

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of June 11, 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, Trent Tucker (Highway Foreman), Tyson Chouinard (Pike Industries), Steve Davis, Chris Knox, Dave Hanna, Bonnie Hanna, 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. Steve Davis: Road Concerns.** Mr. Davis is a longtime Northfield resident and taxpayer. He feels he has yet to receive an adequate explanation for why the municipality needs to hire outside contractors to repair potholes. Mr. Davis feels the Town Highway crew should be able to make these road repairs on a regular basis. He felt bad potholes often are ignored until someone like him complains repeatedly to local officials. Mr. Davis feels the Highway Department needs to be proactive (not reactive) on these matters. He also believes the crew should have started filling the worst potholes with hot mix as soon as it became available from the distributor on May 1, 2019. Mr. Davis has come up with some possible reasons why this work is not getting done and this includes such possibilities as the local Highway crew doesn't know how to fix potholes; they don't have the proper equipment; or they don't have sufficient time to do it. He believes none of these explanations are adequate and thinks it more likely that the Highway crew avoids fixing potholes because it is hard and dirty work. Mr. Davis believes those in charge of the Highway Department employees (i.e., the Town Manager and Highway Foreman) need to tell them to patch potholes on a regular basis as this is not being done. In any case, he does not see the need to employ outside contractors to do this work.

Manager Schulz said it is very difficult to fix potholes in the winter months and every Central Vermont community is experiencing worse than usual problems this spring. He did confirm the hot patch became available at the beginning of May but consistent rain storms that month resulted in delays. The current plan is to have a contractor (FreshCoat Asphalt Services) repair the worst potholes with asphalt, which lasts much longer than hot mix or cold patch. Due to budget constraints due to a difficult winter, Manager Schulz felt it was inadvisable to provide temporary fixes to the same potholes over and over again. Mr. Davis said there have been a number of dry days this spring so there is no reason the Highway crew couldn't have repaired potholes then. Board member Goslant said twelve (12) tons of cold patch were put on the worst potholes this spring. Mr. Davis still feels the Highway crew should have been using hot mix to repair sidewalks as soon as it became available. He then thanked the Select Board members for allowing him to speak on this matter.

V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

- a. Trent Tucker, Highway Foreman.** Mr. Tucker reported the work on Barrows Road, which needs to be completed by the end of June to meet state grant conditions, is coming along very well. In addition, the grader is out on the backroads as much as possible. However, due to the recent wet weather the roadside mowing is a little behind schedule. The contracted street sweeper has been in town a couple times and should be back to complete its work in the next couple weeks. Chair Maxwell asked if the Highway crew should fill potholes on a regular basis. Mr. Tucker has no objections and noted the crew has put down a lot of cold patch recently even though it is costly, takes time to put down, and doesn't last very long. He felt the roads with the worst potholes (i.e., Cox Brook Road and Union Brook Road) will need to be completely repaved.

Mr. Tucker felt his crew does its best given the amount of work hours and the equipment available to them. He noted cold patching requires two employees to operate the machinery and an additional two employees to act as flaggers. When this happens, the bulk of his six-member crew gets tied up on one job. He felt this is why hiring outside contractors is preferable so the Highway crew can perform routine road maintenance. Board member Goodrich asked how the pothole work by FreshCoat Asphalt is coming along. Manager Schulz said they have fixed some of the worst spots on Cox Brook Road and Union Brook Road. They will be returning to town tomorrow to determine what else needs to be done. Board member Goslant would like Manager Schulz to ensure that all the potholes that need to be addressed are indeed fixed. He also felt this work should have started earlier this spring. Manager Schulz said you can waste a considerable amount of money providing temporary road fixes on wet roads.

Turning to other issues, Mr. Tucker said the Highway Department still does not have a replacement for the mechanic who left about a month ago. However, there have been a couple of qualified candidates who have expressed interest in the position. In addition, Highway crew members will be undergoing VOSHA training and road grader instruction by the end of this month. Board member Goslant asked when the roads and crosswalks would be striped and painted. Manager Schulz said the contractors should be in town by the second week in July. Board member Goslant asked if the grading of the backroads was under control. Mr. Tucker said the grader has been on Little Northfield Road the past couple days smoothing out some bad spots. He added it has been difficult to complete this work due to the intermittent rainstorms. Board member Miller said there had been some discussion of either renting or purchasing a roller to help with the grading of soft roads. Mr. Tucker favored renting one first in order to determine its effectiveness. If it worked well, this might justify the purchase price. Board member Goslant asked if Mr. Tucker has been in contact with Limlaw Pulpwood & Chipping about trimming some roadside trees. Mr. Tucker said he has spoken to them a few times and has been working with them on a summer work schedule. Chair Maxwell then thanked Mr. Tucker for his report tonight and for his good work.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **May 28, 2019 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the minutes. Board member Goodrich would like one correction: the repair bill Board member Doney asked about was for fixing pavement damaged by a broken water main and not for repairing the water main itself. **Motion to approve the revised minutes passed 5-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #23-19.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve Warrant #23-19 in the amount of \$1,465,460.14. Board member Goodrich noted of the total warrant amount, about \$1,044,000 represents property tax funds collected by the municipality and then forwarded to the Paine Mountain School District. Board member Goslant noted another \$242,000 was spent purchasing power for the Northfield Electric Department (NED). Board member Doney asked about a \$658 purchase of a cutting edge blade for the rented grader. Manager Schulz said the one already on the vehicle wasn't good enough for the work to be done so a new one had to be bought and installed. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Warrant #23-19A.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve Warrant #23-19A in the amount of \$15,860.31. Board member Goodrich noted this is the final payment on a loan to purchase an ambulance unit. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through June 2, 2019.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$94,915.54. Board member Doney is pleased to see part-time officers are being used to reduce overtime expenses in the Northfield Police Department (NPD). **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Road Paving Projects.** Board member Miller said the Highway Subcommittee has met twice since the last Select Board regular meeting (05/28/19) in order to discuss the proposed paving of Cox Brook Road and Union Brook Road. It was learned late last week that Northfield's application for Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) Class 2 Road grant funds to repave Cox Brook Road was unsuccessful. It now is the consensus of the Highway Subcommittee (Board members Goslant and Miller) to recommend borrowing the funds needed (\pm \$270,000) so Cox Brook Road could be repaved this year. As for Union Brook Road, as this is a much more expensive project (\pm \$1,700,000), the recommendation is to hold a bond vote later this year so the paving project can start as early as possible next spring. Updated quotes for both projects have been received from Pike Industries and their Contracts Administrator, Tyson Chouinard, is present tonight to answer any questions.

Board member Goodrich noted in the Pike Industries quote for Cox Brook Road that the section of road beyond the covered bridges is to be reclaimed and fine graded but not around the bridges. Mr. Chouinard said the equipment used for reclaiming is too heavy to pass through the covered bridges so that section would be "machine paved." There is about a mile from the Third Covered Bridge to the Berlin line and this section of road would be reclaimed down to eight inches (8"). Board member Doney asked if Pike Industries would fix the dips on the road or would the Highway crew do this. Manager Schulz said any depressions would be fixed during the reclaiming process. Board member Doney asked who would put in new culverts, etc. Mr. Tucker said the Highway crew would replace any damaged culverts and put a shim coat on the worst section of the road before Pike Industries comes in. Mr. Chouinard said the paving schedule has not been determined but he expected the project would start by the end of July and be completed by the end of September.

Board member Miller asked if it were possible to borrow these funds without a public vote. Manager Schulz said Vermont municipalities are authorized by state law to borrow for highway projects. Chair Maxwell asked if this project would need to put out to bid to comply with the municipality's purchasing policy. Manager Schulz said the Select Board could choose to waive the policy and award the project to Pike Industries in order to avoid further delay. Motion by Board member Miller, seconded by Board member Goslant, to borrow \$268,678 for a period not longer than ten (10) years in order to repave Cox Brook Road; to waive the municipality's purchasing policy in this instance; and to award the Cox Brook Road paving project to Pike Industries. Board member Goslant asked if there were funds budgeted so the Highway crew can perform its share of the project. Manager Schulz said the new fiscal year will start in a couple weeks so this should not be a problem. Chair Maxwell would favor a ten-year loan as this would result in only a one cent (1¢) increase in the Town Tax Rate. A five-year loan would double this increase. Board member Goodrich asked how long the road would last until it would have to be repaved. Mr. Chouinard said this is difficult to predict due to Vermont winters. He anticipates no major work would be needed for at least ten (10) years but it all depends on what's underneath the road. Mr. Chouinard doesn't expect Cox Brook Road to require subbase work (unlike Union Brook Road). Chair Maxwell noted the Berlin section of the road was paved about six (6) years ago and still looks almost new. Board member Goslant said he normally opposes borrowing funds for such projects but he also feels the unsafe condition of Cox Brook Road requires drastic action. Chair Maxwell asked if Manager Schulz would be able to commence the borrowing paperwork right away should the motion pass. Manager Schulz confirmed he would work with Finance Director Laurie Baroffio first thing tomorrow morning to get the process started.

Motion passed 5-0-0.

The Select Board members then turned to a discussion of Union Brook Road. Motion by Board member Miller, seconded by Board member Goslant, to bond the Union Brook Road paving project in the amount of \$1,700,000. Board member Miller said one reason this project would be so expensive is the need to go down to the subbase. Mr. Chouinard confirmed the road's subbase has a lot of clay so a couple of inches of gravel would need to be laid down to avoid future cracking, etc. Calcium chloride would be injected into the subbase to further stabilize it before the road is paved. This would create a long-lasting product that should last several years.

Chair Maxwell asked if the serious dip near the road's intersection with Hockman Hill Road would be fixed. Mr. Tucker said it would but the time and expense to repair it would depend on whether the underlying problem is due to ledge, bad culverts, etc. There is no way to determine this before the project begins. Chair Maxwell felt this problem must be addressed as part of this project. Board member Doney asked how long this project would take to complete. Mr. Chouinard estimated about seventy-five (75) working days.

Chair Maxwell favors paying for this project with a twenty-year loan, which would require a public bond vote. He checked with Ms. Baroffio and it is anticipated this bond would add between 3.5¢ and 4.5¢ to the municipal tax rate. It also would increase the municipal debt load. However, Chair Maxwell noted about \$100,000 in municipal debt would be coming off the books in the next couple years so this probably would be a good time to start addressing problems with the municipal highway infrastructure. Prior to providing his consent for the motion, Chair Maxwell would like a site visit on Union Brook Road as well as additional financial information from Ms. Baroffio.

Chair Maxwell asked about the timeline for a bond vote. Manager Schulz said the Select Board would need to adopt a resolution showing the necessity of bonding this highway project. It then would need to approve a warning for a Special Town Meeting at least thirty (30) days before the vote is held. At least one Public Hearing would need to be held a week to ten (10) days prior to the vote. If the bond vote passes, there is a sixty (60) day voter appeal period so no further action can be taken until this expires. Chair Maxwell asked if the resolution can be prepared for the next regular meeting (06/25/19). Manager Schulz said it could. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to table the previous motion until the next regular meeting so that a site visit can be held and more financial information collected. Board member Goslant felt the Select Board needs to perform due diligence on this matter so Northfield taxpayers will get the best deal possible. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. Pedestrian Improvements – Intersection of Main and East Streets.** Manager Schulz said public concerns over the safety of the crosswalk linking Depot Square and East Street resulted in a VTrans analysis of this intersection as well as two crosswalks adjacent to the Norwich University (NU) campus. Acting on VTrans' recommendations, Manager Schulz found design plans and costs for installing two (2) pole-mounted flashing signs at the east and west ends of this crosswalk. Including installation costs, the price of installing both signs would be about \$10,000. Board member Goslant felt similar signage should be installed at the crosswalk near the Falls General Store. There have been complaints of drivers going too fast around the corner. Manager Schulz said since this crosswalk is located on a state highway, VTrans would have to provide its permission first (and perhaps contribute towards the cost). Manager Schulz has been in contact with VTrans about this possibility. He added NU has already pledged to install such signage at its crosswalks. Chair Maxwell confirmed NU has already purchased the signs and will install them by August 1, 2019. He then asked how the municipality would pay for the signs near Depot Square. Manager Schulz said the Highway Department's "Sign and Post" budget has been depleted but it is possible to deficit spend this account before replenishing it in the next fiscal year. Board member Doney noted crosswalks near the University of Vermont campus are painted red and white. Chair Maxwell said that could happen in Northfield when the contracted road striping and painting is performed. He then asked whether new nighttime lighting would be installed at this intersection. Manager Schulz said the new flashing signs probably eliminated this need. The Select Board consensus was to authorize Manager Schulz to proceed with the purchase and installation of the new signage.
- c. Northfield Observances, Inc. Request to Block off Common over Labor Day Weekend.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve Northfield Observances' request to block the Northfield Common from through traffic from 7:00 p.m. on Friday, August 30, 2019, through Monday, September 2, 2019. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- d. **Northfield Observances, Inc. Request for Labor Day Parade Parking Ban.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve a parking ban on Main Street from the Crescent to Kenyon's Hardware Store before and during the Labor Day Parade on Monday, September 2, 2019. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- e. **Northfield Observances, Inc. Request for Labor Day Coin Drops.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to grant permission for Northfield Observances to hold a coin drop fundraiser Labor Day morning at two (2) locations on Vermont Route 12. **Motion passed 5-0-0**

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Community Walk Audit.** Chair Maxwell said a walking tour of the Northfield downtown area from the Common to Mayo Healthcare will be held on Tuesday, June 18, 2019. The walk is about one mile and there will be a subsequent discussion of sidewalk conditions, etc. Those interested should meet at the Brown Public Library by 1:00 p.m.
- b. **"Night on the Crescent."** Chair Maxwell said the Northfield Farmers Market and Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN) will be sponsoring an outdoor market at the NU Crescent on Tuesday, June 18, 2019, from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The regular local farmers market will be held but there will be additional food and crafts options available along with live music. Board member Doney attended last year's inaugural event and remembers there was outstanding food choices and everyone seemed to have a good time. He commended those putting this event on again.

X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Water Street Stormwater Project.** Manager Schulz reported the project has been restarted and it should take around six (6) weeks to install the underground filtration unit, new sidewalk, etc. He doesn't anticipate traffic disruptions during construction.
- b. **Working Communities Challenge.** Manager Schulz said the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston is working with New England communities to provide funding for local economic development projects that would include job training, forest management, etc. The program originally focused on southern New England communities but recently expanded to Vermont. Manager Schulz will come back to the Select Board members with more information before beginning the award application process.
- c. **Town Plan Update.** Manager Schulz said the Planning Commission has been working on revisions to the current town plan and would like to hold a joint meeting with the Select Board to discuss the latest draft version. This has been tentatively scheduled for the next regular Select Board meeting on Tuesday, June 25, 2019.
- d. **Green Mountain Transit (GMT) update.** Manager Schulz said GMT has asked to address the Select Board members in the near future to discuss its recent efforts to expand ridership on the weekday Northfield-Montpelier commuter bus service. He suggested GMT representatives could attend the next regular meeting. Chair Maxwell felt that meeting agenda already has a site visit, a joint board meeting, etc. so it might be better to wait for a later time. Manager Schulz will let them know this.
- e. **FY 2019/2020 NED Budget.** Manager Schulz said the Utility Commissioners have been working on the Electric Department budget and it should be ready for Select Board review at their first meeting in July (07/09/19).
- f. **Union Contract Negotiations.** Manager Schulz said the separate negotiations with the NPD union and the union representing the other municipal employees are proceeding well. There should be more to report (in executive session) at the next Select Board regular meeting.

- g. CERV Relocation Update.** Manager Schulz said CERV has been using the lower level of the Municipal Building for its Clothing Shelf for several months and there remain plans to rehabilitate the storage building on Kent Street to relocate its Food Shelf there. Some NU engineering professors have looked into the logistics of this rehabilitation and there has been discussion of CERV fundraising to cover the conversion costs. Manager Schulz will keep the Select Board members informed as this project proceeds. Chair Maxwell favors the concept but would like to see the details before fully committing his support. He noted this process began as a way to free up the space at the Ambulance Bay that CERV had been using for several years. Board member Goslant said they have one cost estimate already, which is a good start.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. Chris Knox: Cox Brook Road Paving, etc.** Mr. Knox lives on Aseltine Road and is quite upset the pavement on Cox Brook Road was allowed to deteriorate over the past few years. He also doesn't understand why the municipality has held off work waiting for a state grant instead of budgeting over a few years to finance the project. Manager Schulz said VTrans does provide funding for Class 2 roads like Cox Brook Road that link with other communities. The municipality does budget for paving work in its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) each year but major projects such as this usually require borrowing or bonding in order to spread the cost over several years. Chair Maxwell noted the Highway Subcommittee has worked with the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) to develop a master plan for future highway infrastructure work, which includes road paving and resurfacing gravel roads, with a long-term schedule based on road priorities. Mr. Knox asked if this long-term plan would eliminate the need for borrowing. Board member Miller said regular road maintenance can be budgeted but major road reconstructions like this would have to be financed through borrowing or bonding. Chair Maxwell said spreading out these expenses over time is needed to keep property tax rates manageable. He added the Select Board members acted proactively during the last budget process by significantly increasing the amount budgeted for sand/gravel, road salt, etc. in the next fiscal year. Board member Goslant suggested Mr. Knox might want to attend a future budget meeting dealing with highway expenses to see how the process works. He also might want to review the current Town Report to see how highway budgets are set for the next fiscal year. Elroy Hill agrees with Chair Maxwell that it usually is better to borrow funds for major paving projects rather than significantly raising tax rates to pay for them.
- b. Elroy Hill: Gould Road Culvert Problems.** Mr. Hill said the culvert at Gould Road is half-filled with debris and needs to be cleaned out before there is danger of the Falls Post Office parking lot flooding again (as it did earlier this spring). Manager Schulz said he will have Mr. Tucker check this out as soon as possible. This culvert has been a topic of discussion at recent Highway Subcommittee meetings but the proximity of a state highway means VTrans has to be consulted before any significant work in the area can be performed.

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

The Board adjourned at 9:35 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 June 25, 2019.