision with not much time left to make it.

Board member Goodrich asked what would happen if the July 1, 2019 deadline was missed. Manager Schulz said the DEC will require the municipality to continue to monitor the CSO and take positive steps to resolve the problem within eighteen (18) months. Ms. Claudon noted construction costs for such projects usually increase about three percent (3%) each year. Board member Goslant is concerned the available state funds for such projects might decline in future years. Mr. Brown said Governor Phil Scott appears to be very supportive of projects protecting the Lake Champlain watershed. Ms. Claudon noted Burlington and Rutland already have held successful bond votes and would receive the bulk of available grant funds in the coming year.

As he recommended at a previous Select Board meeting (02/12/19), Mr. Brown believes the listed bond amount should be for total project costs so construction would not have to be halted if there is a delay in receiving grant funds. Chair Maxwell noted the federal budget recently proposed by President Donald Trump would significantly cut grant funding for clean water projects. Mr. Brown agreed the competition for federal and state grant grants could become very intense in future years.

Chair Maxwell understands this project has to be done but the timing is a real problem. He is uncomfortable asking voters to approve a bond when there is a high level of uncertainty regarding the availability of outside funding. Board member Goslant agrees more information and more discussion is needed before a decision can be made regarding the bond vote. Manager Schulz noted if the bond vote is to be held on April 30, 2019, it would need to be warned at least thirty (30) days in advance. This means the warning would need to be approved and signed before the end of this month. Board member Goodrich asked if the final project design would be available for residents to review before they vote. Mr. Baker said the final design would not be completed by that time but he would be able to put something together to educate voters. Chair Maxwell then thanked Ms. Claudon, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Baker for their valuable information.

- b. Watershed Consulting – Union Street Stormwater Project.** Pam DeAndrea is the Senior GIS Planner for the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) and has been working on this project with Manager Schulz and Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi for some time. The initial construction phase began last year but Ms. DeAndrea said some project "bumps" were encountered and work had to be suspended until additional state funding became available. Now that the funds to complete the project have been obtained, Ms. DeAndrea has prepared new bid documents so the work can be completed before the end of this summer.

Andres Torizzo from Watershed Consulting performed the initial planning study in 2014 that sought to find potential sites for stormwater remediation projects in Northfield. Several possible projects were discerned including the already completed ones on Central Street, Holland Place, and by Kenyon's Hardware Store. The intersection of Water Street and Union Street also was identified as this site sees a considerable amount of stormwater flow from adjoining streets directly into the Dog River. The original plan was to locate a treatment structure right on the river but this was reconsidered when a nearby FEMA buyout property on Water Street became available for an underground treatment facility. This would include installation of new catch basins and storm lines feeding this location and the placement of a subsurface chamber system that would trap and treat the stormwater before it is discharged into the Dog River. Jo Krupa from Aldrich + Elliott confirmed the project would include the installation of new catch basins along Union Street from its Cross Street intersection to Water Street. The project will include new curbing and sidewalk where new storm lines are installed. Mr. Krupa said the chamber system design is a simple one and once the underground facility has been installed, the vacant lot can be reseeded and used as a small public park. The chamber system is flexible enough to allow for the placement of light towers so the park could be used at night. Chair Maxwell asked if the stormwater retention area would extend to include runoff from Pearl Street. Ms. DeAndrea said the possibility of modifying the project to install new catch basins on Pearl Street had been researched but the additional cost proved to be prohibitive. Mr. Torizzo said the street's elevation should direct considerable stormwater into the treatment collection system.

Regarding the project financing, Ms. DeAndrea said at the ninety percent (90%) design threshold, it was discovered the total project cost would be considerably more than originally estimated. Mr. Krupa and Aldrich + Elliott were able to provide some alternate project options and as a result DEC was willing to put into the project an additional \$380,000 in funding. Ms. DeAndrea said the local match amount would be met by having the Northfield Water Department excavate the site where the underground chambers would be located. She is hoping the bids received will be reasonable but has concerns the curbing installation will inflate project costs. Board member Goslant suggested splitting off the cost of the curbing work in the bid documents. Manager Schulz said another way was to leave it in for now but rebid the project without it should the initial bids prove too high. Mr. Torizzo said another alternative was to adjust the amount of curbing included in the project after the bid has been awarded and (if needed) allow another contractor to do the curbing work at a lower price. Ms. DeAndrea said after a slight correction is made, the bid documents will be advertised with a deadline of Tuesday, April 9, 2019. Once the project has been awarded, construction should begin in June 2019 with expected completion by the end of September. She next will draft a Memorandum of Understanding that will confirm the municipality will perform the excavation work. Chair Maxwell thanked Ms. DeAndrea, Mr. Torizzo, and Mr. Krupa for the project information and for their impressive work.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **February 26, 2019 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #17-19.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve Warrant #17-19 in the amount of \$1,501,319.98. Board member Goodrich asked why there had been such a delay in refunding 2018 tax overpayments. Manager Schulz said there had been some questions regarding fee charges to non-profits that had to be resolved first. Board member Goodrich asked about the purchase of a "magnetic locator." Manager Schulz said this was new equipment designed to locate underground wiring. The municipality relied in the past on Dig Safe for this service but their charges became prohibitive. Chair Maxwell noted of the total warrant amount, \$1,053,800 represented property taxes collected by the municipality and forwarded to the Paine Mountain School District. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. **Warrant #17-19A.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve Warrant #17-19A in the amount of \$31,161.29. Board member Goslant noted this is the payment of an old bank note prior to refinancing (see below) **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through February 24, 2019.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$96,349.89. Board member Goodrich noted this pay period included \$4,509.21 for Highway Department overtime but only \$441.00 for the part-time Highway employee. She would like the part-time employee used more in order to bring down the overtime figure. Manager Schulz will discuss this with Highway Foreman Trent Tucker. The original intent was to keep the part-time employee in reserve for major snowstorms but that might change. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

a. Liquor License Renewals

- 1. **Depot Square Pizzeria.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- 2. **Dollar General.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

IX. SELECT BOARD

- a. **South Main Street Stormwater/CSO Project.** Manager Schulz put this item on the agenda in case the Select Board members were ready to make a decision at this time. The consensus seems to be to delay until more information is available. Chair Maxwell would like to have a written summary of tonight's presentation in layman's terms with hard figures available. He is concerned the bond vote timeline is too tight. Board member Goodrich felt it was disappointing the municipality will spend so much on this single project when there are a number of local concerns, such as highway infrastructure, that also require considerable funding to remedy.
- b. **Bond Anticipation Note (RSMS Program FY 2013/2014).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve and sign the Bond Anticipation Note in the amount of \$25,195 at 2.23% interest; to approve and sign the Bond Anticipation Borrowing Resolution; and to approve and sign the Bond Anticipation Tax Certificate. As indicated earlier in the meeting, this is a refinancing of an old bank note at a lower interest rate. Board member Goodrich asked if the local banks had been given the opportunity to match this low interest rate. Manager Schulz confirmed they had. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Board of Listers Vacancy.** Manager Schulz noted no one was elected to the expiring three-year Board of Listers seat on Town Meeting Day. We now are advertising for a resident to fill the vacant position on an interim basis until next year's Town Meeting. Letters of interest will be accepted until Thursday, April 4, 2019, with the expectation the Select Board will appoint an applicant at their regular meeting of Tuesday, April 9, 2019. Chair Maxwell said we do need someone to step forward at this time.

X. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Highway Subcommittees Update.** Board member Miller said the Subcommittee met yesterday to discuss, among other things, the impact of this winter on the Highway Department budget. He said there now is a \$30,000 overage in the salt budget and an \$8,000 overage in the sand budget. Fifteen hundred (1,500) yards of gravel/stone remain in the stockpile at the Northfield Falls pit. The general highway budget does have a \$16,000 surplus at this moment and there is \$28,000 left in the gravel/stone budget and \$8,000 in the culvert budget. Manager Schulz said any culvert purchases and tree trimming will be delayed for the time being.

Board member Miller said state grant possibilities also were discussed and there are hopes the paving grant application for Cox Brook Road will be successful this time. The municipality also will be applying for a structures grant and repairing the Stony Brook Bridge is considered the top priority. The maximum amount for this grant is \$175,000 and the estimated cost of fixing Stony Brook Bridge is \$270,000. Manager Schulz said the repairs would restore it as a two-lane bridge. Board member Miller said the Subcommittee also discussed a less expensive solution to repair the retaining wall on Elm Street. The original plan had an estimated cost of \$450,000 but Mr. Tucker suggested using the “driven sheeting” approach that would reduce the cost to between \$75,000 and \$80,000. Also discussed was the purchase of the new vehicle that would replace the 2014 Western Star. With the trade-in of the old vehicle, the new truck should cost about \$65,000. An additional \$15,000 would be spent to obtain an extended warranty. Board member Goslant noted the new truck will have a standard drive, which should save on repair costs over time.

Board member Miller said the possibility of revisiting the road discontinuance process was discussed and it was felt there might be a better chance of success next time if clear criteria for road discontinuance was established, focusing on one-house roads that basically serve as driveways. There also will be an attempt to demonstrate the actual financial gains for taxpayers when such roads are discontinued. In addition, if the process is split over two years, it was thought best to release the full list of targeted roads at the onset. Mark Fournier suggested discontinuing a section of Asetine Road where there are no houses. There is a good turnaround spot just after Asetine Farm. Board member Miller said the Subcommittee will look into this possibility.

Board member Miller said ten (10) tons of a new patching compound has been purchased and will be used on Cox Brook Road, Main Street, and other bad spots. There has been some consideration of selling the current hot mix/cold patch machine if this new product proves worthwhile.

- b. State Highway Problems.** Board member Doney said the large pothole by Cumberland Farms still needs to be fixed by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans). Manager Schulz has reached out to them to fix it and they seem to have done some work. It might be the pothole itself is too large to patch and they are waiting until spring to provide a more permanent fix. Board member Doney also would like VTrans to clean out the culvert by the Falls General Store before the snow melts and floods the street. Manager Schulz said VTrans has done some minor removal at this site but major structural work still needs to be done.
- c. VTrans Crosswalk Inspections.** Board member Goodrich asked if there was any update on the plan to have VTrans inspect the crosswalk at the Main Street/Depot Square intersection for safety concerns. Manager Schulz said VTrans has confirmed they will inspect this intersection before the end of the month. They also will look at the two crosswalks by the Norwich University (NU) campus as Select Board members requested. After the assessments, VTrans will provide recommendations regarding any need for new signage, improved lighting, etc.
- d. Turkey Hill Farm Maple Lease Agreement.** Board member Goodrich asked if Manager Schulz has been able to confirm whether the lease agreement has been violated (as some residents have suggested). Manager Schulz said it has been impossible to inspect the property yet due the significant amount of snow on the site. As soon as it is physically possible, the site will be inspected to determine whether the allowed number of taps has been exceeded, whether trees have been damaged, whether an illegal structure has been constructed, etc. Chair Maxwell said a local person has access to a drone that could inspect the site. Manager Schulz will look into this.
- e. NU Students Jaywalking.** Board member Doney is concerned about NU students who ignore the crosswalks adjacent to the NU campus and instead jaywalk at bends in the road where there is poor pedestrian visibility. He doesn’t want to see someone injured or killed. He would like the NU administration to do a better job of educating their students about the risks.

XI. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

- a. **Efficiency Vermont Facility Inspections.** Manager Schulz said Efficiency Vermont has been pressured to provide more services to electric customers and municipalities to justify the tariff it collects on every power bill. They have sent someone this week to inspect and evaluate municipal facilities in order to provide recommendations for improved energy efficiency.

XII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Mark Fournier: Northfield Highway Concerns.** Mr. Fournier has a number of concerns regarding the local road infrastructure that he would like to bring to the Select Board members’ attention. For example, he has noted the traffic signal at the intersection of North Main Street and Vine Street can take as many as five (5) minutes to change during off-peak hours. Manager Schulz will look into this. Mr. Fournier also felt the railroad crossings in town have too much of a rise and this could result in car damage. Manager Schulz said there are plans to fix the one on Water Street this summer once permission has been received from the railroad company. Like a number of Northfield drivers, Mr. Fournier also is irritated by the large bump in the road on South Main Street by NU’s Crawford Hall. Manager Schulz has met with the engineer NU has hired to fix this problem. The plan is to shave down the bump as soon as possible and to dig up and permanently repair the problem this spring. Mr. Fournier doesn’t believe the Highway crew plows the backroads as early as they should on weekends. He noted some people do have to get to work on the weekends and others would just like to have access to the outside world. Manager Schulz will discuss this with Mr. Tucker. Mr. Fournier lives on Union Brook Road and he asked if there are any serious plans to deal with its poor condition in the near future. Board member Goslant agreed the road is in a bad state and the municipality does plan to develop a priority paving list once spring arrives. Board member Miller said the Highway Subcommittee has been looking at cost estimates to totally reconstruct this road down to the subbase. The great expense will probably mean the municipality will have to seek voter authorization for a bond. Board member Goslant noted the municipality is always seeking grant funds to offset the cost to the taxpayer of such projects. Work was done on Barrows Road, Colson Road, and Dole Hill Road last year due to successful grant applications.
- b. **Carolyn Stevens: Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) Community Visit.** Ms. Stevens asked if the municipality has made a formal request to be put on the list for an upcoming VCRD Community Visit. Manager Schulz has made the request and the early feedback from VCRD indicates they are enthusiastic to return to Northfield. The last time they were here was in early 2002. However, due to previous VCRD commitments, the next Northfield Community Visit probably won’t be scheduled for at least another year or two.

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

The Board adjourned at 9:16 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 are subject to approval at the next regular Select Board meeting.