

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING  
Minutes of Tuesday, May 14, 2019**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, Kenneth W. Goslant and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), Lydia Petty (Northfield Placemaking Committee), Bonnie Donahue (Northfield Placemaking Committee), David Feinauer (Northfield Community Development Network), Cassie Morse (Northfield Farmers Market), Jason Endres (Northfield Community Development Network), Kaitlyn Keating (Northfield Community Development Network), Chris Alger, Alana Alger, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting 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. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)**

- a. Lydia Petty and Bonnie Donahue, Northfield Placemaking Committee: AARP Vermont Mini-Grant Update.** Ms. Petty said the Committee's mini-grant application was successful and they will receive \$3,000, which was the maximum mini-grant amount. The plan is to use these funds to create a temporary pedestrian/bicycle trail linking the downtown area (including senior housing) with the Water Street River Park. There would be a two to four hour celebration at the park (date to be determined) in order to encourage residents to make use of the new recreational facility. Ms. Donahue said the Committee will return to the Select Board with details of the event as they develop. Ms. Petty will meet with AARP Vermont representatives next week in order to finalize the date of the event, discuss how the temporary trail will be set up, etc. Ms. Donahue said the Committee is trying to find a date that would not conflict with other planned community activities and now are looking at the weekends of July 27/28 and August 10/11. The temporary trail could consist of banners, water-soluble markings, traffic cones, etc. Considering the source of these grant funds, one emphasis will be to provide senior citizens with better access to the new park. Depending on the feedback received regarding the temporary trail, the Committee might apply later for more grant funds in order to install new sidewalk, put in new directional signage, etc.

Chair Maxwell asked if there were larger grant opportunities involving AARP Vermont. Ms. Donahue confirmed there were and there were other fund sources (from both public and private agencies) that could be approached. She added the main goal is to get more people involved with the recreational opportunities now available in Northfield. Board member Doney noted Jay and Sally Pedley had been local leaders of the effort to create and then enhance the Water Street River Park. Now that both of them have passed away, he asked whom residents should contact regarding current uses and future plans for the park. Manager Schulz said this is a municipal park so the Town Manager's Office would be in charge of day-to-day operations and the Select Board in charge of long-term planning. He noted the Pedleys had spearheaded fundraising efforts (under the aegis of the Northfield High School Class of 1957) for the park pavilion and other amenities. This private fund still exists and there has been some consideration of turning it over to the municipality to fund future capital improvements in the park (but not for routine maintenance). Chair Maxwell then thanked Ms. Petty, Ms. Donahue, and the other members of the Northfield Placemaking Committee for their efforts on behalf of the Northfield community.

- b. David Feinauer, Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN): "Night on the Crescent" Update.** Mr. Feinauer said the NCDN worked last year with the Northfield Farmers Market to hold a successful event on the Crescent and plans to hold another this year. The date is Tuesday, June 18, 2019 and the event will be held from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. In addition to shifting the usual Tuesday afternoon farmers market from the Common to the Crescent, there will be live music, additional vendors, more hot food options, etc. Mr. Feinauer hopes the Select Board members will be able to attend themselves. In addition, the NCDN would like their authorization for putting down traffic cones and the placement of trash cans and at least one Porta Potty.

Cassie Morse from the Northfield Farmers Market said fifteen (15) vendors already have committed to taking part so they are well on the way to the maximum amount of forty (40). Chair Maxwell thanked Mr. Feinauer, the NCDN membership, and the Northfield Farmers Market for putting on this popular event for another year. He said the municipality will provide any assistance required to make it another success.

## V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

- a. **Laurie Baroffio, Finance Director.** Ms. Baroffio had provided the Select Board members with copies of the ten-month financial statements for the current fiscal year (i.e. July 2018-April 2019). She said the main takeaway is because of a very unusual winter, the Highway Department is projected to have a \$73,600 shortfall by the end of this fiscal year (06/30/19). However, due to higher than expected revenue and other cost savings, the Town General Fund is projected to have a \$60,480 surplus. In addition, due to \$109,287 in previous year surplus funds, the Undesignated Fund Balance on June 30, 2019 is projected at \$96,167. Ms. Baroffio then noted which departments are expected to incur significant positive or negative balances. For example, the Northfield Police Department (NPD) is anticipated to have a \$15,000 surplus mainly due to reduced personnel costs while the Police Chief position was vacant. There is a similar situation in the Planning/Zoning budget with \$10,800 in personnel savings with the Zoning Administrator position vacant for several months. There are projected deficits in the Fire Department, Brown Public Library, and Municipal Building accounts mainly due to higher than anticipated building heating costs. The Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) will have \$11,000 deficit due to higher personnel costs associated with the projected increase in run calls during FY 2018/2019. However, anticipated increases in NAS call revenue will more than cover these higher operating costs.

Ms. Baroffio said the \$73,000 deficit in the Highway Department is almost entirely due to higher materials costs (i.e., salt, sand, diesel fuel, vehicle maintenance, etc.). There were about \$8,000 of savings in the tree removal and contracted street sweeping accounts. Board member Goodrich is concerned about the \$18,719 overage in the NPD overtime budget. Even though this particular deficit will be offset by the savings incurred when the Police Chief position was vacant, she felt this problem should not be minimized and better addressed in the next fiscal year. Board member Goodrich noted \$3,700 designated for cemetery tree removal will not be spent. Manager Schulz confirmed he held off on this expenditure because of concerns about overages in other departments. Now that there has been some positive news, Manager Schulz is reevaluating whether to use these funds during this fiscal year.

Ms. Baroffio wanted the Select Board members to remember that even though it was possible to use previous year surplus funds to maintain an overall positive fund balance at the end of the current fiscal year, there will be reduced surplus amounts to fall back on when the FY 2021/2022 budget is drafted at the end of this calendar year. Chair Maxwell then thanked Ms. Baroffio for the valuable information and for her good work throughout the year.

## VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **April 23, 2019 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

## VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #21-19.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve Warrant #21-19 in the amount of \$457,948.58. Board member Doney asked if the municipality was reimbursed for boarding stray dogs at Random Rescue (Williamstown, VT). Manager Schulz said it was not. Board member Doney would like pet owners required to reimburse the municipality before claiming their dogs. Ms. Baroffio noted this expense is in the NPD budget. Several years ago, when a local facility boarded stray dogs prior to collection, part of its contract with the Town specified stray dog fines would be collected for the municipality. That contract ended several years ago and it has been nearly impossible since to recoup these funds. Manager Schulz noted sending stray dogs to Random Rescue is much cheaper than boarding them at the Central Vermont Humane Society.

Board member Goslant noted that of the total warrant amount, about \$311,000 was charged to the Northfield Electric Department (NED) for the purchase of power, etc. He also noted NED paid a \$25,000 monthly charge to Efficiency Vermont. He wondered if NED customers ever receive benefits worth anywhere near this amount. Manager Schulz said the State of Vermont requires all electric utilities to collect payments for the Efficiency Vermont program. Recently, some utilities have raised significant objections to the amount collected and forwarded. There was an unsuccessful attempt last year to lower the monthly charge. Partly in response to these concerns, Efficiency Vermont seems to have expanded its public outreach programs to businesses and residents as well as its rebate programs for home improvements, the purchase of energy-efficient appliances, etc. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through April 21, 2019.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$95,071.94. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through May 5, 2019:** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$92,309.92. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

#### VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **FY 2019/2020 Utility Budgets and Rates.** Manager Schulz said the Utility Commissioners have been working for the past couple months on the water, sewer, and electric budgets for the coming fiscal year. The budgets for the water and sewer departments have been completed and there is a request for a slight rate increase. The Electric Department budget is not complete but there is no anticipated need to go to the Public Utility Commission (PUC) for a rate increase. For single-family homes, there would be a 3.88% rise in the water rate, which would result in a \$1.36 monthly increase for the average customer. The proposed sewer rate would include a 1.05% increase, which would increase the average monthly sewer bill by 42¢. Manager Schulz believes these rates are sufficient to fund planned utility infrastructure improvements. Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the proposed FY 2019/2020 water and sewer rates.

Board member Goslant asked if prior year surplus funds were used to keep the rate increases minimal. Manager Schulz said this was done but there remains approximately \$106,000 in surplus funds above the two months of operating costs. Board member Goslant asked if there were sufficient funds budgeted to reline additional sewer pipe. Manager Schulz confirmed there were. He is now developing a priority list that he will provide to the Select Board members when complete. Chair Maxwell said prior to the 2014 municipal merger, the Village Trustees oversaw the utility budgets and they made every effort to retain sufficient surplus funds to cover any emergency as well as provide for infrastructure projects. He feels the current Utility Commissioners have decided to use surplus funds in order to keep water and sewer rates low. Chair Maxwell would prefer to set these rates based on the actual expenses of operating the system. Like Chair Maxwell, Board member Miller was appointed to the Utility Commissions in March 2019 and he shared his concerns. However, given how far the elected Commission members were into the budget process by then, he would not oppose this proposed budget but would like such considerations taken into account when the next one is developed. Chair Maxwell confirmed he also would like to revisit this issue next year. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. **VTrans Pedestrian Safety Analysis.** Since the last meeting, Manager Schulz, Chair Maxwell, and Board member Goslant met with Norwich University (NU) representatives regarding the VTrans recommendations to improve pedestrian safety at the two crosswalks adjacent to the NU campus. NU has agreed to pay for new signage and trim some trees near the crosswalk by the Plumley Armory (ID White Avenue). However, they would like to explore other options regarding the crosswalk located at the commuter parking lot. Manager Schulz also has been working with the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) regarding the VTrans recommendations for new signage and improved lighting for the Depot Square/Main Street intersection. He also is looking to see if state or federal funding would be available for these improvements. Manager Schulz should have this information for the next regular meeting (05/28/19).

- c. **Planning Commission Appointment.** Manager Schulz noted the five-member Planning Commission (PC) has had two vacancies for a couple months. Letters of interest were solicited and one was recently received from Nancy Peck. The PC members have reviewed Ms. Peck's qualifications and recommend her appointment. Motion by Board member Miller, seconded by Board member Doney, to appoint Nancy Peck to the Northfield Planning Commission. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **Spring Clean Up Day.** The next Spring Cleanup Day will be held on Saturday, May 18, 2019. It had been scheduled for last month but was postponed due to wet fields. Volunteers will meet first at Memorial Park at 9:00 a.m. in order to be given their tasks. Lunch will be provided at 1:00 p.m. and the day's work should be completed by 3:00 p.m. Those taking part are asked to bring their own tools, work gloves, etc.
- e. **Zoning Administrator Position.** Manager Schulz noted this position has been vacant for the past few months. The PC members interviewed the two applicants at their April meeting and subsequently informed the Select Board members of their preference. The Select Board members discussed this matter in executive session at their last regular meeting (04/23/19) but tabled any decision until additional information could be obtained. Manager Schulz believes he now has the information needed to go forward and will provide it later in the meeting in executive session. There was no objection.

**IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS**

- a. **The Need for Public Civility.** Chair Maxwell would like to encourage members of the public to treat any working municipal employees they encounter with courtesy. He personally has seen a couple incidents over the past few months when residents took out their frustrations over road conditions, etc. directly on these employees. Should Northfield residents have concerns about how local government is operating, Chair Maxwell would rather have them contact him or Manager Schulz.
- b. **Northfield Fire Department Kudos.** Board member Goodrich recently spoke with a member of the Williamstown Fire Department who had nothing but praise for the way members of the Northfield Fire Department (NPD) conducted themselves during a recent Mutual Aid response to a house fire in Roxbury. Due in part to their expert performance, a family home was saved from destruction.
- c. **Cox Brook Road Grant Application.** Board member Goodrich asked if any news had been received regarding the grant application Manager Schulz submitted to VTtrans for funds to repave Cox Brook Road. Manager Schulz has heard nothing yet but expects some feedback before the end of the month.
- d. **Scheduled NED Power Outage.** Chair Maxwell noted a scheduled power outage will take place on Sunday, May 19, 2019, from 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. This outage mainly will affect Northfield Falls, the Vermont Route 12 North corridor, and the area near the Northfield schools. The outage area will start at the traffic signal on North Main Street and then move northward along Vermont Route 12 North through Northfield Falls. Other affected areas include North Street, Cemetery Street, Garvey Hill Road, Upper Cross Street, and the upper part of King Street. Northfield residents should contact the Northfield Utility Office at 485-5411 should they have any questions or concerns. Board member Goodrich asked for the reason behind the scheduled outage. Manager Schulz said some infrastructure work needs to be performed and, based on past experience, it appears power outages held early Sunday mornings are the least disruptive.
- e. **FEMA Storm Reimbursement.** Board member Goslant asked when FEMA would compensate Northfield for the storm damage incurred during a severe storm a couple weeks ago (05/04/19). Manager Schulz is aware FEMA has been collecting data regarding Washington County storm damage but is unsure whether the \$1,000,000 threshold for declaring a federal disaster area has been reached. He knows there was about \$20,000 worth of road damage in Northfield alone, which FEMA did document. Manager Schulz also is looking for state funds to replace culverts damaged by the storm.

- f. Highway Subcommittee Update.** Board member Miller said a warned Highway Subcommittee meeting was held earlier today and he received some valuable information from Highway Foreman Trent Tucker on current road conditions, etc. He learned a second grader was leased for a week (\$4,400) and during its forty (40) hours of service accomplished quite a lot. Mr. Tucker estimates about eighty-five to ninety percent (85%-90%) of the Mud Season grading has been completed. When all this grading has been completed, the Highway crew will be able to focus on normal summertime road maintenance.

Board member Miller felt the aforementioned overages in road materials was a very troubling situation. Because of this deficient spending, it has been decided to postpone any tree trimming or culvert work until the next fiscal year. Limlaw Pulpwood is interested in trimming trees along Turkey Hill Road later this summer so Mr. Tucker will be talking to affected landowners soon to start the process.

Board member Miller noted there is a substantial increase in the next fiscal year budget for non-Mud Season gravel purchases and there is a plan to resurface about three and a half (3½) miles of backroad this summer. The Highway Subcommittee will use RSMS (Road System Management System) data when developing a priority list. Board member Miller would like to develop a long-term plan for the backroads resurfacing.

Board member Miller believes Union Brook Road and Cox Brook Road both are in as bad condition as they have ever been. Since some municipal debt will be coming off the books in the next couple years, Board member Miller would like to explore the possibility of the municipality bonding to reclaim and repave both of these roads. The estimated cost to reclaim and repave Cox Brook Road is about \$275,000, which includes \$50,000 needed for the area between the covered bridges. As for Union Brook Road, Board member Miller has floated a \$1,000,000 estimate to reclaim and repave the entire length of Union Brook Road. However, a recent quote from Pike Industries put the total cost of this project at \$1,700,000. Board member Miller believes the town should borrow for the repaving of Cox Brook Road this summer if a grant from VTrans is not received. As for Union Brook, even though it is probably now too late to bond and have the work completed this construction season, Board member Miller believes the town should begin the bond-vote process now so that all the legwork is completed and the paving can begin as soon as contractors are available and the road is sufficiently prepared for the work. He also would like the Select Board members to personally drive on both these roads so they can see how bad they really are.

Manager Schulz still has hopes the Cox Brook Road paving grant application will be successful this year. If not, the municipality could borrow the funds needed to complete the project in anticipation of grant funds being received in the next year or two. He will check with VTrans on the feasibility of such an approach. Board member Goodrich agrees Cox Brook Road needs to be fixed as soon as possible regardless of the current grant application. Chair Maxwell also agrees on the need to fix Cox Brook Road and would like the Highway Subcommittee to explore the advantages (and disadvantages) of borrowing as opposed to bonding, etc. Even if it is too late to get a successful bond vote this year, Chair Maxwell would like all the background work done so we can hit the ground running next year. Board member Goslant asked if the Cox Brook Road covered bridges needed a lot of work. Manager Schulz said some repair work already has been completed and there is a priority list of what still needs to be done.

- g. Green Up Day 2019.** Board member Goslant said a lot of roadside trash was collected on Green Up Day (05/04/19) but there seemed to be a little less than the previous year. He thanked Northfield Green Up Day Co-Coordinator Megan Cicio and Marty Simon as well as the other Northfield Rotary Club members for their efforts.
- h. Sally Nadon Pedley Life Celebration.** Board member Goslant noted there will be a public gathering to honor Sally Nadon Pedley at the Water Street River Park on Saturday, May 18, 2019, starting at 11:00 a.m.

- i. **NAVI Invitational Golf Tournament.** Chair Maxwell said Northfield Ambulance Volunteers, Inc. (NAVI) will hold their fourth annual benefit golf tournament at the Northfield Country Club (2066 Vermont Route 12A) on Sunday, June 9, 2019, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Early bird registrations are due by Monday, May 27, 2019. The proceeds will be used to support the Betty Podgwaite Scholarship Fund and EMS training activities.

**X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

- a. **Northfield Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Sludge Disposal.** Manager Schulz reported at the previous meeting that Casella Waste Management was refusing to accept any additional Northfield WWTF sludge at its Coventry VT landfill because of unacceptable stench. He noted this hadn't been a problem in the previous eighteen (18) years Northfield sludge has been deposited in the landfill and there have been suggestions this refusal was related to Casella's state application to have the landfill expanded. Other municipalities also have been affected by this new smell standard. Fortunately, after exploring several options a facility in southern Quebec near Sherbrooke has been found that will accept the sludge. It first will be transported to Barre City and then to the Canadian facility where it will be used for composting and land reclamation. About twenty-five (25) tons of sludge had to be stored at the WWTF during the standoff so this is a major problem solved. It is possible Northfield sludge might be accepted again at the Coventry Landfill since the use of new chemicals and a new dewatering process might result in future sludge passing Casella's smell test.
- b. **Better Connections Grant Update.** At the last meeting, Manager Schulz noted Northfield had been awarded an \$88,000 Better Connections Grant. \$55,000 of this grant amount is coming from VTrans and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and the remaining \$33,000 from an Agency of Natural Resources Clean Water grant. Manager Schulz has since learned no local match amount will be required for the Clean Water component of this grant so the total local grant match amount will be \$5,500. The Select Board members approved a local match amount limit of \$7,000 when they authorized the grant application.
- c. **Northfield Town Plan Update.** Manager Schulz said the Planning Commission has been working on an update of the local Town Plan for the past couple years. A public forum seeking feedback on the latest draft was held last week (05/07/19) and was well-attended. An additional public forum might be held before the Planning Commission schedules the two (2) required public hearings. The revised plan then would be forwarded to the Select Board for its review and (eventual) formal approval.

**XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).** There was none.

**XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a personnel matter and ongoing contract negotiations with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:20 p.m.

Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:40 p.m.

Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to authorize Manager Schulz to hire Mitch Osiecki as Northfield's Zoning Administrator. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

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

The Board adjourned at 9:45 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 revised and approved at the regular Select Board meeting of May 28, 2019.