

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of August 11, 2020**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell (8:00 p.m.), Vice-Chair Julie H. Goodrich, Board members Nathaniel Miller, Charles Morse, and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Laura Hill-Eubanks (Chair, Planning Commission), Mark C. Anarumo (President, Norwich University), Daphne Larkin (Director of Media Relations & Community Affairs, Norwich University), Ron Lyon PE (DuBois & King), Carlos Pinkham (Northfield Community Development Network), Anne Buttmer, Tim Swatz, Jeff Ott, Steve Davis, Anthony Miller, Bob Keeley, Mark Fournier, Sharon Smith, Lea Hatch, Nelson Hoffman, Wally McLean, Angela McLean, Carolyn Stevens, Katherine Doherty, Gerard LaVarway, William Clements, Lydia Petty, and Kevin Reed.

As Chair Maxwell will be late to the meeting, Vice-Chair Goodrich will serve as Acting Chair. Acting Chair Goodrich called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. In keeping with Governor Phil Scott's COVID-19 "stay at home" directive, the meeting was held remotely.

II. PUBLIC HEARING

- a. Northfield Town Plan Update.** Manager Schulz said this will be the third public hearing held for the revised Northfield Town Plan. The previous ones were held on January 14, 2020 and February 11, 2020. Manager Schulz noted the Planning Commission hired a planning consultant with grant funds and labored for over two (2) years drafting the revised plan. The finalized version prepared for adoption tonight incorporates most (if not all) of the revisions suggested by the Select Board members and Northfield residents at the public hearings and other warned meetings. Manager Schulz said a letter from Northfield residents Wallace and Angela McLean was recently received that expressed concerns about minimum lot size requirements in the lower-density areas. The McLeans own several lots off Homewilde Lane and Freeman Road and don't want the minimum lot size raised from the current three (3) acres to five (5). Manager Schulz said the current draft of the Northfield Town Plan includes this as a suggestion only. This would not be mandated unless Northfield's Zoning regulations, which the Planning Commission soon will be updating, are revised to enforce this. Manager Schulz asked if any members of the public had any comments. There were none. He then asked if any of the Select Board members would like to speak on this matter. Board member Miller hopes the Select Board will be able to approve the document tonight and move on to the next stage. Board member Morse likes the proposed plan as is and believes it will serve Northfield well once it goes into effect. Board member Stevens also is pleased with the current draft. There being no other comments or questions, the public hearing closed at 7:05 p.m.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. Mark C. Anarumo, President, Norwich University.** Dr. Mark C. Anarumo USAF (Ret.) is Norwich University's twenty-fourth (24th) president, following the retirement of Dr. Richard W. Schneider after his twenty-seven (27) years of service. President Anarumo first thanked the Select Board members for allowing him the opportunity to address them and the Northfield community at this time. Since assuming his position on June 1, 2020, President Anarumo said he and his staff have been working twenty (20) hours per day, six (6) days a week to determine how to safely reopen the Norwich University (NU) campus for the fall semester in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. He has been particularly pleased with the input he received from NU faculty and staff. President Anarumo is comfortable with the current plan that will have a closed campus environment (for the time being) with dorm-residing NU students restricted to campus and unauthorized visitors excluded. The phased arrival of students began last week and all were tested for COVID-19. If the initial test is inconclusive, the student will be retested in seven (7) days in case the possible infection occurred either in transit or on arrival. Seven hundred (700) tests will be done each week, which he noted is a high level of testing. Temperature sensors will be located around campus to detect those who might have COVID-19 symptoms.

President Anarumo said of the over one thousand (1000) tests performed on the first wave of students, there were only three (3) positive tests for COVID-19. These students will be quarantined and retested in a few days. Anyone exposed to them also will be monitored separately. President Anarumo said he has been coordinating with state officials on NU's phased reopening and they have been very pleased with the policies and procedures that have been developed. They plan to use the NU plan as a model for other colleges and universities in Vermont. President Anarumo said it has been his policy from the beginning to share whatever information he has with the Northfield community so there would be no surprises as the finalized plan was developed. NU's Director of Media Relations & Community Affairs, Daphne Larkin, will be monitoring local social media to make sure any postings regarding this matter are both accurate and up-to-date. President Anarumo said the NU campus will remain closed for the time being so he (politely) asked Northfield residents to stay away while the phased arrival of students is taking place.

President Anarumo then discussed an off-campus incident that generated some local conversation. He said a house party was held at a private residence on the Crescent and young people were observed on the front lawn without face protection or social distancing. There were public fears that these could be newly-arrived NU students from states with high COVID-19 infection levels. President Anarumo looked into this and found that of the partygoers, only one-third were NU students and these individuals already had been in Northfield for some time. The homeowners, two NU students, were contacted by NU officials and asked in the future to observe COVID-19 restrictions. President Anarumo later spoke to them himself and they were very contrite and pledged full compliance in future. President Anarumo said the incident did not provide any risk to the community but it was bad optics during these difficult times.

President Anarumo said all NU students living off campus will be subject to regular health screenings and asked to sign and adhere to a strict code of conduct. He asked any community members who have any concerns about off-campus student behavior to contact NU officials at the email address ocstaff@norwich.edu so that the situation can be investigated and, if needed, rectified. President Anarumo would like to address the Select Board members again at their September 8, 2020 regular meeting. Fall semester classes will have begun by then and it might be possible to explore the possible reopening of the campus to the community. He added that the NU website has a webpage dedicated to COVID-19 updates and he asked residents to check it periodically.

Board member Morse thanked President Anarumo for being here tonight and for his efforts keep NU in control of the message. He felt constant communication with the community would be very important. Board member Morse also noted the Select Board members did have the ability to propose and approve ordinances that would have the force of law should the need develop. President Anarumo said he has tried to be very open with the community from the beginning so there is no miscommunication, etc. He has been very pro-active to prevent confusion about what's going on at the NU campus.

Board member Stevens thanked President Anarumo for being so forthright and honest with the Northfield community. President Anarumo said one public concern has been in regards to the recreational trail system on and around Paine Mountain that traverses both public land and NU property. President Anarumo said for the time being NU students will be barred from paths used by the public but that those paths used for Cadet training, etc. will be for the use of NU students only. Acting Chair Goodrich thanked President Anarumo for attending tonight and said he was welcome anytime.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. July 28, 2020 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Morse, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Approval of Warrant #03-21.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #03-21 in the amount of \$450,813.86. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through July 26, 2020.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$76,985.36. Board member Stevens is concerned the Northfield Police Department (NPD) has expended almost ten percent (10%) of its overtime budget after only one month. Manager Schulz said this was due to one full-time officer vacancy and the fact another full-time officer was recently deployed into the armed forces. There has been the attempt to fill shifts with part-time officers but the current NPD union contract says the full-time officers have first dibs on open slots. He added the new contract does allow for more flexibility than the old one but this provision was retained. He said the Select Board members should expect additional overtime expenses in coming months or at least until the vacant position is filled. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Approval and Adoption of Northfield Town Plan 2020-2028.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve and adopt the updated Northfield Town Plan. **Motion passed 4-0-0.** The plan next will go to the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) for its approval. Once this is granted, the Northfield Town Plan 2020-2028 will go into effect.
- b. **Approval of 2020-2021 Tax Rates (Homestead & Non-Resident).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Miller, to set the FY 2020/2021 Homestead Tax Rate at 2.5776. **Motion passed 4-0-0.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to set the FY 2020/2021 Non-Residential Tax Rate at 2.7804. **Motion passed 4-0-0.** The tax bills will go out early next week with the first installment due on Friday, September 18, 2020.
- c. **Union Brook Road Reconstruction Project.** Manager Schulz said the project's bid documents have been completed and the project RFP was sent out to trade publications and websites this afternoon. The pre-bid meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 19, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. at the worksite. Project bids are due by Monday, August 31, 2020 and Manager Schulz expects the Select Board to award the project later that week at a special meeting. He added that Project Engineer Ron Lyon (DuBois & King) put in a lot of hard work to get the bid package put together in such a timely manner. Mr. Lyon said sending the RFPs out definitely is a milestone in moving this project forward. The bid forms and supporting documents are available on the DuBois & King website and hardcopies will be available in the Municipal Building. Mr. Lyon has spoken to potential bidders about whether or not this is a good time to go out to bid on this project and has received mixed opinions. There should be more clarity about this after the pre-bid meeting. The bid form does include project scope alternatives that would put down an extra inch or two of additional pavement. There also is the option to delay parts of the project to a later time if the bid amounts come in too high. The project construction period is anticipated to be between September 15, 2020 and December 1, 2020 though it is possible some work would have to be postponed to next spring if there's an early winter, etc. We are hoping all the paving will be done this year. There also are five (5) problem areas that require special treatment and there will be every effort to address them this year.

Board member Morse feels it might be necessary to tear up some of the pavement and leave as a gravel road over the winter if the paving work cannot be completed in time. Mark Fournier lives on Union Brook Road and he would not have a problem with this if the road is suitably compacted. Jeff Ott lives on Bear Farm Road and he thinks the project scope has changed considerably from what was first proposed, which he thought was road reclamation using much of the existing pavement. Mr. Lyon said the soil borings done this spring indicated that reclamation wasn't feasible due to significant drainage problems at various locations. We are now looking at milling down the old pavement and installing a new layer of pavement. New culverts and underdrainage will be installed to address groundwater concerns. The aforementioned five problem areas will receive full road reconstruction. Mr. Fournier thinks just installing a new layer of pavement won't address the underlying problems and will not have lasting results. Mr. Lyon said most of the road doesn't require the special attention the problem areas do and the new layer of pavement will be sufficient. He noted that the cost of totally reconstructing the road would cost about \$1,000,000 per mile (\$4,000,000 in total) and this is far above the bond amount authorized by voters last year (\$1,700,000).

Board member Maxwell arrived at this time. He chose not to assume the Chair for the remainder of this meeting.

Mr. Lyon then thanked Manager Schulz, Highway Foreman Trent Tucker, and the Highway Subcommittee (Board members Miller and Stevens) for keeping this project moving forward in recent months. Board member Morse also thanked the residents of this and nearby roads for their patience. He believes they will be very pleased when the project has been completed.

- d. Municipal Roads Grants-In-Aid Program - Letter of Intent – Equipment Purchase.** Manager Schulz said the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) is strongly encouraging municipalities to address groundwater problems on their backroads. This municipality performed an inventory of problem roads in Northfield in order to be eligible for grant funds so new equipment can be purchased to accomplish this. ANR has provided a list of equipment that can be purchased with the grant funds along with maximum award amounts for each specific type of equipment. The municipality would provide a twenty percent (20%) local match amount. The listed equipment includes roller compactors, vehicle-mounted leaf blowers, hydroseeders, jumping-jack compactors, haybale shredders, etc. Manager Schulz spoke to Mr. Tucker about his preference and he recommended purchasing the leaf blower for a total cost of \$7,000. It would be used to clear out leaves and other debris from streets and especially culverts. Mr. Tucker felt the \$7,500 amount the ANR budgeted for a roller compactor would only fund a lesser, ineffective piece of machinery. He would rather continue to rent a much-better roller than own something that couldn't do the job properly. Board member Morse didn't like the idea of the municipality purchasing equipment that would blow debris from the road into people's yards, etc. Acting Chair Goodrich asked how culverts are cleaned out now. Manager Schulz said it usually requires a lot of time and manpower with manual use of a shovel. He noted the paperwork for this grant doesn't have to be submitted until Friday August 28, 2020 so this matter could be tabled and discussed at the next regular meeting (08/25/20). He would obtain more information about the listed equipment in the interim. There was no objection.

VIII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. Masks on VT Program.** Manager Schulz included in the packets an email from Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) on a state program that will provide free masks to Vermont communities. The number provided is twenty-five percent (25%) of the town's population. Manager Schulz doesn't know when the masks will arrive but will work out a fair distribution plan in the meanwhile.
- b. Cross Brother Dam Removal Project.** Manager Schulz reported the engineering RFP for this project has been awarded to DuBois & King. The Dam Removal Task Force is continuing to find outside funding for the construction phase of this project.
- c. Central Street Composting Concerns.** Manager Schulz has asked Health Officer Lawton Rutter and Deputy Health Officer Christopher Golder to look into reports of rodents being attracted to composting sites on Central Street. They haven't found the source of the problem yet and are asking residents with information to contact them.
- d. Northfield Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Permit Process.** Manager Schulz said he did respond in writing to ANR's requests for various upgrades at the WWTF before its permit can be renewed. Some of the requests are both difficult to meet and quite expensive. He hopes there might be some room for negotiation but ANR may be basing their new requirements on federal EPA standards.
- e. South Main Street Speeding.** Manager Schulz said a resident of lower South Main Street (where the speed limit lowers from 40 MPH to 30MPH) has complained about excessive traffic speed. This includes heavy trucks, automobiles, motorcycles, etc. Manager Schulz has asked NPD Chief John Helfant to investigate this. The radar speed sign has been located there but hasn't yet detected any problems. Acting Chair Goodrich noted drivers often slow down quickly when they see the radar sign ahead of them so this evidence might not be accurate. She suggested running radar from the end of the letter writer's driveway for better results. Manager Schulz will look into this.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Backroads Gravel Resurfacing.** Board member Miller asked if this work has begun. Manager Schulz said the gravel supplier will be delivering the material soon and the resurfacing will start early next week. Mr. Tucker has investigated and found he can rent the roller compactor on a daily basis.
- b. **Roadside Mowing.** Board member Maxwell asked if there has been progress on the roadside mowing. Manager Schulz said a part-time employee has been working on this. He will obtain for Board member Maxwell a list of the roadsides already done and the schedule for future work.
- c. **Road Grading.** Board member Maxwell asked if the grader has been out recently. Manager Schulz said it has been out daily and most recently worked on Loop Road. The only workday it did not go out last week was when there was steady rainfall all day.
- d. **Camp Wihakowi Dam Removal Project.** Board member Maxwell asked who's been monitoring the hauling of riverbed material to Winch Hill Road to ensure the municipality's conditions are being met. Manager Schulz said he and Mr. Tucker have been keeping their eyes on this along with the project engineer. The project engineer has been maintaining a log of truck trips and making sure the daily limit is not exceeded.
- e. **In-Person Select Board Meetings.** Board member Maxwell asked how the other Select Board members felt about attending in-person meetings in the Community Room. Board member Morse didn't have strong feelings either way but Board members Goodrich, Miller, and Stevens would prefer to keep meeting remotely. Board member Maxwell felt it might be good in the near future to install a setup in the Community Room that would allow for a combination of remote and in-person meetings. Acting Chair Goodrich asked if some residents felt excluded by remote-only meetings. Manager Schulz said it seems more residents did attend the in-person meetings than the recent remote-only meetings. Board member Maxwell has heard from residents who have had difficulty logging onto the remote meetings.
- f. **South Main Street Sidewalk Project.** Acting Chair Goodrich asked if this project is still scheduled to start on September 1, 2020. Manager Schulz confirmed it was. He has spoken to the contractor and the only impediment found was an old tree with roots encroaching on the sidewalk that will have to be trimmed or removed first.
- g. **Municipal Building Accessibility.** Acting Chair Goodrich asked if the Municipal Building was fully open. Manager Schulz said the front doors remain locked and visitors must contact the front desk employees by phone to be let in. He added the building employees remain uncomfortable with allowing unfettered access. Board member Maxwell suggested establishing an occupancy limit for the building and not letting anyone into the unlocked building once this has been exceeded.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Carlos Pinkham, Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN).** Mr. Pinkham has created a Human Resource Directory for the municipality as an NCDN project. He asked how it should be distributed. Manager Schulz thought NCDN was going to post a link to the document on Front Porch Forum. It also is possible for the directory to be hosted on the municipal website. Mr. Pinkham will coordinate with Manager Schulz on this.

XI. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Morse, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:45 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 25, 2020.