

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of August 27, 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, Jane Pekol (Northfield Energy Committee), Denise MacMartin (Northfield Energy Committee), Gail Hall (Northfield Energy Committee), Russ Barrett (Tree Warden/Conservation Commission), Sally Davidson (Recreation Committee), Mark Fournier, Steve Davis, Jeffrey Ott, Dave Hanna, Bonnie Hanna, Bethany Drum, 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. Jane Pekol, Northfield Energy Committee (NEC): Go! Vermont Grant, etc.**
Ms. Pekol said she and other NEC members just came from tonight's "Night on the Common" event where they provided information to attendees regarding their committee as well as energy issues in Northfield. About this time last year, even before the NEC was officially established, Ms. Pekol and other members of the then ad hoc committee Northfield's Energy Future worked with Efficiency Vermont to help residents with "Button Up" winterization and energy conservation efforts. NEC will do this again in coming months. Ms. Pekol said NEC also has been working with Green Mountain Transit (GMT) the past few months on better publicizing the weekday Northfield-Montpelier commuter bus service in order to increase its ridership. A public transportation forum was held in early April 2019 to discuss possible options for the commuter bus service, such as adjusting its schedule to better accommodate its current users and perhaps attract new ones. In mid-May 2019, NEC helped organize a "Ride the Bus to Work Week" that encouraged residents who had never used the commuter bus service to try it out. The event was quite successful and some valuable feedback was gathered. Ms. Pekol said NEC members also have been in contact with Norwich University (NU) regarding the possibility of NU contributing funds to construct a downtown sheltered bus stop that might include an informational kiosk, etc.

In addition, NEC has been working with Darn Tough Vermont (Cabot Hosiery) on a potential van pool program for its employees as well as the possibility of adjusting the weekday commuter bus schedule to better accommodate its work shifts. Ms. Pekol stated NEC recently received a \$500 grant from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTTrans) as part of its Go! Vermont initiative. The funds will be used to promote public transportation in Northfield and NEC members have researched similar efforts in other Vermont communities. For example, from the non-profit organization Net Zero Vermont they learned of "Hitching Post" programs in Montpelier and Worcester that reward drivers who pick up commuters at designated locations with vouchers for free coffee, etc. The current plan is to have an even bigger and better "Ride the Bus to Work" event later this year and distribute detailed survey forms that will help provide clear indications of local opinion regarding the future of public transportation in Northfield.

Gail Hall said NEC members have been reaching out to several local organizations regarding Northfield's energy concerns. For example, NEC worked with the Planning Commission with suggestions on updating the "Energy" section of the revised Town Plan that will be approved later this year. In addition, NEC member Sarah Wolfe has been attending meetings of the Northfield Utility Commissions. Chair Maxwell felt this was especially useful because the commission members included Northfield's leading experts on public energy. He also would like NEC members to keep in contact with Manager Schulz regarding any future projects so they can be funded in the next municipal budget. The first public meetings for the FY 2020/2021 municipal budget drafting will be held in a couple months so it would be good to have that information available beforehand.

Chair Maxwell then asked about the possibility of electric car charging stations in Northfield. Ms. Pekol said NU received funding to install two (2) stations on campus. There will be another opportunity next spring for the municipality to apply for state funding to install one in the downtown area. Chair Maxwell noted there also has been discussion of one at Darn Tough Vermont. He asked if NEC members would contact NU about its policies regarding its charging stations, i.e. are they available for public use, etc. Ms. Hall said the NEC would like to serve as a resource for the Select Board on such energy-related issues. Chair Maxwell then thanked the NEC members present tonight for the valuable information provided and their good work for the community.

- b. Russ Barrett, Northfield Conservation Commission: Emerald Ash Borer Update.** Mr. Barrett has served as Northfield's Tree Warden for several years and more recently has assumed leadership of the task force created to plan for when emerald ash borers migrate from neighboring communities to Northfield. Mr. Barrett said the task force received a \$2,000 state grant that will be used to create an inventory of ash trees along Northfield's roadways, cemeteries, and other public locations. The inventory has been underway for some time and is being conducted by two (2) paid interns and two (2) volunteers. About thirty-five (35) miles of roadside have been surveyed so far and about two thousand (2,000) ash trees have been catalogued. The survey will include the tree's GPS location, its size, overall condition, etc. Mr. Barrett said the survey started in the more urban parts of the community and should be completed later this year. When completed, the survey will be turned over to the municipality so it can be determined which trees on public lands or in roadside rights-of-way should be harvested and which should be protected through inoculation. Board member Goslant asked if any ash borers had been detected during the survey. Mr. Barrett said none had been found yet in Northfield. Given that ash borer infestation areas expand by about a mile per year, he didn't expect any here for at least a couple years. Of course, that could change overnight if infected wood were transported here in a pickup truck, etc. Chair Maxwell noted \$300 is in the current year budget for tree inoculation and this will be a regular budget item for the foreseeable future. Board member Goslant asked if any private property owners have started harvesting ash trees on their lands before the infestation hits Northfield. Mr. Barrett said he knows of a few and noted ash is a valuable lumber product. Chair Maxwell asked if there were any state grant funds available for tree removal or inoculation. Mr. Barrett said other states have set aside grant funds but Vermont hasn't yet. Board member Goslant asked if there were any ash trees on the Common. Mr. Barrett said there were two (2). Since both are in good shape, they would be likely candidates for inoculation when the time comes. Any inoculations should wait until the first ash borer has been detected in Northfield. Chair Maxwell thanked Mr. Barrett for his good work to date and the valuable information provided tonight.
- c. Mark Fournier: Select Board Meeting Procedures.** Mr. Fournier attended the last regular Select Board meeting (08/13/19) and was disappointed when Chair Maxwell attempted to prevent him from asking questions during a public participation presentation regarding plans for Norwich University's bicentennial celebration. He noted many presenters during scheduled public participation leave right after they are done so it is impractical to wait until unscheduled public participation at the end of the meeting to ask questions since the person(s) with the most information are gone. Chair Maxwell has reviewed the Board-approved public participation procedures and discerned brief comments from other members of the public are permissible if they are brief and pertinent to the matter under discussion. He said he merely was trying to limit such questioning in order to avoid prolonged back-and-forth conversations between members of the public. It is Board policy that questions raised during the meeting are to be addressed directly to the Select Board members. Chair Maxwell also was attempting to prevent the meeting from being unnecessarily drawn out. Mr. Fournier would like the Select Board members to consider the possibility of moving up on the agenda unscheduled public participation towards the beginning of the meeting.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **August 13, 2019 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #04-20.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve Warrant #04-20 in the amount of \$146,639.39. Board member Goodrich noted an invoice for tree trimming and asked where this was done. Manager Schulz will check on this. The Northfield Electric Department (NED) is paying for this so the trees must have been in close proximity to powerlines. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Warrant #04-20A.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve Warrant #04-20A in the amount of \$31,316.38. Manager Schulz noted this is a payment on an old RSMS bank note. The final installment for this loan will be paid next year. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through August 11, 2019.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$102,874.28. Board member Doney noted increases in payments for Northfield Police Department (NPD) overtime and part-time employees. Manager Schulz said this was due to full-time officers taking summer vacation time in recent weeks. Board member Doney asked about a \$395 payment for NPD "Grant Labor – Reimbursable." Manager Schulz said NPD officers participated in "Click It or Ticket" activities as part of the Vermont Governor's Highway Safety Program. The State will reimburse Northfield for this expense. Board member Goodrich asked if this payroll period included the final labor expenses for the municipal pool. Manager Schulz said the next biweekly payroll would include the last week of the pool operation. There also will be some post-closure payments to the Pool Director related to her submission of a pool season summery, etc. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Union Brook Road Reconstruction Project Bond Financing Options.** At the last regular meeting, the Select Board members approved and signed the warning for a Special Town Meeting to be held on Tuesday, September 17, 2019, in order to obtain voter authorization for general obligation bonds or notes not to exceed \$1,700,000 for "financing reconstruction of Union Brook Road." At that time, the Select Board members directed Manager Schulz to look into whether it would be preferable to finance the bond (should it be authorized by voters) over twenty (20) or thirty (30) years. It was felt Northfield residents should have this information before the vote is held. Manager Schulz discussed this with attorney J. Paul Giuliani, a recognized bond bank expert who regularly advises the municipality on such matters. Mr. Giuliani has recommended the twenty-year payment period as optimal and Manager Schulz concurs with this opinion for several reasons. For example, spreading the payments over thirty years would result in the municipality paying \$955,056 in interest, which would bring the total cost of the bond to \$2,655,056. Paying over twenty years would reduce the interest payments to \$557,480. In addition, the reconstructed roadway should provide about twenty years of good use and it would be best to match the bond repayment period to the service received. Manager Schulz noted a number of old bond notes will be retired over the next couple years so this is a good time to take on new debt. Chair Maxwell agrees such debt retirement makes this the time to address serious road concerns. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to finance the \$1,700,000 bank note for the reconstruction of Union Brook Road (if voter-authorized) over a twenty (20) year period as recommended by management. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Funding Application – Main Street Stormwater and CSO Abatement Program.** Manager Schulz said the Select Board members authorized him at a previous meeting (04/23/19) to "finalize an engineering services agreement with The Dufresne Group for the engineering phase of the South Main Street Stormwater/CSO Project..." He now is asking the Select Board members to approve and sign a funding application to the State Revolving Loan Program in order to obtain state funding for half the cost of the engineering services (\$76,800).

The engineering study would cover the entirety of the proposed project, including side street work on South Main Street, even though the scope of the initial construction phase will be limited (for budgetary reasons) to eliminating the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) located on East Street. Manager Schulz said the remainder of the project would be done at a later time when the financing has been worked out. It also is possible the utility and highway crews would be able to assist with various aspects of the project in order to reduce costs. Board member Goslant noted the intention was to divert untreated stormwater along South Main Street to the stormwater collection area behind the American Legion (i.e., Holland Place). He is concerned the facility might be overwhelmed by the additional volume. Manager Schulz said the project engineers believe the Holland Place facility has sufficient capacity to handle the additional stormwater. The engineering study would confirm this one way or another. Motion by Board member Miller, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve and sign the State Revolving Loan Program Funding Application in the amount of \$76,800 for the "Main Street Stormwater Separation and CSO Abatement Project." **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- c. **Development Review Board Appointment.** Manager Schulz said Steve Davis has indicated his interest in filling a long vacant position on the Development Review Board (DRB). Mr. Davis said he attended the July 25, 2019 DRB meeting as he was requesting a setback waiver. At that time, Zoning Administrator Mitch Osiecki informed him of the DRB vacancy and asked if Mr. Davis would be interested. Mr. Davis believes he would be a good addition to the DRB given his many years of experience as a building contractor. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to appoint Steve Davis to the Development Review Board. **Motion passed 5-0-0.** Chair Maxwell thanked Mr. Davis for his willingness to serve Northfield in this capacity.

VIII. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **East Street Paving Project.** Board member Doney asked about the status of this project as he had been hoping the new sidewalk would be in place for the Labor Day weekend. Manager Schulz said the contractor was delayed by conduit work but the concrete for the North Main Street section of the project should be poured this week.
- b. **Memorial Park Upgrades.** Board member Doney noted a lot of work has been done at Memorial Park this summer (i.e., refurbished basketball courts, new baseball dugouts, etc.) and he is grateful members of the public have treated the facilities in a respectful manner. There are plans for further improvements in the coming months.
- c. **Fire Station Roof Replacement Project.** Board member Doney noted when Iron Horse Roofing installed the new Fire Station roof recently, they neglected to install the snow guards needed to divert snow dumps away from the Police Station, etc. Manager Schulz said installing the snow guards was included in the work contract so he will contact Iron Horse Roofing about coming back to complete the work.
- d. **Water Street/Union Street Stormwater Project.** With the nearby Northfield schools reopening this week, Board member Doney would like better fencing around this project for safety reasons. Board member Goslant agreed with this and suggested closing off the area from through traffic. Mr. Fournier said the work on Union Street has been going on for some time and the contractors don't seem to be making much progress. Manager Schulz said a lot of stormwater diversion work has been completed to date and the restoration of the road and sidewalk was always scheduled for the end of the construction phase. Jeffrey Ott felt the sidewalk work should have been scheduled for completion before the start of the new school year.
- e. **Labor Day Weekend Festivities.** Board member Goslant asked how the setup for the big holiday weekend is progressing. Manager Schulz said the Highway crew is working long hours to get everything done in time. This includes cleaning up around the Common. The fountain will be cleaned out as part of this. Additional trash containers have been ordered for the Common that will remain in place after the holiday weekend. The street sweeper also will be in town later this week. Manager Schulz is confident all will come together in time.

- f. **Special Town Meeting Informational Meeting.** Chair Maxwell noted at the beginning of the next regular meeting on Tuesday, September 17, 2019 will be an informational meeting for the article to be voted on by Australian ballot at the Special Town Meeting to be held on Tuesday, September 17, 2019. Board member Miller said the traffic counters on Union Brook Road are in place and this and other relevant information will be available in time for this informational meeting. Bonnie Hanna lives on Hallstrom Road and would like to know the exact location where paving project will start. Board member Miller said the starting point would be near the dip in the road by the Hockman Hill intersection. The exact locations would be clarified at the informational meeting. Mr. Fournier suggested putting down temporary roadside stakes to designate the starting and ending points for the project. Manager Schulz said this could be done.

IX. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

- a. **Norwich University’s Bicentennial Homecoming.** Manager Schulz said there would be a final update on the preparations for this celebration at the next regular meeting. The fireworks permit application has been submitted and residents should expect a spectacular fireworks display on the night of Friday, September 20, 2019.
- b. **Solar Farm Projects.** Manager Schulz said there is a lot of local interested in privately-funded solar farms. This includes the proposed solar farm on Bone Hill, which has received a letter of support from the Northfield Planning Commission but remains in the early planning stages. We should see number of similar projects in the near future.
- c. **FY 2018/2019 Town Audit.** Manager Schulz noted the contracted financial auditors are working in the Municipal Building this week. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio should be able to provide a preliminary report at the next regular meeting.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED). There was none.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, 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 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:45 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 9:00 p.m. No action was taken.

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

The Board adjourned at 9:00 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 September 10, 2019.