

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of August 13, 2019**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Lynn Doney (absent), Julie H. Goodrich, Kenneth W. Goslant, and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, John Helfant (Police Chief), Kaitlyn Keating (Northfield Community Development Network), Jon Moore (Green Mountain Transit), Jamie Smith (Green Mountain Transit), Diane Scolaro (Norwich University), Larry Rooney (Norwich University), Mark Fournier, Jeffrey Ott, Denise MacMartin (Northfield Community Development Network), Bonnie Waninger (Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission), Sally Davidson (Recreation Committee), Bethany Drum, Sonya Rhodes, 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. Kaitlyn Keating, Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN): "Night on the Common 2019."** Ms. Keating reported this year's "Night on the Common" will be held on Tuesday, August 27, 2019, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. She noted this event is usually held later in the year but NCDN did not want to conflict with upcoming Norwich University bicentennial events. The focus will be on community groups and local volunteers. The community photo will be taken at 6:15 p.m. Ms. Keating thanked the Northfield Fire Department (NFD) for providing their aerial ladder truck for this. There also will be live music and family games and she expects the Farmers Market vendors might stay around later than usual to sell their goods to attendees. The event will be well publicized on Front Porch Forum and other venues beforehand.
- b. Jon Moore, Interim Director, Green Mountain Transit (GMT): Northfield-Montpelier Commuter Bus.** Mr. Moore wanted to provide an update on commuter bus service ridership. Jamie Smith, GMT's Marketing and Public Affairs Manager, also was present to indicate how GMT is working to better advertise the service. Mr. Moore said in recently completed fiscal year the Northfield-Montpelier commuter bus service saw its ridership increase by nine percent (9%). This compares well to the average four percent (4%) ridership increases in previous years. In addition, the cost to GMP per boarding has decreased due to increased ridership. Mr. Moore said GMT has conducted a cost analysis of this route and one suggestion was to eliminate the midday trip. However, Mr. Moore said this is only under consideration at this time. He would like some feedback regarding this possibility from the Select Board members as well as the Northfield community. Ms. Smith said she has been working with the Northfield Energy Committee (NEC) and other groups to better publicize the commuter bus service through the "Ride to Work Week" and other efforts. She noted NEC was awarded a Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) grant that can be used for a future similar event. In addition, Norwich University (NU) has contacted GMT about providing additional service to Montpelier for NU students and staff. Also, Darn Tough Vermont has been in contact about the possibility of adjusting the commuter service route schedule to better conform to its work shifts. There also has been interaction with Mayo Healthcare and Northfield Senior Citizens about expanded service.

Chair Maxwell said the Select Board members during their last budget meetings decided to eliminate from the 2019 Town Meeting Warning the annual \$21,000 local share amount request for the commuter bus service. This decision was based on concerns the service's apparent low ridership did not justify the taxpayer expense. The funding was restored on Town Meeting Day as voters chose to amend the municipal budget from the floor to include the payment. Despite this, Chair Maxwell continues to have concerns that the bus service should be better marketed to improve ridership. He is pleased with the recent developments Ms. Smith has described but still would like actual proof the community is receiving comparable value for the annual contribution. Chair Maxwell supports public transportation so long as it is sustainable and cost-effective. Although things seem to be moving in the right direction, Chair Maxwell would like another update from GMT before the FY 2020/2021 budget meetings commence this November.

Manager Schulz asked when GMT might make the decision whether to eliminate any of the daily trips. Ms. Smith said the City of Montpelier is conducting an analysis of its public transportation system so any decision will probably have to wait until this has been completed. Mr. Moore also would like to discuss this possibility with the Select Board members to determine if they have any suggestions. Board member Miller asked about the average ridership per route trip. Ms. Smith said the trip that begins in Montpelier at 6:25 a.m. has 7.56 average riders, the 7:22 a.m. trip has 5.03 riders, the 12:05 p.m. trip has 5.05 riders, the 4:30 trip has 9.18 riders, and the 5:30 p.m. trip has 2.73 riders. Mr. Moore said there has been some discussion of shifting the route times to fit better with riders' work schedules. Ms. Smith said one possibility is to move up the morning trips to better match Darn Tough Vermont's work shifts. Manager Schulz asked about the fees charged. Mr. Moore said they remain at \$2.00 per trip. Since an increase probably would result in a loss of ridership, there are no plans to change them at this time. Chair Maxwell thanked Mr. Moore and Ms. Smith for the valuable information and looks forward to hearing from them again later this fall.

- c. **Diane Scolaro, Norwich University Associate VP: Norwich University's Bicentennial Homecoming 2019.** Ms. Scolaro is joined tonight by Larry Rooney, who serves as Chief of Security for Norwich University (NU). She noted the Bicentennial Homecoming is now thirty-six (36) days away and based on current projections they expect 7,000 visitors to Northfield over the homecoming weekend (09/18/19-09/22/19). Ms. Scolaro addressed the Select Board last month (07/09/19) and she now has one change in her previous requests. Instead of closing of the south end of Central Street to through traffic starting Thursday night, she now asks that this start on Friday morning. A new request is to close off a section of Water Street adjacent to the NU campus for about forty-five (45) minutes on Friday night (09/20/19) before and during the fireworks show scheduled to start at 9:15 p.m. This is due to safety concerns about possible falling debris, etc. Ms. Scolaro noted NU Security has met with the Northfield emergency services in order to discuss logistics regarding traffic control, parking, emergency responses, etc. She said this event cannot go forward without a full partnership with the municipality and the Northfield community. Chair Maxwell said the current prediction is for about 3,000 cars coming into the community with only 1,500 available spaces at this time. He asked if there are plans to create addition parking spaces. Mr. Rooney said some off-campus parking areas have identified and NU will rent large directional signs to direct drivers to them.

Ms. Scolaro believes the situation will be under control as NU alumni have been contacted and informed where they should park, what shuttle bus services are available, etc. NU has contracted with a private traffic control company as well as with the Washington County Sheriff's Office to handle the influx of cars. There will be an ambulance unit based on Crescent Avenue over the weekend and participants have been asked to arrive a couple hours early for the 9:30 a.m. alumni parade on Saturday. Mr. Rooney said Washington County Sheriffs will be on site all day Friday and until 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, which is about a couple hours after the football game's conclusion. Chair Maxwell would like the sheriffs in place by 6:30 a.m. on Saturday so there won't be significant traffic congestion and parking problems. Ms. Scolaro said NU Security will put up "no parking" signs near the campus where on-street parking is not allowed. Chair Maxwell still is concerned about cars coming from the interstate backing up on Vermont Route 64. Board member Goslant would like the fireworks display well-advertised in advance as some residents have special concerns about the noise, etc. Ms. Scolaro will forward NU's communications plan to Manager Schulz and the Select Board members. She was present at last week's Farmers Market to commemorate the actual two-hundredth anniversary of Norwich University's founding and passed out a number of event fliers at that time. Ms. Scolaro also is willing to meet again with the Select Board members at their next meeting (08/27/19) and provide a further update.

Jeffrey Ott asked if there were any plans for shuttle buses to transport visitors to the downtown area so they can patronize local businesses. Ms. Scolaro said a number of local eateries will be providing their wares on campus over the weekend. She will check with the shuttle bus service if downtown stops are possible. Chair Maxwell then thanked Ms. Scolaro and Mr. Rooney for the information presented tonight and he looks forward to a future update.

V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

- a. **Police Chief John Helfant.** Chief Helfant said he has been on the job for about ten (10) months now and he wishes to thank Manager Schulz, the Select Board members, and the Northfield community for their support. Chief Helfant said for his first months here he focused his attention on internal matters, such as updating departmental equipment and policies. There also was a cleanout at the Northfield Police Department (NPD) garage, which had a lot of broken and/or outdated equipment, in order to create more workspace and storage areas. In addition, various rooms and offices at the Police Station were reorganized and unneeded items discarded. He said this was a real group effort. As for personnel matters, Chief Helfant said Levi Wiley has been hired as the sixth full-time NPD officer. Officer Wiley recently completed all his academy training and other certification and now is on active patrol duty.

Chief Helfant said the budgeted Tasers were ordered and arrived today. NPD Officer Logan Potskowski is a certified Taser Instructor so he will be training the other NPD officers in their usage. The officers should be carrying them soon and it will be good for them to have another non-lethal option when confronting a subject. Chief Helfant also ordered three (3) binocular lasers that can be used for traffic speed enforcement and for measuring distances at accident scenes. In addition, mobile data computers have been mounted in two (2) NPD cruisers. This is an important tool during traffic stops. In addition, due to a successful grant application, e-ticket equipment will be purchased and installed in the cruisers. Issuing paperless traffic tickets and warnings cuts down on traffic stop lengths and also reduces administrative costs. Paper tickets probably will be eliminated statewide in a couple years so NPD is ahead of the curve on this.

As for local criminal activities, there were a number a car break-ins this spring that led to the arrest of two juvenile suspects. In addition, another person was stealing catalytic converters all over Washington County but was arrested elsewhere. The source of the recent graffiti tagging has not been determined but Chief Helfant believes someone will speak up soon about this. There have been a number of speeding motorist complaints so speed display signs have been put up and the officers have been asked to be proactive on this.

Chief Helfant has been attending planning sessions for the Labor Day Weekend Festivities and the Norwich University Bicentennial Celebration. Board member Goslant asked if the NPD is ready for the schools restarting in a couple weeks. Chief Helfant plans to reach out to the public school administrators next week.

Board member Goslant said Chief Helfant seems to doing a good job of reducing overtime expense by using part-time officers when needed. Chief Helfant said only one of the part-time officers is available on a regular basis but there probably will be less need for part-timers now that the NPD has a full complement of full-time officers. Chair Maxwell thanked Chief Helfant for his report tonight and for all his good work.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **July 23, 2019 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goslant, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #03-20.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve Warrant #03-20 in the amount of \$445,914.52. Board member Goslant asked about a \$3,000 payment for "Unused Postage Inventory." Manager Schulz said the expense was to put additional funds on the postage machine. Board member Goslant would like this clarified on future warrants.

Board member Goslant noted Northfield Electric Department (NED) credits for numerous municipal facilities. Manager Schulz said this was related to the municipality's contract with the operators of the private solar farm on Bull Run. The agreement provides renewable energy credits to NED and reduces energy costs for municipality facilities. The wastewater treatment facility uses the most power so it receives the largest credit (\$9,000). Board member Goslant noted of the total warrant amount, about \$300,000 will be used to purchase power for NED. Board member Goodrich saw a \$500 water bill for the Common fountain. There had been discussion earlier of installing a recirculating system and she would like this revisited. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through July 28, 2019.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$99,996.10. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Approval of Special Town Meeting Warning: Tuesday, September 17, 2019 (Bond Authorization for Union Brook Road Reconstruction Project).** Manager Schulz said in the Select Board members' packets were documents related to the current plan to hold a Special Town Meeting to obtain voter authorization for \$1,700,000 in bond funds for the reconstruction of Union Brook Road. This includes the warning, the ballot wording, a Resolution Certificate, a Declaration of Official Intent, a Certificate of Posting, and a draft scope of work. Board member Miller said if the bond vote passes, new culverts would be installed this fall in anticipation of complete road reconstruction starting in late spring or early summer 2020. After the subbase work has been completed, four inches (4") of concrete pavement would be applied over 3.8 miles of Union Brook Road. Chair Maxwell asked if the dip in the road near the intersection with Hockman Hill Road would be addressed. Board member Miller said the work would be separate from the project scope of services. Manager Schulz confirmed the construction bid documents would list this work separately but he felt the \$1,700,000 bond amount should cover any additional expense for this. Board member Goodrich asked if bids for the construction phase of this project would be sent out prior to the bond vote. Manager Schulz said the bond vote would have to pass before contractors would be asked to submit bids. Board member Goodrich feels the length of the bond payback period (i.e. ten, fifteen, or twenty years) should be determined before the bond vote is taken. Manager Schulz said he is working with the bond bank now in determining the best repayment terms and should have this information before the Informational Hearing held on Tuesday, September 10, 2019. He added that warning articles for bond votes typically include the total bond amount but not the repayment period. Chair Maxwell would like to discuss the bond repayment options at the next regular meeting. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve and sign the Special Town Meeting Warning, to approve the ballot wording, approve the Resolution Certificate, approve the Declaration of Official Intent, and approve the Certificate of Posting. Mr. Ott asked what would happen if the project's construction bids come in higher than \$1,700,000. Manager Schulz said the Select Board would have to decide whether to reduce the scope of the project or find additional funding sources. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Reappointment of Town Health Officer and Deputy Health Officer.** Manager Schulz said the Northfield Town Health Officers serve three (3) years terms that will expire next month. He asked that Lawton Rutter and Meggan McCusker be reappointed as Health Officer and Deputy Health Officer (respectively). Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to reappoint Lawton Rutter as Health Officer and Meggan McCusker as Deputy Health Officer. Board member Goslant feel they both have been doing excellent jobs. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Union Brook Road Traffic Counter.** Board member Miller asked if there has been any update on installing the device that will measure the daily traffic on Union Brook Road. Manager Schulz will check with Dan Courier on this. Mr. Currier is the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) consultant who regularly assists the municipality with highway infrastructure matters.
- b. **Common Trash Containers.** Board member Goslant would like to see additional trash containers located on the Common. The ones there now usually overflow with trash over the weekend. Manager Schulz said more could be purchased and installed.
- c. **Water Street/Union Street Stormwater Project.** Board member Goslant has concerns about the recycled curb being installed on Union Street during this project. He is worried there might be damage to the sidewalk sweeper this winter if it is not set properly. Manager Schulz said he already has spoken to the contractor about adding some new curbing pieces.

- d. **Road Surface Management System (RSMS) Plan update.** Board member Goodrich asked about the status of the RSMS update. Board member Miller has been working with Mr. Courier on this and reported he asked to have current road conditions included in the calculus that determines road maintenance priorities. The updated plan should be available in the near future. Board member Goodrich would like to have this in hand before the budget meetings begin.
- e. **Appreciation for Northfield Gardeners.** Chair Maxwell would like to thank Sally Davidson, Christine Barnes, and other members of Northfield Gardeners who have done such an outstanding job on the flowerbeds on the Common. Their hard work is much appreciated.
- f. **“Walk to Dog River Park.”** Chair Maxwell thanked Bonnie Donahue and Lydia Petty for organizing the community event at the Dog River Park last Saturday. The event was well-attended and participants really seemed to enjoy the various activities and (especially) the free ice cream.

X. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

- a. **Main Street Bridge.** Manager Schulz said it is obvious the Main Street Bridge needs to be replaced. It was built in 1927 and last rehabilitated in the 1950s. VTrans has inspected it and rated its condition as “poor” and it is near the top of the regional priority list for replacement. VTrans has started the process by contacting Manager Schulz and seeking his input on various logistics, i.e. traffic flow, etc. Manager Schulz will return the questionnaire as soon as possible to hasten the process. He believes the bridge should be replaced within four (4) years. Board member Goslant asked if VTrans is aware of the proposal to remove the nearby Cross Brothers Dam. Manager Schulz is unsure but will forward this information.
- b. **East Street Sidewalk Project.** Manager Schulz said the contractor has begun this project by removing the old sidewalk and leveling the ground. The concrete should be poured within a couple weeks. The businesses there appear to be pleased with the progress. In addition to the sidewalk work, two old utility poles will be replaced, some conduit installed, and new light standards put in.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Sally Davidson: Recreation Committee update.** Ms. Davidson said a little more work needs to be done on the Memorial Park basketball courts. Manager Schulz has heard a number of compliments for the work done so far. Ms. Davidson said she attended a recent meeting with representatives from the local schools’ athletic teams. She anticipates a good working relationship when it comes to scheduling organized sports events at the municipal parks.

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 with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:10 p.m.

Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:55 p.m. No action was taken.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:56 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 27, 2019.