

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**TOWN SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING**  
**Minutes of January 9, 2020**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, Kenneth W. Goslant (5:15 p.m.), and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Finance Director Laurie Baroffio, Shannon Palone (Pool Director), Dan Sivori, John Stevens, Charles Morse, Scott Neun, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLIEGENCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled):** None.

**IV. DISCUSSION**

- a. Town Meeting Warning Article Request: Mayo Healthcare Partial Property Tax Exemption.** Manager Schulz has been sent a letter from Mayo Healthcare Executive Director/Administrator Timothy McAdoo requesting that the Select Board put an article directly on the 2020 Town Meeting warning that would seek voter authorization for a three-year fifty percent (50%) local property tax exemption for Mayo Healthcare's land and premises on Richardson Avenue. Their existing partial property tax exemption was approved in 2016 and will expire at the end of the current fiscal year (06/30/20). After some discussion, the consensus of the Select Board members was that Mayo Healthcare should circulate a petition to get this article on the warning. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to request Mayo Healthcare submit a petition to have a partial property tax exemption article added to the 2020 Town Meeting warning. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

**V. BUDGET WORK SESSION**

- a. FY 2020/2021 Town Budget Recap.** Manager Schulz and Finance Director Laurie Baroffio had prepared a list (i.e., "Summary of Changes") of tentative changes to the initial budget presented to the Select Board members over a month ago. The list only includes items where there was a clear consensus of Select Board members in favor of making the change. In the operations and maintenance (O&M) budgets, there was a \$600 increase in the Board of Civil Authority budget in order to hire two (2) sign language interpreters for the open session of Town Meeting Day. This is required should a resident make the request.

*Board member Goslant arrived at this time.*

The "Dispatching" line item in both the Northfield Fire Department (NFD) and Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) budgets will be raised slightly to accommodate expected cost increases for this service in the next fiscal year. The health insurance line item for the Northfield Police Department (NPD) was reduced by \$20,080 due to NPD officers choosing to take the buyout and obtain health coverage elsewhere. In addition, the "Maintenance Contract" budget has been reduced from \$4,500 to \$500. As NPD Chief John Helfant explained at an earlier budget meeting (12/05/19), most of this line item was devoted to software maintenance for the NPD fingerprinting machine. However, the company that performed this service said this particular machine, which was purchased long ago with grant funds, had outdated software and couldn't be updated. The fingerprinting machine will be used as long as it is functional.

As agreed by Select Board members, the NAS "Personnel Services" budget will have pay rate increases for the EMTs. This will raise the "Part-Time" line item from \$52,000 to \$61,200, "Run Pay" from \$26,000 to \$28,500, and "Training Pay" from \$6,900 to \$7,960. The expense for "Non-Emergency Transfers" will be increased from \$6,000 to \$6,900 as there are indications neighboring ambulances services will raise their rates for this service.

In the Highway O&M budget, \$90,000 from the "Gravel/Stone" line item will be transferred to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget in order to address problems on certain backroads through gravel resurfacing. The budget for winter sand will be increased from \$60,000 to \$70,000 and the road salt budget will be raised from \$65,000 to \$70,000. The "Equipment Rental" budget will be raised from \$8,000 to \$14,000 so a second grader and a roller can be rented during the summer months. Board member Goslant doubts the need to rent another grader, noting the amount of dirt road in this town hasn't increased in recent years. Manager Schulz said the number of rainstorms last summer meant a limited time when the backroads could be graded. Public criticism of the condition of certain backroads led to renting a second grader in order to smooth the roads out before winter. The process appeared to work well. Chair Maxwell thought this might have been a one-time occurrence. He felt the new highway maintenance work schedule developed for this summer should eliminate the need to rush maintenance work at the end. After further discussion, the "Equipment Rental" line item was set at \$9,000. In the Grounds/Parks/ Facilities O&M budget, the new "Garden Supplies" line item was increased from \$500 to \$1,500.

In the NFD CIP budget, the "Building Improvements" account was increased from \$10,000 to \$16,000. Part of these funds will be used to install snow guards on the roof to divert snow dumps away from the nearby Police Station. In the Grounds/Parks/ Facilities CIP budget, the FY 2020/2021 addition to the "Dugouts" line item was increased from \$4,000 to \$5,000. It was felt the additional funds would ensure the dugouts upgrade project would be completed this summer. In the Recreation CIP budget, the "Holiday Enhancements" addition will be raised from \$1,000 to \$1,800. As previously indicated, there will be a new account in the Highway Department CIP budget for "Gravel Resurface" and the amount budgeted will be \$90,000. It was noted \$200,000 will be budgeted for gravel/stone in the Highway O&M and CIP budgets. This amount includes the \$35,000 for gravel/stone reserved for Mud Season operations.

In the NFD Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget, there appeared to be a Select Board consensus regarding the purchase of a new tanker truck during the next fiscal year. As a result, the \$40,000 new contribution for this will be removed and replaced with \$182,000 in borrowing for this purchase. Ms. Baroffio noted since NFD Chief Peter J. DeMasi said it would take him several months to develop the specifications for the new truck and for the vehicle to be constructed, it might be over a year before the new tanker is put into service and the initial payment made. Voter authorization to bond for this purchase will be on the 2020 Town Meeting warning but a bond authorization note might be needed before seeking the loan from a bond bank. Board member Doney said Chief DeMasi has been looking for a good used tanker truck for some time but he hasn't been able to find one with the proper dimensions, water capacity, and four-wheel drive. The tanker purchase price is projected at \$340,000 but this figure could come in a little lower based on the specifications, etc. After further discussion, the Select Board members postponed a final decision on the \$340,000 figure until more information from Chief DeMasi is made available.

In the NPD CEP budget, the amount to be added to the "Body Cameras" line item has been increased from \$0 to \$5,600, as the Select Board members accepted Chief John Helfant's recommendation to purchase seven (7) new body cameras in the next fiscal year. The FY 2020/2021 addition to the "Computers" CEP budget will increase from \$1,000 to \$7,000 as the NPD will buy new laptops in the next fiscal year and eliminate most desktop computers. The NPD officers will be able to take their computers out in the field which, Manager Schulz noted, will be very useful as the state is going to a paperless ticketing system. Due to the switch to laptop computers, the NPD "Mobile Data Computer" budget will be reduced from \$3,500 to \$0.

The Select Board members then discussed whether the NPD vehicle fleet should be three (3) or four (4). Board member Miller believes three (3) cruisers should be sufficient. Manager Schulz said the current policy is to have a fourth vehicle on hand in case another goes down. The extra vehicle also could be used by NPD officers travelling to and from training sessions. Board member Miller feels there seems to be a lot of additional expense for maintaining a backup vehicle. Manager Schulz believes the consensus at last year's budget meetings was to retain a fourth vehicle (2014 Ford Explorer) but not budget for its replacement.

Ms. Baroffio noted the 2017 Ford Explorer was totaled in an accident a couple months ago (11/28/19) so it will need to be replaced sooner than originally scheduled (FY 2022/2023). The insurance payment was \$14,000 and she will adjust the CIP budget accordingly. Chair Maxwell would like to keep the current policy of keeping the fourth vehicle as this has proved a prudent course given the recent accident. This appeared to be the consensus of the Select Board.

In the Grounds/Parks/Facilities CEP budget a new line item was created for the replacement of the 2011 half-ton truck now driven by the Maintenance Worker. The original thought was that the Maintenance Worker would receive the truck now driven by Highway Foreman Trent Tucker when Mr. Tucker got a replacement truck in FY 2024/2025. However, it was Select Board consensus that the Highway Foreman's truck should be sold or traded-in at that time. A less expensive (perhaps used) truck will be purchased for the Maintenance Worker when the 2011 half-ton truck needs to be replaced. \$2,000 will be the initial payment into this account. Chair Maxwell hopes the 2011 half-ton truck will have several years of useful service before it needs to be replaced. There was no objection to this action.

- b. Municipal Pool.** Manager Schulz said the Pool O&M budget will see a slight (2.3%) increase in FY 2020/2021. In addition to a pay raise for the Pool Director, there are small increases in the advertising, electricity, and facility supplies/maintenance budgets. The personnel costs will remain about the same due to increases over the past couple years in life guard hourly wages. Pool Director Shannon Palone had no suggested changes to the proposed O&M budget. Chair Maxwell asked about a supposed policy of charging the pool budget less than the standard rate for water and sewer use. Manager Schulz looked and found no policy about this. He said the pool budget is charged the same rate as other customers. Manager Schulz said the pool is half drained when closed for the summer season and then fully drained and refilled before its mid-June reopening. All the discarded water goes into the public sewer system so it is charged the standard sewer rate. Manager Schulz spoke to Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi about pool water lost to evaporation, spillage, etc. and he said it was roughly balanced out by the addition of summer rainwater. Charles Morse suggested installing a water meter at the pool to determine any water loss that doesn't go into the sewer system. Ms. Baroffio is concerned that might start a precedent for every Northfield resident who owns a private pool. Chair Maxwell would favor collecting water loss data in case a policy does need to be established. There were no more questions regarding the O&M budget.

Ms. Palone noted a local youth group would like to start a summer swim team that would use the pool during hours when it was closed to the general public. She felt that might require additional insurance coverage costs. Manager Schulz felt this probably would be covered under the municipality's current insurance policy.

Manager Schulz noted there were two items in the Pool CIP budget: pool paint/repair and skimmers replacement. The current balance in the "Paint/Repair Pool" account is \$38,271 with an additional \$7,930 to be added in FY 2020/2021. He said the pool has been inspected and found to be in overall good condition except for some decay at one end. It was thought a special epoxy should be able to fix the damage for between \$3,000 and \$4,000. Ms. Palone said repainting the pool, which is next scheduled for FY 2023/2024, is not an easy task as special paint is needed, etc. She was not pleased with the work done the last time. Board member Goslant felt a local contractor should be able to do a better job at a reasonable cost. Manager Schulz said the current plan is to spot paint the areas where repairs are done this year while still putting money aside for the next total repainting job.

The pool skimmer account now has a \$20,000 balance with an additional \$5,000 to be added in FY 2020/2021. The normal practice is to replace five (5) skimmers each year for a total cost of \$10,000. Ms. Palone believes additional skimmers might need to be replaced next summer based on a pre-pool opening inspection. There also are some drainage issues from a nearby hill that need to be addressed. Following a brief discussion of possible repairs needed at the pool house, the Select Board consensus was to increase the O&M line item for "Facility Supplies/Maintenance" from \$2,500 to \$3,000.

In the Pool CEP budget, there is a \$46,153 balance in the filter replacement account with \$7,500 to be added in FY 2020/2021. The estimated cost of the filter replacement is between \$80,000 and \$100,000 and is scheduled for FY 2024/2025. At Chair Maxwell's request, Manager Schulz and Superintendent DeMasi will obtain an updated cost estimate in order to ensure sufficient funds are being set aside for this. Ms. Palone would like a new pool vacuum ordered before the pool reopens. The vacuum costs about \$5,000 and the current balance in this account is \$6,026 so this shouldn't be a problem. Manager Schulz said there is a \$2,609.87 balance in the diving boards account with \$500 to be added in FY 2020/2021. The boards cost about \$2,400 each and Ms. Palone believes one of the two (2) diving boards needs to be replaced this year. She added that some of the four (4) diving board bases are in poor condition and might require replacement. The cost is about \$2,000 each. Chair Maxwell suggested creating a CEP account for this so all four (4) can be replaced (if needed) within the next three (3) to four (4) years. This proved to be the Select Board consensus and the initial amount for this account will be \$1,000. The same amount will be added to this account in future fiscal years. The CEP account for the two (2) lifeguard chairs has a \$3,400 balance and the estimated cost of replacing one chair is \$1,700. Ms. Palone said both chairs are in pretty good condition so we probably won't need to buy another for a few years.

Asked if she had any remaining concerns about the pool, Ms. Palone said there are some drainage and utility pipe issues in and around the pool that need to be addressed. Manager Schulz will discuss this with Superintendent DeMasi. Ms. Palone believes Superintendent DeMasi already is generally aware of the problem. It was noted the current Olympic-sized pool configuration was installed in 1985.

- c. Future Budget Meeting Schedule.** Chair Maxwell noted the next budget meeting will be held next Tuesday night (01/14/20) prior to the scheduled regular meeting. It was suggested that the starting time be moved up to 5:00 p.m. Chair Maxwell asked what should be discussed then. Manager Schulz noted that according to the Summary of Changes discussed earlier in the meeting, the proposed FY 2020/2021 budget would be \$380,880 higher than the previous fiscal year budget, which would be a 13.3% increase. He suggested the Select board members could review the proposed budget for any possible spending reductions that could be discussed next Tuesday night. Chair Maxwell said the only brushback tonight was regarding the estimated replacement cost of the NFD tanker truck. Ms. Baroffio believes there were some unresolved issues in the Highway CIP budget. Chair Maxwell said these matters need to be decided as soon as possible. The last budget meeting scheduled is on Thursday, January 16, 2020. The proposed budget and the Town Meeting warning are scheduled to be approved at the regular meeting of January 28, 2020. Board member Goodrich noted the current budget numbers do not include the various Australian Ballot spending articles, which this year might include ±\$10,000 for a new Economic Development Director position. Chair Maxwell asked the Select Board members to be prepared with suggestions on how the budget could be reduced. He will bring a detailed list of his own for consideration.

**VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled).** There was none.

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

The Board adjourned at 7:20 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 January 28, 2020.