

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
NORTHFIELD COMMON REHABILITATION  
PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING  
Minutes of August 22, 2024**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board members Merry Shernock and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Emily Lewis (DuBois & King), Cait Campbell (DuBois & King), Sally Davidson, Richard Wobby, Gail Hall, Lydia Petty, Steve Davis, and Tammie Davis.

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m.

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

**III. DISCUSSION**

- a. Review of Conceptual Plans.** Ms. Campbell provided the other committee members with copies of the three (A,B, & C) design concepts for the proposed rehabilitation of the Town Common. These concepts are based on the feedback from the previous public meetings regarding how Northfield visualize the future appearance of the Town Common. Ms. Campbell stressed that these are not finalized design concepts but rather preliminary alternatives. She added that it is possible that a specific feature in one particular concept design could be combined with features in another concept design based on public feedback. Ms. Campbell said the three current design concepts are provided in order to present starkly different visions of how the Town Common could appear in future. She added that the one current feature that would be retained in its current location is the Civil War monument, which cannot be properly relocated.

The first design concept ("A") is a "traditional" approach that would maintain many of the current features on the Common but with significant upgrades in order to provide greater accessibility, etc. The water fountain would be kept in its current location but would be upgraded to make it more efficient and the water flowing through it would be recirculated. More accessible seating would be situated around the fountain area and wider paved pathways would be installed on the Common's interior to make it more accessible to those using wheelchairs, walkers, etc. As with the other two design concepts, the bus kiosk would be situated at the corner of Depot Square and Wall Street on Norwich University (NU) property next to the old armory building. Ms. Campbell added that the Common's footprint would not change with any of these design concepts. Board member Shernock thought it might be best to coordinate with the organizers of the Northfield Famerers Market in order to ensure that whatever new Common reconfiguration is selected would not interfere with their future operations. It was noted that each of the design concepts have details that could be fine-tuned at a later time.

The second design concept ("B") is designated as a "meander" approach and would have the traditional water fountain replaced with a natural stone fountain that would be surrounded by shrubs and movable seating. The fountain would have a narrow outlet stream that would be traversed by a small bridge and would finish at a rain garden. The Common's center would have an open lawn that would be surrounded by shade trees. There would be a nearby paved area with accessible chairs and tables. The inscribed bricks now located by the water fountain would be relocated here. Board member Shernock likes aspects of this design concept as it would provide some separation from the noisier activities now taking place on the Common from quiet spaces where people could relax, read, etc.

The third design concept (“C”) is designated as a “contemporary” approach and would focus on open spaces and would have a large grassy expanse where the water fountain is currently located. There also would be a raised stage at the northwest corner that would be used to create a performance area. There also would be nearby shade trees that would create quiet areas. The eastern end of the Common would have a large, paved area surrounded by shade trees. At the far eastern end would be an interactive water display with a traditional water fountain at its center. This could either be the current water fountain refurbished or an entirely new one. Surrounding the central fountain would be small nozzles or spigots that would shoot water into the air on command. The water display area would be surrounded by a seating wall that would separate this area from Main Street so that children using it don't wander into the streets. This wall could have a mural painted on it by local artists, etc. In addition, the middle of the Common by the Civil War monument would have accessible tables and chairs. Steve Davis asked how much it would cost to maintain the interactive water display feature in future. Ms. Lewis said that detail would be figured out later should this design feature go forward. A water recycler would be included with any water display feature, whether the traditional water fountain or more modern concepts. The water used would be kept clean through chlorination and other methods used in public pools. The water would be turned off in the winter so this open area could be used for the annual Christmas tree display on the eastern end of the Common. Board member Shernock noted that the open spaces could be used for other winter activities such as show sculptures, etc. She also felt installing a permanent gazebo in the open space would limit how the area could be used in future. As for how the design concepts should be presented to public, Board member Shernock would like the new curb cuts better indicated on the display versions.

- b. Labor Day Weekend Display.** Ms. Campbell said large copies of the three design concepts would be on display in a booth on the Common over the Labor Day Weekend (Saturday and Sunday). The booth will be staffed by her and Ms. Lewis as well as volunteers from this committee. Written survey forms will be available at the booth and there also will be an online version available starting Saturday, August 31, 2024. The online survey will be available for one week, ending on Saturday, September 7, 2024.
- c. Next Steps.** The survey feedback will be evaluated and discussed when the committee holds its next meeting (09/12/24). The committee members then will start deciding on a preferred final design concept. Ms. Lewis said the survey would ask the respondents about which features they favor from all three alternative concepts rather than just asking them to choose concept design A, B, or C. The committee will probably hold at least two meetings before presenting the final design concept to the Select Board members at their first meeting in October (10/08/24). Once the preferred design features have been chosen, it will be possible to start developing cost estimates for the construction phase of this project. Board member Stevens asked if the surveys of the Depot Square businesses have been completed. Ms. Campbell said it had and the results will be forwarded to the committee members. She doesn't have the exact figures on hand but believes at least half of the business and/or property owners responded to the survey.

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

**V. ADJOURNMENT.** Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes are subject to approval at the next committee meeting.