

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING  
Minutes of October 25, 2022**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Julie H. Goodrich, Charles Morse, Lydia Petty, and John Stevens (absent). Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Tom Davis (Economic Development Director), Dexter Lefavour, Mark Fournier, Donald Doyon, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Those persons present were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The remote contingent also participated as much as possible.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** Manager Schulz said Donald Smith had asked to be put on the agenda under "Public Participation" but Mr. Smith contacted Manager Schulz this afternoon to say that he would not be attending tonight.

- IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED: None.**

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. October 11, 2022 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve the minutes. Board member Goodrich wanted it included in the minutes that she asked Mr. Smith in future to document any concerns he has about municipal operations and submit them in writing. Board member Petty noted that in the discussion of the revised purchasing policy, "Competitive Purchasing" should be "Cooperative Purchasing." **Motion passed 3-0-1, with Chair Maxwell abstaining.**

**VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. Approval of Warrant #08-23.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve Warrant #08-23 in the amount of \$67,996.58. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. Approval of Warrant #08-23A.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve Warrant #08-23A in the amount of 22,114.74. Manager Schulz explained that this was a payment on an old bank note that financed Depot Square roadway improvements. There are another ten (10) years of payments due on this bank note. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. Approval of Biweekly Payroll through October 16, 2022.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$106,590.29. Board member Goodrich is concerned that about two-thirds of the Northfield Police Department (NPD) FY2022-2023 overtime budget (\$40,000) has been expended even though we are only about one-third into the current fiscal year. Manager Schulz previously had warned the Select Board members that NPD overtime expenses would be increasing in the short term due to staff shortages. However, a new full-time officer (Aaron Cochran) was hired this past week and that should help alleviate the problem. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

**VII. SELECT BOARD**

- a. DRAFT Purchasing Policy Revision.** The possible revision of the current municipal purchasing policy was discussed at the previous meeting (10/11/22) and the Select Board members made numerous suggestions. These were incorporated to the revised draft document now provided along with a second document that indicates where the changes were made. Some minor misspellings were corrected along with changing the minimum number of quotes to be solicited from two (2) to three (3). In addition, "Invitation for Bid" has been changed to "Request for Proposal," as that has been traditional wording here in Northfield.

The purchasing policy now includes the sentence, "The Town is not required to award a contract to the lowest bidder." This will further clarify that the municipality can go with a higher bid amount if it is felt that bidder better meets municipal expectations regarding quality of goods and/or services. In addition, the revised document makes it clear that when a Department Head decides not to go with the lowest bidder, the written justification would go to the Town Manager and/or the Select Board (not the bidders). The reference to a "Bid Waiver Form" has been removed as that document does not exist and probably is unnecessary. Lastly, the section on "Disposition of Real Property" has been deleted as it was felt that should be a separate policy from the purchasing policy.

Manager Schulz has forwarded the revised policy to the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) for a legal review, which is standard practice when new/revised policies or ordinances are presented to the Select Board. Board member Morse felt this meant any approval of the revised policy should be tabled until the next meeting (11/08/22), by which time the legal review should be completed. As for any additional revisions, Chair Maxwell believes that the Town Manager, not the Select Board members, should have the authority to approve bid proposals provided the amount to be expended is within the approved budget.

- b. Select Board Retreat Follow-up: Goals Summary.** Chair Maxwell said he has not yet had the opportunity to meet with Manager Schulz to finalize the list of immediate, short-, and long-term goals discussed at the Select Board Retreat (09/01/22). This matter also will be on the next agenda.
- c. Northfield Snowmobilers Inc. (NSI) Trail Requests (Well Field, Fairground Road, and South View Road).** Manager Schulz said NSI has made its annual request for permission to connect its trail system by allowing snowmobile use through the Well Field and also along short sections of Fairground Road and South View Road. A memorandum from Acting Utility Superintendent James Russo lists the conditions for allowing the trail to go through the Well Field. These conditions have been followed in the past with no problems. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Petty, to permit snowmobile use through the Well Field and along sections of Fairground Road and South View Road. Although this request has gone to the Select Board members (and to the Village Trustees prior to merger) for several years, Board member Morse feels Manager Schulz should have the authority to approve this on his own in future. The Select Board members should only become involved if there is an appeal of his decision. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- d. Main Street Waterline and Tank Replacement: Authorization to Sign Service Agreement and Submit Grant Funding Application.** Manager Schulz said the waterlines along Main Street were installed over one hundred (100) years ago and definitely are in need of replacement. In addition, the underground water storage tanks on Cheney Farm also need significant upgrades. He believes the State of Vermont will provide most if not all of the funding for these projects but both need to be engineered and made "shovel ready" before this can be confirmed. The first step is to sign the engineering agreement for this project (with The Dufresne Group). Manager Schulz now is asking for the Select Board members to authorize him to sign the agreement and then apply for state grant funds. The estimated costs of the two (2) projects are about three million dollars (\$3,000,000) each for a total of six million dollars (\$6,000,000). Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Petty, to authorize Manager Schulz to sign the service agreement and to submit the application for grant funds. Board member Morse asked if the work to be done included upgrades along Prospect Street. Manager Schulz said the project target area would include everything from Main Street to the Cheney Farm Reservoirs. Board member Morse said the Cheney Farm Reservoirs were relined with rubber in 2002 and this improvement was not expected to last longer than twenty (20) years. He noted the above-ground Garvey Hill Reservoir was built about a year later to provide increased water storage capacity.

Board member Morse then asked why some figures in the service agreement were shaded. Manager Schulz said some of the cost estimates in the agreement are not finalized. Any changes submitted by the engineer would have to be approved by both the State and the municipality. Chair Maxwell asked how confident Manager Schulz was that significant state funding would become available for these projects. Manager Schulz said he is certain that the state will cover at least half the total costs but it is more likely that the final amount of state grant funding will be closer to ninety percent (90%) of total project costs. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

#### VIII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Northfield Housing Task Force.** Manager Schulz said the task force will have its initial meeting this coming Friday (10/28/22) in the Municipal Building at 2:00 p.m. There will be discussions of the task force's mission statement, its final membership composition, the timing and frequency of future meetings, etc. (*Note: this meeting later was postponed to Friday, November 4, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.*)
- b. **E-911 Coordinator.** At the last meeting, current E-911 Coordinator Lawton Rutter spoke about the increased workload for this position and how it does take time away from his other duties as Ambulance Chief and Health Officer. He noted some upcoming address renumbering projects on Fairway Drive and Jarvis Lane that might be time consuming. Manager Schulz has spoken to Zoning Administrator Mitch Osiecki and he has agreed to assume this role, which he already holds in his own hometown (Middlesex). His appointment will be on the next meeting agenda.
- c. **NPD Union Contract.** Manager Schulz said the new NPD union contract still is being negotiated. This has been a long and difficult process. The next contract negotiation meeting will be held tomorrow morning.
- d. **FY 2023/2024 Municipal Budget.** Manager Schulz said the draft budget is in its initial stages as there have been numerous meetings with the various Department Heads. Due to expected increased material and personnel costs in the next fiscal year, we probably will be looking at a property tax rate increase. Once the initial draft budget has been completed, it will be forwarded to the Budget & Financial Review Subcommittee members for their perusal.
- e. **Northfield Falls Pedestrian Safety Study.** Manager Schulz said the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) has completed its onsite survey of the area and next will be drafting its study with recommendations. Once the study has been completed, the Select Board members will review its findings at a public meeting that will be well-advertised in order to get the participation and feedback of Northfield Falls residents. Since the study area is a state highway, it will be forwarded to the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) with recommendations for action. Chair Maxwell noted there is a crosswalk sign near the junction of Vermont Route 12 and Cox Brook Road but it seems VTrans hasn't line striped the crossing for some time. There have been suggestions of installing a flashing pedestrian sign there like the ones on Depot Square and by Norwich University. Manager Schulz said that was a possibility should the CVRPC study include this as a recommendation.
- f. **Vermont Route 64 Paving Project.** Manager Schulz has been informed VTrans is planning to repave Vermont Route 64 next summer. He will provide more information to Select Board members and the public when it becomes available.

#### IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Recent NPD Drug Bust.** Board member Morse commended NPD officers Karie Tucker, Aaron Cochran, and Chief John Helfant for coordinating with other law enforcement agencies in executing a search warrant at a Colson Road residence. 43 grams of crack cocaine, 128 grams of Fentanyl, 93 bags of Fentanyl, two (2) firearms, and \$6,827 in cash were seized. Three (3) suspects were arrested on scene and will be charged with various felonies and misdemeanors.

- b. **Possible Road Salt Shortage.** Board member Morse noted a VLCT notice in the packets that warned a potential rail strike might disrupt deliveries of road salt this winter. He asked if local preparations are being made. Manager Schulz said Highway Foreman Trent Tucker has been in contact with regional road salt suppliers. We also are looking over the border to New York State as Vermont-based suppliers may not be able to provide all we will need this winter. Chair Maxwell would like the Select Board members kept apprised of any new developments.
- c. **“Trunk or Treat” on the Common.** Chair Maxwell noted that the Northfield Activity Group will be sponsoring a Halloween candy distribution on the south side of Depot Square next Monday night (10/31/22) from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The south side of Depot Square will be closed off to traffic starting at 3:00 p.m. in order to ensure the safety of the candy suppliers and participating children.

**X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)**

- a. **Mark Fournier: NPD Overtime Expense.** Mr. Fournier felt with the ongoing concern about the police overtime budget, perhaps there should be a serious discussion of whether Northfield should have 24/7 police coverage or if there should be more reliance on Vermont State Police for overnight coverage. Chair Maxwell remembers a full discussion of this at an Annual Town Meeting about seven (7) years ago. At the time, there was a strong public preference for keeping the current level of police coverage. Chair Maxwell that this question comes up frequently amongst Select Board members, especially when the NPD budget for the next fiscal year is discussed. Board member Goodrich noted that despite worries, NPD overtime expenses did come (barely) within budget during the last fiscal year.
- b. **Dexter Lefavour, Candidate for Vermont State Senate.** Mr. Lefavour is a Middlesex resident now running to serve as one of the State Senators for Washington County. He is a civil engineer, farmer, professional skier at Sugarbush, and an adjunct teacher at Norwich University. Mr. Lefavour said he does have Northfield connections as he lived here for several years starting in 1986 when he was first hired by the engineering firm DuBois & King. He added that he is running for office because he wanted to make Vermont a more affordable place to live. He also would like to reduce the toxic partisan atmosphere in Montpelier by seeking sensible, common-sense solutions to the various problems now facing Vermonters. He thanked the Select Board members for allowing him to address the voters tonight and added that he truly appreciates the level of public service provided by local legislators in Vermont. Chair Maxwell thanked Mr. Lefavour for the kind words.

**XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Petty, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)], in order to discuss a legal matter and a personnel issue with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 7:53 p.m.

Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Petty, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 8:52 p.m. No action was taken.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Petty, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:54 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 Select Board regular meeting of November 8, 2022.