

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of May 10, 2022**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell (absent), Vice-Chair Julie H. Goodrich, Board members Charles Morse, Lydia Petty, and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Mitch Osiecki (Zoning Administrator), Gary LaRoche (Vermont Agency of Transportation), Melissa Rutter (Vermont Agency of Transportation), Alan Legacy (Vermont Agency of Transportation), Steve Davis, Carolyn Stevens, Aimee Poisson, Tyler Gregory, Erin Hicks-Tibbles, Donald Doyon, Chris Bradley, Cassie Morse, and Elroy Hill.

Acting Chair Goodrich called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Participants had the option of attending the meeting either in person or remotely through Go-to-Meeting.

- 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.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. Gary LaRoche, Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) Structures Project Manager: Main Street Bridge Replacement.** Mr. LaRoche said there had been some questions at a previous Select Board meeting about utility relocation during this project as well as the financial obligations of the (public and private) utility company owners. With him tonight are VTrans Utility Coordination Supervisor Melissa Rutter and Alan Legacy, who is the Utility Coordinator for this particular project. Mr. Legacy said this will be a fairly complex utility relocation due to the number of aerial lines adjacent to the project area. In order to facilitate construction, an underground concrete duct bank will be installed under North Main Street just south of the bridge. This will house power lines (Northfield Electric Department) and communication lines (TDS Telecom, Trans-Video, and First Light). Board member Morse asked what would happen if additional lines needed to be installed in the future. Mr. Legacy said there would be spare space in the ducts for future needs. Board member Morse noted TDS Telecom is embarking on a fiber optic upgrade project this summer and asked if this utility relocation would accommodate this. Mr. Legacy said it would. VTrans already has been in contact with TDS Telecom and will meet with them again should they have any concerns about this. Ms. Rutter said VTrans should be able to work with them to minimize the impact of this relocation. Mr. Legacy then noted that some of the current utility poles in the project area will be moved further away from the construction site. This includes a putting in new pole near the Dollar General.

Manager Schulz said this presentation is an update only at this time. Any decisions regarding utility relocation will be part of a separate agreement focusing on this alone. This would be different from the standard project agreement that the Select Board members will be asked to approve later in this meeting. Mr. Legacy confirmed this and said the agreement regarding utility relocation will be drafted only after VTrans has met on site with all the interested parties. The utility companies would be contacted afterwards to seek their agreement to the document's provisions, etc. Ms. Rutter said agreements also would need to be made with adjacent property owners for rights-of-way, etc. Board member Morse asked if most of the overhead utility lines located at the intersection of Northfield Main Street and East Street (near Subway®) would be buried. Mr. Legacy said most of the power lines would be but not the communication lines. Ms. Rutter said for economic reasons, the underground burying of utility lines is based on necessity and not for aesthetic purposes. Mr. Legacy noted this is a unique situation since the municipality itself owns the power lines. As this is considered part of the participating cost of the project, this expense will be part of the overall project budget, of which the municipality is responsible for only five percent. The amount that the communication companies will have to pay for the relocation of their lines depends on such factors as pre-existing easement agreements, etc. With the assistance of the municipality, VTrans will investigate the easement situation in the construction area. Board member Morse asked if the communication companies would be able to bury their current lines in the new underground conduit. Mr. Legacy said that was possible but they probably would install new lines in order to shorten the service outage time during relocation. Since the underground conduit is required for this project, the communications companies would not be charged for burying their lines. As indicated earlier, the amount they would be charged depends on the easements they currently have.

Acting Chair Goodrich felt it was appropriate for her to mention at this time that her husband George Goodrich III co-owns Trans-Video with his sister Jill. She added Mr. Goodrich has spoken to VTrans about relocating their communications lines and he had some suggestions that might lessen their share of the expense. Mr. Legacy said this was a positive interaction and has no objections to Mr. Goodrich's suggestions provided he has the easements in place. The final decision regarding how Trans-Video lines would be relocated would be made by Trans-Video. Acting Chair Goodrich asked if the utility relocation part of the project could be started before construction phase. Mr. Legacy confirmed it could.

As for the project's Standard Finance and Maintenance Agreement that is subject to approval later in the meeting, Mr. LaRoche said this was a standard agreement that allocates costs and responsibilities for the Main Street Bridge Replacement Project. This agreement would allow VTrans to act on behalf of the municipality on specified matters and also commits the municipality to provide funding for five percent of the total project costs. The balance would be paid for by the federal government (80%) and the State of Vermont (15%). Since it would subsequently own the new bridge, the municipality would assume responsibility for its future maintenance. Under the proposed agreement, VTrans would be responsible for obtaining all the required permits for this project and to work with the municipality regarding traffic detours during the bridge closure. As indicated earlier, VTrans would be responsible for negotiating with privately-owned utility companies regarding relocation of their lines. Mr. LaRoche said the municipality would be solely responsible for relocating and disposing any contaminated soils discovered in the construction area. Manager Schulz asked if any significant amounts have been found to date. Mr. LaRoche said not yet. He added that VTrans can provide a separate presentation on this matter to the Select Board members if they prefer. Board member Morse noted there is a service station located near the construction site so some soil contamination is to be expected. Mr. LaRoche said a better determination of the actual amount would be available further into the project. Board member Morse asked if this information would be available before the Select Board starts its budget process (mid-November) for the next fiscal year so that the costs can be included in the municipal budget. Mr. LaRoche said a rough estimate should be available by then. The actual cost will depend on many factors such as the concentration of contaminants, etc. He can have a hazardous materials specialist attend a future meeting to provide more information on this. Manager Schulz said this expense is probably unavoidable. Mr. LaRoche added that the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) would regulate this process. Manager Schulz noted that other municipalities have been able to obtain federal funds (EPA) to cover at least part of this expense. Mr. LaRoche said that was possible and their expert on this will assist Northfield throughout the process. Any contaminated soil would need to be covered with a tarp prior to its removal and disposal but this should not delay other work on the project. Manager Schulz asked when the preliminary plans for this project would be ready for Select Board review, discussion, etc. Mr. LaRoche said they should be ready in about six weeks after some internal review. Acting Chair Goodrich and the other Board members then thanked the VTrans representatives for tonight's presentation.

V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

- a. Mitch Osiecki, Zoning Administrator.** Mr. Osiecki said he was mostly here tonight to discuss the possibility of updating Northfield's zoning permit fees. He has served as Northfield's Zoning Administrator for about three years now and has become aware over this time that the local fees have not been updated for several years and are not in keeping with what other Vermont municipalities charge for such services. Mr. Osiecki said the amounts we charge for zoning hearings are quite low and often do not cover the expense of newspaper notices, sending out certified mail to abutting property owners, etc. Board member Morse noted that the current fees are printed in the annual Town Report and it might be confusing to change them from the published amounts. Perhaps this matter should be postponed until the budget process for the next fiscal year begins so the new amounts can be printed in the next Town Report. It was noted that the fees the Northfield Ambulance (NAS) Service charges for various services also are published in the Town Report and this has not prevented the Select Board members from making mid-year adjustments when there was a recommendation to do so. Mr. Osiecki will present a full proposal to the Select Board members at a future meeting so that the revised fees can be fully discussed and approved.

Acting Chair Goodrich asked if Mr. Osiecki has been keeping busy recently. Mr. Osiecki confirmed there has been an increase in zoning permit applications and other requests. As indicated in his First Quarter Report previously forwarded to the Select Board members, during the first three months of 2022 he processed seventeen zoning permits, three sign permits, two driveway permits, and provided one Letter of Compliance. Things have been even more busy over the past month. Mr. Osiecki added that the Planning Commission has begun revising and updating the local zoning regulations and he will provide periodic updates to the Select Board members as the process continues.

VI. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

- a. **Liquor License Renewal: Northfield Country Club (3rd Class).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **April 20, 2022 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **April 25, 2022 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. **April 26, 2022 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- d. **April 27, 2022 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- e. **April 29, 2022 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- f. **May 5, 2022 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VIII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Approval of Warrant #21-22.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #21-22 in the amount of \$418,795.73. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through May 1, 2022.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$101,784.09. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

IX. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Main Street Bridge Replacement Project: Standard Finance and Maintenance Agreement.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve and authorize Manager Schulz to sign the Standard Finance and Maintenance Agreement for the Main Street Bridge Replacement Project. According to the approved meeting minutes, at the January 25, 2022 Select Board regular meeting Acting Chair Goodrich asked Gary LaRoche "if the cost of utility relocation was included in the total project cost. Mr. LaRoche said it was." Acting Chair Goodrich is disappointed to learn tonight that this is not the case. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of 2022 Northfield VT Local Emergency Management Plan.** Manager Schulz said this local plan needs to be updated and submitted annually to Vermont Emergency Management. Not having a local plan in place might reduce the amount of state and federal disaster relief funding available to the community. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the updated Local Emergency Management Plan. Manager Schulz said there were two revisions from last year: a new Select Board member and a new administrator for Mayo Healthcare. Acting Chair Goodrich asked if local Emergency Management Coordinator Lawton Rutter had been consulted about the update. Manager Schulz said he was and had no concerns. Mr. Rutter has heard that the plan's format might be revised later this year but that was no reason to delay approval of the updated plan. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- c. Village Center Designation Amendment.** Manager Schulz has been working with Interim Economic Development Director Jon Ignatowski on a proposal that would expand the current boundary of the previously approved Northfield Village Center Designation. The revised boundary includes some additional businesses (i.e. Gillespie Fuels & Propane, NAPA Auto Parts, etc.) as well as the Freight Yard Way area, which is considered a viable location for future downtown commercial and/or industrial expansion. Putting them under the umbrella of the Village Center Designation would provide these businesses with additional grant application opportunities, etc. Manager Schulz said there is no downside to this boundary expansion and he is asking for Select Board approval to submit the needed paperwork to the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD). Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to authorize the expansion of the Northfield Village Center Designation boundary. Board member Morse asked if the Planning Commission members have reviewed this proposal. Manager Schulz said they have not but this action is consistent with the revised Northfield Town Plan that they drafted a couple years ago. Board member Petty noted that the final report issued by the Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT) in 2014 recommended that Northfield should seek "Downtown Designation" rather than "Village Center Designation." She believes this would allow for additional grant opportunities and asked if this has ever been pursued. Manager Schulz said that this designation would require formation of a downtown organization that would oversee the designated downtown area. He confirmed that it would allow for additional grant opportunities and for higher amounts. Board member Petty suggested this might be a good project when a permanent Economic Development Director is hired. Board member Stevens asked why the boundary borders were set as they were. Manager Schulz believes they are based on the current zoning maps. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- d. DRAFT 2022 Memorial Park Pool Schedule & Fees.** Manager Schulz said the proposed pool schedule & fees are presented to the Select Board each spring in preparation for the pool's reopening in mid-June. This year, the pool is scheduled to reopen on Saturday, June 18, 2022 and close on Saturday, August 20, 2022. The current plan is to keep the fee amounts the same as last year. Shannon Palone will return as Pool Director and she reports that most of the lifeguards from last year will return as well. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the 2022 Memorial Park Pool Schedule & Fees as proposed by management. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. South Main Street Stormwater Mitigation/CSO Elimination Project.** Manager Schulz has signed the contract with Courtland Construction for this project and they should be starting work by early June. Adjacent property owners have been notified of the project schedule. Most of the work should be completed by Labor Day and there should be no interference with the Labor Day Parade and other activities that holiday weekend.
- b. Stony Brook Road Bridge Repair Project.** The flashing informational signs rented from VTrans have been put in place to inform residents that the bridge will be closing for repairs next week and they will need to use alternate routes. The contractor originally stated that the closure would last about a month but now they are thinking two to three weeks. Manager Schulz will send another notice on this to Front Porch Forum in the next couple days.
- c. Informational Kiosk.** The kiosk that Norwich University students designed and built has been placed by the corner of Depot Square and Wall Street by the Community Bank. Some additional work still needs to be done but it is quite impressive. There will be a formal dedication held during the first outdoor Northfield Farmers Market of the year (05/17/22).
- d. Covered Bridge Rehabilitation Funds.** Manager Schulz has learned that the federal government will have new funding available specifically targeted for rehabilitation and maintenance of covered bridges that are located on or near "Connector Roads." He believes the three covered bridges on Cox Brook Road and perhaps the nearby one on Slaughterhouse Road will meet these criteria so it is likely Northfield will receive some of this funding. Carolyn Stevens asked why the Moseley Covered Bridge on Stony Brook Road wasn't being considered for funding. Board member Morse said that probably because it was located on a backroad that doesn't connect to another community. Manager Schulz will check to see if it could be added to the list of eligible covered bridges.

- e. **Central Street Sidewalk and Paving Projects.** Manager Schulz said the plan is to start removing the deteriorating sidewalks on the east side of the street in about three weeks. In addition, new sidewalk will be installed on the lower end of the street, new curbing installed for stormwater mitigation, and the whole street repaved this summer. Letters will be sent to Central Street property owners to inform them of these plans.

XI. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Crosswalk Painting.** Board member Stevens noted some of the street striping has been done but asked when all the crosswalks would be repainted. Manager Schulz said some of them have been completed but the painting contractor (like a lot of businesses) currently has some staffing issues so it might take a little longer than usual to finish everything.
- b. **Transfer Station Temporary Closure.** Board member Stevens noted that the transfer station was closed last Saturday (05/07/22). He was surprised residents weren't informed of this beforehand on Front Porch Forum, etc. Manager Schulz said he only learned of the temporary closure the night before at 5:00 p.m., which was too late for the news to be posted on Front Porch Forum. What happened was that Casella Waste Systems has been operating the facility for the past two months through an interim agreement with the State of Vermont. It seems a state employee decided Casella had not provided some paperwork as timely as it should have and this necessitated a one-day closure. Casella has apologized to the municipality for the misunderstanding and the problem has been resolved. The facility will open as scheduled tomorrow (Wednesday) and there should be no more service interruptions.
- c. **Lovers Lane.** Board member Stevens asked if there are any plans to pave Lovers Lane in the near future. Manager Schulz said the Highway Subcommittee did make a suggestion recently that Lovers Lane be paved. He looked into this and found that any state grant for this purpose would not cover even half of the total cost. Therefore, he thought this matter should be discussed during the next budget sessions if this is something the Select Board members would like to pursue. In the interim, Manager Schulz has applied for state grant funds that would allow for such safety improvements as new guardrails along the road.
- d. **Freight Yard Way Utilities.** Board member Stevens asked if there were plans to improve the water and sewer lines located in this area this summer. Manager Schulz believes these are private lines so that would be the responsibility of the property owner. He will confirm this with Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi.
- e. **Spring Cleanup.** Board member Petty is pleased with the town's appearance with the re-installation of the community banners on and around Depot Square; the new benches and tables located in the downtown area; the repainting of the crosswalks and other street markings; etc. She also wanted to thank all the volunteers who showed up for Green Up Day last weekend as well as those who helped repaint the pedestrian lanes on Wall Street.
- f. **AARP Vermont Complete Streets Demo.** Board member Petty reminded everyone that there will be a demonstration of possible safety enhancements on Depot Square on Friday, May 20, 2022 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. She is hoping for a good turnout and that those taking part will provide feedback after the event. This could help the Select Board members determine whether some of the temporary safety measures should be made permanent.

XII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Elroy Hill: Possible Soil Contamination.** Mr. Hill has previous experience with the operations of gas stations. He believes if soil contamination near the Main Street Bridge Replacement project site can be linked to current or former service stations in the area, the oil companies should be held responsible for at least part of the cleanup costs. If the contamination is about ten feet deep, then it can be traced to a faulty gas storage tank.

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

The Board adjourned at 8:46 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 May 24, 2022.