

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
TOWN SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of January 28, 2020

- 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, Lydia Petty, Gail Hall (Northfield Energy Committee), Sally Davidson (Recreation Committee), Laura Hill-Eubanks (Planning Commission), Ruth Ruttenberg (Planning Commission/Northfield Conservation Commission), Deb Zuaro (Northfield Conservation Commission), Joe Zuaro, David Hanna, Bonnie Hanna, David Black, Bethany Drum, Jeff Ott, Scott Neun, Mark Fournier, 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. Lydia Petty: Permission to Hold Paine Mountain Trail Race.** Ms. Petty said this would be the third straight year this race would be held and the basic planning remains the same as in previous years. The race will be held on Saturday, July 11, 2020 and will start and finish at Norwich University's Shaw Outdoor Center. Arrangements will be made with Green Mountain Clinic so participants can use their parking lot again. If pre-registration indicates there will be more participants than now anticipated, Ms. Petty would work with the municipality on possible other parking sites in the vicinity. This might include a temporary lifting of the parking ban on Crescent Avenue. Chair Maxwell suggested she work with Manager Schulz on this should the need arise. He also commended Ms. Petty for helping organize this event and hoped the weather and other factors will be favorable for the trail race.
- b. Gail Hall: Informational Kiosk Update, etc.** Ms. Hall said at the last time she addressed the Select Board members on this matter (12/17/19) there were some questions she couldn't answer without further research. One involved whether the proposed location on the west side of Depot Square would lie within the railroad right-of-way. Ms. Hall looked into this and found the railroad right-of-way extends thirty feet (30') on either side of the track. The proposed location is well beyond that. There also were concerns regarding sight lines around the Common and whether drivers might be negatively affected. Some Norwich University (NU) engineers looked in to this and concluded the proposed dimensions for the kiosk would not make this a factor. Another question was whether zoning or other permits might be required. Ms. Hall reviewed this and found the kiosk's size fell below the threshold for permitting. In addition, since the site is already paved there are no concerns regarding stormwater runoff. Also, the soil was tested during the Common Rehabilitation Project in 2014 so there will be no ground toxins. Ms. Hall said a project timeline and preliminary budget has been developed. NU students from the School of Art and Architecture have resumed their class studies and have begun meeting with the project's advisory committee in order to discuss all aspects of the project. The NU students now will be working on five (5) separate design concepts that will be reduced by the committee to the two (2) that will be presented to the Select Board members at their regular meeting of February 11, 2020. After the Select Board members have expressed their preference, Ms. Hall will approach local businesses regarding the possibility of contributing to the project in return for advertising space on the kiosk, etc. Given that NU classes for this semester end in late April 2020, Ms. Hall said it was possible the kiosk's foundation could be installed this spring but the kiosk itself put into storage until classes resume in late August 2020. Board member Doney said the kiosk project seems to be progressing well. Board member Goodrich looked at the site plans and felt the proposed kiosk location might be too close to the Community Bank's customer drive-through facility. Ms. Hall said the current map wasn't exactly to scale and there is proper separation between the two.

Ms. Hall then said the Northfield Energy Committee (NEC) is planning to hold a Transportation Fair on Sunday, March 1, 2020 in the NU Plumley Armory. This would be held in conjunction with one of Northfield Farmers Market's scheduled indoor markets. This fair will be followed by another Transportation Week later in the spring. Both these events will be fully publicized in the coming weeks. Chair Maxwell then thanked Ms. Hall for the update on the Kiosk project and future NEC activities.

- c. **Sally Davidson: Recreation Committee Update.** Ms. Davidson said the Recreation Committee is still working on installing an ice rink for public skating but recent weather has not been cooperating. She then noted tickets now are being sold for the Recreation Committee's Winter Chicken Barbeque fundraiser, which will be held on Sunday, March 8, 2020 in Kenyon Hardware's parking lot. Two hundred (200) tickets for pre-ordered meals will be sold for \$15 each. The meals will consist of half a chicken, mostaccioli, coleslaw, roll, dessert, and a beverage and can be picked up between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. Members of the Recreation Committee and other volunteers will be selling the tickets over the next few weeks. Chair Maxwell thanked Ms. Davidson for the valuable information and wished her well with the chicken dinner tickets sale.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **January 9, 2020 (Budget Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **January 14, 2020 (Budget Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **January 14, 2020 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the minutes. Regarding the proposed relocation of the CERV Food Shelf and Clothing Shelf, Board member Goodrich wanted it clarified that CERV will pay for the purchase of Kent Street land to be used for additional parking. **Motion to approve the revised minutes passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **January 16, 2020 (Budget Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Board member Goslant abstaining.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Approval of Warrant #14-20.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve Warrant #14-20 in the amount of \$341,391.45. Board member Goodrich noted a payment for a training course for a Northfield Police Department (NPD) officer that was later refunded when the officer cancelled. She asked if Manager Schulz had any information about this. He will check with NPD Chief John Helfant to see what happened. Board member Goodrich asked about an invoice for "Equipment Rental." Manager Schulz said this was rental of the second grader this past fall. The invoice was very late in getting to the municipality. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through January 12, 2020.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$107,527.70. Chair Maxwell noted with this payroll period, only \$1,850.67 remains in the NPD overtime budget for the current fiscal year. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Northfield Town Plan.** Manager Schulz said the Select Board is scheduled to hold two (2) public hearings for the current draft of the revised Town Plan before it can be approved and put into effect. The first was held on January 14, 2020 and the second will be held February 11, 2020. At the first public hearing, there were a number of comments from Select Board members and the public suggesting changes to the current document. Manager Schulz would like to use this discussion tonight to suggest some possible revisions before the second public hearing. He hopes his suggestions might receive broad acceptance and hasten final approval of the document. For example, in the "Vision" statement on the first page, Manager Schulz would like to add wording that recognizes and protects a property owner's "ability to continue to reasonably develop and subdivide property in the rural areas of the community." In the Land Use chapter, Manager Schulz recommends slight revisions in sections related to "Resource Protection," Economic Development," and "Working Conservation and Open Space."

In the "Future Land Use Recommendations" section, Manager Schulz suggests revisions that would loosen restrictions on the number of dwellings per acre in areas designated as "Moderate Density" or "Rural Moderate." In the Town Plan's "Implementation Program" chapter, Manager Schulz recommends modifying some "Action Statements" that he felt would necessitate hiring additional municipal staff, remove authority from the Development Review Board (DRB) to review and approve development proposals, encourage establishment of conservation easements (which the majority of Select Board members has opposed), and advocate for hiring an Economic Development Director. Manager Schulz said these suggestions are based on comments from Select Board members and the public.

Ruth Ruttenberg serves on both the Planning Commission (PC) and Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC). She opposes removal of the sentence on page 3 that merely states Northfield values its natural resources and seeks ways to protect them. Manager Schulz said the sentence could be reinstated if reworded that way. PC Chair Laura Hill-Eubanks doesn't understand why Manager Schulz would like to include language in the "Land Use" chapter that would remove Cheney Farm from the Town Forest. Manager Schulz said he felt this was necessary so that the Water Department, which owns the property, would not face future restrictions in maintaining this community water source. Ms. Hill-Eubanks also noted the Town Plan was written with an eye to remove strict limits on minimum lot sizes in favor of establishing average population density goals in rural areas. Ms. Ruttenberg said the plan has some flexibility in order to recognize that higher rural density along roadsides should not be discouraged. Manager Schulz said it might be difficult to create zoning regulations that reflect such ambivalent language. Ms. Hill-Eubanks said the regulations could cite such factors as road access, etc. when setting development limits in certain parts of the community. She felt that was preferable to adhering to the current strict five (5) acre minimum lot size. Ms. Ruttenberg said flexible zoning is cutting edge but also increasingly popular in Vermont communities with sizable rural components. Clustering smaller parcels along a roadside would allow for the protection of larger forested parcels without road access. Ms. Ruttenberg said the plan tries to get away from regulating a minimum lot size in favor of establishing average density amounts in a rural area.

Ms. Hill-Eubanks said the plan's recommendation for adopting "a minimum rental housing code" came from public feedback decrying the number of student rental units in the downtown area that haven't been properly maintained by the landlords and give the surrounding neighborhood a shabby appearance. This also could be an attempt to protect historic structures from being allowed to deteriorate. Chair Maxwell said zoning regulations could be strengthened to allow for better housing code violation enforcement. As for creating a role for the NCC in evaluating new development proposals, this would be advisory only and not meant to threaten the DRB's decision-making ability. Ms. Hill-Eubanks only would like to create a formal process whereby NCC members are kept informed of potential developments so that they could provide input at the proper time.

Board member Goodrich said despite some of her concerns with the current draft, putting together a new Town Plan is a great undertaking and she appreciates the effort the PC members put into producing this document. Chair Maxwell believes the Select Board members will be providing their formal approval in the near future once some contentious issues have been resolved. Board member Miller asked if the Select Board members should be asked to adopt some or all of Manager Schulz's recommendations at this time. Chair Maxwell would like to hold off on this until the next public hearing, which will be held two (2) weeks from tonight.

- b. Approval of FY 2020/2021 Municipal Budget.** Manager Schulz said the Select Board members provided preliminary approval to municipal budget at their last budget meeting (01/16/20). However, that approval was based on the incorporation of revisions that had been agreed upon that evening. Now that a final document has been produced, he would like the Select Board members to provide formal approval tonight. He noted the budget would have total fund expenditures of \$4,770,090. Of this amount, \$3,305,000 would be paid from property tax revenue and the remaining \$1,465,090 from non-tax revenues. Manager Schulz noted the budget would result in a roughly eight cent (8¢) increase in the tax rate and doesn't call for increased staff hiring or use of prior year surplus funds. He added this amount doesn't include the expenditures in the petition articles to be voted on Town Meeting Day.

Chair Maxwell noted should the municipal budget as presented tonight be approved by voters on Town Meeting Day the estimated tax increase for a property valued at \$100,000 would be \$86.30. This would rise to \$129.45 for a \$150,000 parcel; \$172.60 for a \$200,000 parcel; \$215.75 for a \$250,000 parcel; and \$258.90 for a \$300,000 parcel. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve the FY 2020/2021 Municipal Budget as presented by management. Board member Miller asked if there had been any additional information available regarding the possibility of purchasing a replacement tanker truck for the Northfield Fire Department (NFD) at a lower cost than anticipated in the budget. Manager Schulz said he had nothing new. He noted the bond article for the tanker truck purchase specifies "an amount not exceeding..." for the amount to be borrowed for this purchase. Therefore, there is no restraint on the Select Board members' ability to approve purchasing a less expensive vehicle at a later time. Board member Goslant said a lot of people put much hard work in developing the proposed budget and some difficult cuts had to be made to help keep the tax rate down despite some major projects either recently completed or upcoming, i.e. Cox Brook Road repaving, Union Brook Road reconstruction, etc. He felt this budget will provide the Northfield community with fast and better service. Chair Maxwell also thanked all those who helped create the municipal budget now under consideration. He agreed it was a difficult task given the aforementioned major projects that had to be financed. Chair Maxwell also thanked persistent budget meeting attendee Elroy Hill for the needed sustenance (i.e. cookies) and good counsel he provided at these numerous meetings. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- c. Approval of 2020 Northfield Town Meeting Warning.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve and sign the 2020 Northfield Annual Town Meeting Warning. Board member Doney noted a new non-profit organization on the warning: Everyone Wins! Vermont. It was confirmed this organization petitioned to be added to the Northfield warning for the first time. It focuses on providing schoolchildren with mentors to improve their reading and writing abilities. Although the organization was formed in 2000, Everyone Wins! Vermont's Northfield Elementary School program started only a couple years ago. Chair Maxwell said he himself provided such mentoring services in the Waterbury school system several years ago. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. Union Brook Road Reconstruction Project - Engineering Services.** Manager Schulz said he and Board member Miller recently reviewed an engineering services proposal from DuBois & King for the Union Brook Road Reconstruction project. The proposal received included three (3) separate levels of engineering services to be provided for this project. The first level, called "Limited Consultation Services," would provide about eighty (80) hours of consultation services for about \$8,500. The next or "Intermediate" level would provide one hundred and forty (140) hours of consultation services for about \$15,800. This level would include assistance in drafting a project RFP, a review of solicited project bids, and numerous meetings with municipal employees and officials throughout the project timeframe. The third or "Comprehensive" level would provide a much higher amount of service for a payment in the range between \$150,000 and \$200,000. The proposal itself indicates the nature of this particular project probably would not require such extensive and constant interaction with the engineering staff. After reviewing the options, Manager Schulz and Board member Miller recommend the intermediate level as this would provide a good initial project overview, valuable recommendations as bid documents are developed, etc. They both considered the comprehensive approach to be too expensive and felt it also could lead to delays in the project timeframe. Manager Schulz and Board member Miller also recommend supplementing the intermediate level services with laboratory and field testing services for an additional \$3,000 and providing for an engineer to be on-site throughout the project for an additional \$4,000. Manager Schulz said he would move forward with his recommendations provided there are no objections. There were none. Manager Schulz said this consensus approval of the proposed engineering services is a good sign of faith to the public that this project is on track for completion this year. Board member Goslant asked if Highway Foreman Trent Tucker had any concerns about the project engineer being in Northfield throughout the project. Manager Schulz said he did not as this would limit Mr. Tucker's need to review the project's process himself. If Mr. Tucker had to be on scene all the time, this would impact his ability to do his own work. Board member Miller thought having the project engineer on site would ensure the work would be done to the approved specifications.

Jeffrey Ott asked if the Select Board members can guarantee the project will be completed this year. Chair Maxwell said this should be established when the project timeline is developed. This is an extensive and expensive project so it would be counter-productive to rush the process. Board member Miller said it took a little time to find a project engineer who could be hired at a reasonable price. Manager Schulz said there will be every attempt to fast track this project but he can provide no guarantee on the exact completion date due to a number of factors outside our control.

VIII. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. Highway Crew Kudos, etc.** Board member Doney would like to commend the Highway crew for the excellent work done on the roads recently despite recurring incidences of bad weather. Board member Goslant and Chair Maxwell echoed this sentiment, adding neither had received any complaint phone calls recently even though this time of year usually has problematic road conditions. Board member Doney said even though the Highway trucks appear a little dirty during the daytime, the crew washes them down thoroughly when going off-service each evening. The Town Mechanic also addresses any small problems encountered during the day so they can be fixed before they become major concerns.
- b. Main Street Potholes.** Board member Doney noted some potholes along Main Street he would like the Highway crew to fill with hot mix/cold patch when weather permits.
- c. Town Garage Renovations.** Board member Doney said the renovations are coming along well with new flooring installed recently. Board member Goodrich thanked Board member Doney for undertaking this responsibility in such a thorough manner.

IX. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. South Main Street Bump.** Manager Schulz said in the packets was a copy of his letter to the head of NU Construction Services asking that the road subsidence issue by Crawford Hall be scheduled for permanent repair this spring as previously promised.
- b. Replacement NPD Cruiser.** Manager Schulz said he signed the invoice for the new Ford Explorer that will replace the one totaled in an accident last November. The \$34,000 cost was a little lower than originally anticipated (\$40,000). The lower cost was achieved by going through the state bid process. Board member Goslant is concerned that buying from a non-local buyer might lead to delays when the vehicle has to be brought to the dealer for repairs. He would have preferred buying from a Central Vermont dealer. Manager Schulz said that probably would have added at least \$5,000 to the purchase price.
- c. Cross Brothers Dam Removal Project.** Manager Schulz said the Select Board members were last addressed over a year ago (10/23/18) by Brian T. Fitzgerald from the Vermont Dam Removal Task Force on the benefits of removing the deteriorating Cross Brothers Dam on the Dog River just east of the Main Street Bridge. These benefits included flood hazard mitigation, restoring natural fish passage along the river, etc. Lack of funding was the major reason this project has not progressed much before now but recently an engineer was hired to conduct a feasibility study. The engineer confirmed the dam removal would reduce the chance of downtown flooding during a major rainstorm event but the impact on the fish population would be minimal. The project costs are estimated at about \$450,000 but state and federal grant funds are available. There would be minimal cost to the municipality through in-kind services, etc. This matter will be on the next regular meeting agenda (02/11/20).
- d. Bull Run Dam Removal Project.** Manager Schulz said the Friends of the Winooski River and the State of Vermont have received the local permits for this project but an Act 250 review is still required. The disposal sites for the material removed from the riverbed still have not been specified. The Select Board members also have expressed concern about the impact of this project on the access bridge. The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) inspected the bridge and concluded it could handle the workload. This issue, however, can be revisited during the Act 250 review. Project costs are estimated at about \$450,000 and about half the funding has been obtained.

- e. **Town Garage Vehicle Lift.** Concerns about the condition and safety of the in-ground vehicle lift at the Town Garage were discussed during the recent budget meetings. An inspection by the company that sold the lift will be done soon to address these concerns.
- f. **Town Forest Stewardship Plan.** The Town Select Board approved this plan presented by NCC a few months ago (10/22/19). This approval was conditional on changes requested by the Select Board members being incorporated in the finalized plan. These revisions included removing references to conservation easements, allowing exceptions for “nuisance animals” to the general ban on trapping, and specifying a new NCC subcommittee focusing on Town Forest concerns would have only advisory status. Some Select Board members have inquired whether these requested changes were made. A comparison of the document presented at the October 22, 2019 meeting and the version now online on the NCC webpage confirmed these changes actually have been made.
- g. **Incoming Norwich University President.** Manager Schulz said he attended the press conference this morning when it was announced that Air Force Colonel Mark Anarumo had been selected by the NU Board of Trustees as the 24th President of Norwich University. Colonel Anarumo currently serves as a Permanent Professor and Department Head at the Center for Character and Leadership Development at the US Air Force Academy. He will assume the NU presidency in June 2020 upon the scheduled retirement of current NU President Richard W. Schneider.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Mark Fournier: Cox Brook Road Paving.** Mr. Fournier said although the rest of the paving job done last fall was good, there is a rough transition from old to new pavement by the covered bridges. Manager Schulz said he and Mr. Tucker will look into this.
- b. **Mark Fournier: NPD Cruiser Accident.** Mr. Fournier asked if information about the accident was available to the public. Manager Schulz said the Crash Report done at the time is public information. There is an ongoing outside investigation of the incident and he is unsure how much of the completed report will be available for public review because personnel issues will be involved.
- c. **Lydia Petty: Northfield Ridge + Rivers Open House.** Ms. Petty reported a public open house will be held on Thursday, January 30, 2020 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room located in the Brown Public Library (93 South Main Street) so Northfield residents can share their thoughts and ideas about connectivity and pedestrian access within the Dog River Valley. For more information and to take a survey, visit www.northfieldridgetorivers.info.

XI. 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 and contract with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:00 p.m.

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

The Board came out of executive session at 9:40 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 9:40 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 are subject to approval at the next regular Select Board meeting.