

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING**  
**Minutes of July 23, 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, Laura Hill-Eubanks (Planning Commission), Aaron Rhodes (Planning Commission), Ruth Ruttenberg (Planning Commission), Lydia Petty (Northfield Placemaking Committee), Bonnie Donahue (Northfield Placemaking Committee), Thomas Alsheimer (Board of Listers), Susan Popowski (Board of Listers), Mark Fournier, Jeffrey Ott, Denise MacMartin, Nancy LaVarnway, Mary Doud, John Stevens, Sonya Rhodes, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:01 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. JOINT MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD AND PLANNING COMMISSION: REVIEW OF DRAFT TOWN PLAN.** Manager Schulz said the current Northfield Town Plan expires in September 2019 and the Planning Commission (PC) members have been working on updating it over the past couple years. Due to a successful grant application, the PC members have been assisted by a paid consultant. Now that the revised Town Plan is being finalized for approval later this year, this is the time for the PC and Select Board members to discuss together any remaining concerns that exist before the required public hearings are scheduled. He noted a lot of time and effort has been put into the current draft but additional work still needs to be done. Laura Hill-Eubanks, who serves as PC Chair, said the approval process is a little behind schedule so she would like to have the plan's wording finalized and submitted for further public comment as soon as possible. PC Chair Hill-Eubanks said the plan is in a different format than the current version but it does contain all the local information required by state law. The public feedback solicited in the early stages of the plan drafting indicated residents would like to see an improved local economy, strong downtown development, and protection of the Northfield's rural characteristics. Therefore, the plan will try to strike a balance between economic expansion and preservation of our natural resources. New state requirements have led to separate sections focusing on renewable energy, flood resilience, etc. PC Chair Hill-Eubanks said a new approach in the draft plan is to suggest abandoning strict requirements on lot sizes in the lower density areas of the community in favor of allowing smaller lot sizes along roadways so long as average density goals are maintained. PC member Ruth Ruttenberg said the approved Town Plan would be an advisory document and any recommendations regarding downtown development, rural preservation, etc. only could be implemented if local zoning regulations are revised accordingly. PC Chair Hill-Eubanks added that the zoning maps in the draft plan also are advisory at this time.

Select Board member Julie Goodrich is grateful for all the hard work the PC members have put into the current document but has some concerns that recommendations regarding future development might result in strict zoning regulations in the future. She also is concerned that the current draft seems to restrict where renewable energy sources can be located. PC Chair Hill-Eubanks said the plan would not limit where solar farms or wind turbines can be sited but only makes recommendations regarding optimal locations. For example, the plan suggests solar farms should be located near existing roads and power lines. In addition, surveys have indicated Northfield residents don't want wind turbines along our ridgelines so the plan doesn't recommend siting them above certain elevations. Select Board member Goodrich noted there is a recommendation in the "Economic Development" section that Northfield should hire an economic planning director. She has concerns about hiring additional staff since the approved municipal budget doesn't allow for this. PC Chair Hill-Eubanks said this suggestion was based on local feedback and is considered a long-term goal. She added there are several options to bring in outside resources to fund this position. PC member Ruttenberg noted some communities base the salary paid the person holding this position based on his/her ability to actually bring in new businesses. PC Chair Hill-Eubanks said a similar recommendation for a code enforcement officer also was based on public feedback regarding the number of local housing units not being kept up to code. It is possible that employee's salary could be partially offset by fines collected. Select Board member Kenneth Goslant agreed that a number of apartment buildings and houses in this community have been allowed to become blighted. He does see the need for code enforcement but also is reluctant to add staff due to budgetary concerns.

Select Board Chair David Maxwell asked if the PC worked with the local utility commissions when developing the "Energy" chapter. PC Chair Hill-Eubanks said she did speak with Electric Utility Commission Chair Stephen Fitzhugh for recommendations regarding reducing local energy use, which would lessen the need for additional energy sources. Part of this effort would be to make the downtown and other high density areas more pedestrian (or bicycle) friendly in order to reduce reliance on automobiles for short trips, etc.

Select Board Chair Maxwell had some questions regarding forest preservation. PC member Ruttenberg said Northfield has a good amount of contiguous forest blocks and the plan suggests encouraging the preservation of large- and medium-sized forest lots by promoting development in the existing higher density areas. PC Chair Hill-Eubanks noted this was only a recommendation and did not preclude economic development elsewhere in the community.

Select Board Chair Maxwell noted some outdated and/or inaccurate information in the current draft. PC Chair Hill-Eubanks encouraged anyone who has found erratum in the document to contact her as soon as possible as the document is being finalized before being forwarded to the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) for evaluation. After the CVRPC has provided its preliminary approval, there would be a thirty (30) day public notice period. When this period expires, the PC would schedule a public hearing at least fifteen (15) days later. After the public hearing is held, the PC will need to decide whether, based on public comments, to make substantial changes to the draft before submitting the document to the Select Board, which needs to hold two (2) public hearings. Additional changes can be made to the draft at that time before the document is returned to the PC to be finalized. Formal approval by the PC and Select Board then would follow. PC member Ruttenberg encouraged public comment as the PC was not only concerned with correcting erratum but also would like feedback regarding the plan's general goals, recommendations, etc.

Bonnie Donahue is a former PC member and she is pleased with the draft plan's emphasis on preserving the rural integrity of our community while also promoting local economic growth. She felt preserving our natural resources is a very worthy goal. Mark Fournier would like to see more businesses brought into town and would like to know how this plan would encourage this. PC member Ruttenberg said one recommendation is to expand the municipality's wastewater collection infrastructure along the Vermont Route 12 and 12A corridor, especially into Northfield Falls, in order to further economic development without creating environmental problems. She added there still is some debate, as indicated in the surveys collected, over what kinds of new businesses should be attracted to Northfield.

There being no other questions or comments, the Joint Board meeting concluded at 7:58 p.m.

## **V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)**

- a. Lydia Petty and Bonnie Donahue, Northfield Placemaking Committee: AARP Vermont Mini-Grant Update.** Ms. Petty and Ms. Donahue had addressed the Select Board members previously after their \$3,000 grant application had been awarded regarding plans for the funds. Now that these have been finalized, they would like to provide an update. Paint and other art supplies have been purchased with the grant funds and will be used to create a temporary pedestrian trail from the Northfield Police Station on Wall Street to the Dog River Park on Water Street. Employees from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTTrans) will be assisting with the installation of this signage, etc. On Saturday, August 10, 2019, there will be an event in Dog River Park with participants asked to meet first at noontime on the Common for a non-motorized parade along the temporary pedestrian trail. Ms. Petty said the goal is to encourage people to make use of the new park by showing how accessible it is from the downtown area. There will be activities held at the park throughout the day including Children's Storytime, a Ti Chi demonstration, live music, family games, etc. An ice cream truck will be on scene and will provide free ice cream to the first two (200) hundred customers. Ms. Donahue said there also would be art installations created by local youth along the temporary route. This will include a number of painted cardboard dogs in honor of the park's official name. There also will be artistically painted trail stakes and some temporary movable benches along the route. Ms. Donahue noted a "Walk Audit" was held recently (06/18/19) with about twenty (20) participants walking from the Common to Mayo Healthcare on Water Street. The audit noted a number of good stretches for walkers along this route as well as a number of areas needing work. Ms. Petty attended a workshop with some residents of Green Mountain Apartments, which is a senior living complex on Wall Street owned by the Vermont State Housing Authority. Many of the residents no longer drive themselves and rely on public transportation as well as their own walking ability. The residents Ms. Petty spoke with would be very grateful for better walkways so they can better access local shops, restaurants, etc. Ms. Donahue said she and Ms. Petty have been working with Manager Schulz throughout this project to make sure everything would work logistically. Chair Maxwell thanked Ms. Petty and Ms. Donahue for their efforts and he looks forward to this unique community event.
- b. Thomas Alsheimer, Board of Listers: 2019 Grand List Errors & Omissions.** Listers Chair Alsheimer is asking the Select Board members to approve three (3) changes to the 2019 Grand List, which was formally lodged earlier this month. The first request would be a \$40,000 decrease in value for a property on Stagecoach Road. The property owners is a veteran with a permanent disability but was originally left off the partial tax exemption list due to a delay in paperwork processing.

The second request is a \$23,800 valuation decrease for a Barrows Road property. The property owner had appealed the original assessment and, after re-inspecting the property, the Listers agreed some of the acreage had been valued incorrectly and they now recommend lowering the property value. The third request would be a \$150,300 increase in valuation for a North Main Street structure. The property had been under-assessed due to an inadvertent mistake. The property owner will be given the opportunity to appeal the valuation increase. Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the Grant List adjustments as presented. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

#### **VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **July 9, 2019 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

#### **VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. **Warrant #02-20.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve Warrant #02-20 in the amount of \$251,215.66. Board member Doney noted a \$304 travel reimbursement payment to a Northfield Police Department (NPD) officer so she could attend training sessions. Manager Schulz said he discussed this matter with NPD Chief John Helfant beforehand and they agreed it would best for the officer to use her personal vehicle for commuting. Board member Doney noted some payments to Green Mountain Power (GMP) related to work for "First Light." Manager Schulz said this involved installing fiber optic lines on Northfield Electric Department (NED) utility poles and the expense will be fully reimbursed. Board member Goodrich saw a \$2,300 payment to FreshCoat Asphalt for road patching and asked where the work was done. Manager Schulz said some potholes were fixed on Winter Street, Central Street, and other locations. This was in addition to the work done previously on Union Brook Road and Cox Brook Road. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through July 14, 2019.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$104,314.76. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

#### **VIII. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION**

- a. **Liquor License Application: The Pub at Fiddler's Green.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the liquor license application. Manager Schulz said this restaurant has been closed for some time and the property owner has decided to reopen it at this time. Chair Maxwell spoke to him recently and he appears to have a solid business plan in place. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

#### **IX. SELECT BOARD**

- a. **FY 2019/2020 Fuel Bid Results.** Manager Schulz said bid forms were sent out to ten (10) fuel distributors on July 3, 2019, but the only one returned by the deadline (07/19/19) was from Gillespie Fuels. They provided bid amounts for heating fuel, propane, and diesel. There is no bid submitted for no-lead gasoline so the municipality will continue to spot buy it from Jack Corse, Inc. After some discussion, the Board consensus was choose the fixed bid price for heating fuel and propane. This is not an option for diesel. Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to award the heating fuel bid to Gillespie Fuels at the fixed price of \$2.28 per gallon; the propane bid at the fixed price of \$1.33 per gallon; and the diesel bid at the floating price of \$2.19 per gallon. These prices are slightly lower than last year's but this is partially offset by a new Vermont law removing municipal governments' exemption from the Petroleum Distributors Licensing Fee (1¢ per gallon) and the Vermont Fuel Tax (2¢ per gallon). Chair Maxwell anticipates reduced heating costs at the Town Garage due to recent building renovations. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **East Street Sidewalk Replacement Project.** Manager Schulz said it has become a Select Board priority to repair the broken sidewalks on East Street in order to help the businesses operating there. This project would include repaving sidewalk along North Main Street from the Subway® restaurant to the Main Street Bridge. Bids were solicited and two were received: Josh Fenoff Siteworks (\$60,600) and X-Treme Excavating (\$64,600). Manager Schulz said the bidders did a good job of adhering to the project specifications so the only difference between the two proposals is cost. He added there now is \$122,000 in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) account for sidewalks. Board member Goslant asked when the work would commence. Manager Schulz said it would be right after the project is awarded. Chair Maxwell noted the businesses would like it completed before foliage season. Board member Doney would like it finished before Labor Day. Chair Maxwell said at the most recent Utility Commission meeting there was a suggestion this would be a good time to install conduit and new streetlight fixtures at this location. Manager Schulz said this would require only a minor adjustment of the project specifications. There was no objection from the Select Board members. Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to award the East Street Sidewalk Replacement Project to Josh Fenoff Siteworks at the bid price of \$60,600. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- c. **Town Road and Bridge Standards.** Manager Schulz said VTrans and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) have worked together to develop revised Town Road and Bridge Standards. The main changes include new provisions for “hydrologically-connected road segments” as well as new standards for guardrail installation and driveway access. Manager Schulz said refusing to adopt the new standards might result in a municipality receiving lower state highway aid amounts and/or becoming ineligible for certain highway grant programs. As the new standards are not too onerous, Manager Schulz recommends their adoption. Motion by Board member Miller, seconded by Board member Goslant, for the Northfield municipality to adopt the 2019 Town Road and Bridge Standards. Board member Goslant is concerned about possible extra expense in conforming to the new standards but doesn’t see any another option. Chair Maxwell said such additional scrutiny from the State has been expected for some time. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **Approval of Private Road Name: Meadowbrook Lane.** There has been a request from a resident to name the new private road on his property “Meadowbrook Lane.” E-911 Coordinator Lawton Rutter has looked into this and found no potential conflict with existing road names. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve naming the new private road off Vermont Route 12A “Meadowbrook Lane.” **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

**X. BOARD MEMBERS’ COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS**

- a. **Highway Subcommittee Update.** Board member Miller said the Highway Subcommittee held a meeting last Wednesday (07/17/19) and among topics of discussion were proposed repairs projects for the Stony Brook Road Bridge and the Elm Street retaining wall. It was learned after this meeting that the grant application for the bridge repairs was unsuccessful. The repaving of Cox Brook Road should begin before the end of this month. The Highway crew are completing the grant-funded work on Barrows Rod this week and then will head to Cox Brook Road to work on culverts, etc. in anticipation of the paving project. The decking on the Pleasant Street Bridge has been repaired with materials already on hand at the Town Garage. The roadside mowing as begun and a second Highway employee has been trained to do this work. The Highway Subcommittee, Manager Schulz, and Highway Foreman Trent Tucker will meet soon with CVRPC consultant Dan Currier for further clarification of the RSMS (Road Surface Management System) plan and finalize plans for future projects on paved and unpaved roads. Board member Miller reported the bond vote for the Union Brook Road Reconstruction Project has been set for Tuesday, September 17, 2019. The warning will be ready for signature at the next regular meeting (08/13/19) and a public hearing will be held at the first regular meeting in September (09/10/19). Board member Miller will be preparing a list of households affected by the poor condition of Union Brook Road and a road counter will be installed to determine the amount of daily traffic. Board member Goodrich asked when Limlaw Pulp & Chipping is coming to trim along Turkey Hill Road. Board member Miller said the exact dates have not been set. Chair Maxwell asked if the residents have been contacted. Manager Schulz said notifications have been made and all questions answered.
- b. **Municipal Parks Update.** Board member Doney said despite extreme high temperatures last week the basketball court at Memorial Park has been sealed and hoop installation and court striping should be completed this weekend. He hopes those using the new facility will treat it with care. He then thanked Utility Superintendent Patrick Demasi and Mr. Tucker for providing their assistance during this project. Board member Doney also wanted to thank Pool Director Shannon Palone and her lifeguards for helping to pick up trash around the pool area when they are not busy elsewhere.
- c. **Pool Vandalism, etc.** Board member Goodrich heard there had been some vandalism at the municipal pool. Manager Schulz said graffiti had been spray painted there afterhours and some chairs and other equipment thrown into the pool. However, there has been no structural damage and the pool continues to operate as normal. Chair Maxwell would like such heinous activity “nipped in the bud.” He feels Manager Schulz should work with NPD Chief Helfant to develop a pro-active policy to find out who is responsible and prevent future such incidents. Chair Maxwell also encouraged private property owners to remove any graffiti on their property as it reflects badly on the community. Elroy Hill has driven throughout the United States and Canada and he believes Vermont small- and medium-sized towns suffer graffiti problems much more than similarly sized communities elsewhere.
- d. **Household Hazardous Waste Collection.** Chair Maxwell noted Mountain Alliance and Casella Waste Management will be holding the second of four collection events this year behind the Northfield Fire Department (128 Wall Street) on Saturday, July 27, 2019, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This event is open only for residents of Randolph, Braintree, Brookfield, and Northfield. If you cannot attend this particular event, the next one will be held in Randolph on Saturday, September 21, 2019, and the final one in Northfield on Saturday, November 2, 2019.

#### **XI. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

- a. FEMA Disaster Funds.** Manager Schulz recently held a conference call with FEMA representatives regarding reimbursement for the April 2019 local storm damage now that a Federal Disaster for Washington County has been proclaimed. He expects \$21,000 to be the base amount for reimbursement and an in-person meeting will be held tomorrow.
- b. Norwich University (NU) Bicentennial Homecoming 2019.** Manager Schulz and the chiefs of Northfield's emergency services recently met with NU representatives regarding the large crowds ( $\pm 10,000$ ) anticipated for Homecoming Weekend this year. A NU representative will be present at the next Select Board regular meeting to present an update on their strategies to deal with the influx of visitors, i.e. traffic control, off-campus parking, etc.
- c. Bone Hill Solar Project.** Manager Schulz included in the Select Board packets the forty-five (45) day public notice from the company planning to build a solar farm on the east side of Vermont Route 12 South between Preston Drive and Honeysuckle Terrace. The solar farm would occupy about six (6) acres with about 4,800 solar panels installed. The notice says it would have minimum visibility from the road. Should the project receive Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC) approval, it would benefit NED by providing renewable energy at a stable price. It also would help NED meet its renewable energy purchase requirements.
- d. Northfield Police Department (NPD) Statistics.** Manager Schulz also included in the packets statistics from NPD breaking down into various categories the 1,921 local incidents that took place between June 1, 2018 and May 31, 2019. Manager Schulz hopes to have NPD Chief Helfant present at the next regular meeting to provide a general update on recent NPD activities. This might include information on the recent rash of vandalism.

#### **XII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)**

- a. Mark Fournier: Roadside Mowing, etc.** Mr. Fournier lives on Union Brook Road and would like better roadside clearance around the Pleasant Street and Union Street intersection. He would like the area mowed as soon as possible since there now exists a dangerous situation due to poor visibility. He then asked if the Select Board were planning to revisit the issue of privatizing some of the one- and two-house roads in order to effect savings in the Highway Department budget. Board member Miller said there have been no new developments on this. Chair Maxwell said the matter remains under consideration.
- b. Sonya Rhodes: Union Brook Road Concerns.** Ms. Rhodes also lives on Union Brook Road and is pleased the Select Board has committed to holding the bond vote this year. She has received a copy of the RSMS plan and would be interested in obtaining an updated version if any revisions are made. Mr. Rhodes also is interested in the results of the traffic counter but hopes the Select Board will take into account seasonal adjustments in traffic patterns. Like Mr. Fournier, Ms. Rhodes would like better mowing of the roadsides and would like to see additional guardrail installed on Union Brook Road where there are severe drop-offs at the sides of the road. Chair Maxwell said the municipality does have CIP funds for guardrail purchase and installation. The Highway Subcommittee can look into this matter and evaluate whether the road drop-offs are significant enough to justify the expense.

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

The Board went into executive session at 9:45 p.m.

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

The Board came out of executive session at 10:05 p.m. No action was taken.

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

The Board adjourned at 10:05 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 August 13, 2019.