

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
TOWN BUILDINGS & ENERGY SUBCOMMITTEE
Minutes of January 22, 2025

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board member Merry Shernock, Select Board member John Stevens, Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Matthew Reed (Architect/Project Manager, AES Northeast), Jamie Gillon (Architectural Technician, AES Northeast), DeLane McIlvene (Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety [AWPS] Task Force), and Tim Swartz (AWPS Task Force).

The meeting started at 3:02 p.m.

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

III. DISCUSSION

- a. Municipal Pool House Redesign Kickoff Meeting.** Manager Schulz said the purpose of this meeting was to begin the redesign project for the building located at the municipal pool mainly used so swimmers can changing into their swimsuits. The building also has toilets, showers, and staff areas. Members of the Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety [AWPS] Task Force inspected the facility last year and found many deficiencies including non-compliance with ADA accessibility standards. AWPS Task Force member Tim Swartz also drafted a conceptual design of how the building would be redesigned to address these problems. Subsequently, the architectural firm AES Northeast was hired for this project and has two (2) representatives in attendance today in order to provide their concepts for how the pool house could be redesigned to address its current deficiencies. They have reviewed Mr. Swartz's concept design and did take some of its suggestions in consideration. Architect/Project Manager Matthew Reed said AES Northeast is based in Burlington VT and he is personally excited to return to Northfield for this project as he is a Norwich University graduate. He added that he and his colleague Jamie Gillon were in town recently to inspect the pool house themselves, take measurements, etc. Mr. Reed agreed that the main thrust of this redesign project is to make the facility ADA-compliant and fully accessible to the public. He noted that the building entrances currently are not wide enough to accommodate wheelchair users. The showers also are not ADA compliant and neither are the toilet stalls. There also isn't sufficient privacy in the male and female changing rooms.

Manager Schulz then asked if the building itself was in good shape and could have its interior redesigned rather than being totally razed. It was noted that the municipal pool is only open to the public for two (2) months each year. Mr. Reed said that was very possible as the exterior block is in very good shape with only minor cracks that could be easily repaired. There has been some building settling over the years that could be addressed during the project but the walls and roof appear to be in good condition. He added that there are some options that would make the building more accessible, etc. without major building reconstruction.

Mr. Swartz said the AWPS Task Force did work together to create the proposed building redesign schematics. They also consulted with longtime pool director Shannon Palone regarding what building upgrades she would like to see. In addition to addressing ADA compliance concerns, the AWPS Task Force members considered other problems such as poor interior lighting, slippery floors, changing room privacy concerns, etc. It was noted some pool users arrive with their swimsuits already under their clothes so they don't have to use the pool house. If this is to be a major renovation project, he would like all these problems addressed at the same time. Mr. Swartz agreed that the building's exterior and interior walls are in good shape so the structure itself could be maintained. The plans the AWPS Task Force members favored called for widening the building entrances, installing new plumbing fixtures to allow for outside showering, and basically creating more open interior areas. The changing areas would be large enough to accommodate at least two (2) individuals and there also would be a larger changing area for families. It was felt best that the changing room entrances be curtains and not doors. The concrete walkway leading to and from the building would be expanded and there would be privacy barriers installed by its entry ways. Grab bars would be installed in the showers, toilets, and changing rooms. The area used by the lifeguards would be redesigned for better comfort, etc. Mr. Swartz said their vision was to fully gut the building interior in order to make all these changes.

Mr. Swartz said additional floor drains would need to be added in order to make the floors less slippery. He noted that he and the other AWPS Task Force members understand that their vision could be scaled back due to cost considerations, etc. He did note that there are significant grant funds available in order to make public facilities more ADA compliant and fully accessible to all community members.

Mr. Reed then presented the plans he and Mr. Gillon developed based on their initial impressions of the facility. Their plans look at moving away from traditional gender-based changing rooms in favor of individual changing rooms as well as family changing areas. The first concept Mr. Reed brought forward can be designated as Option A. In this option, there would be individual changing stalls that would be thirty-six inches (36") wide with thirty inch (30") entrance doors. There also would be one family changing area with internal curtains. The doors would be plastic/steel and therefore resistant to damp conditions. There also would be two (2) large toilet stalls that had attached showers. Standalone showers also would be installed outside the building so swimmers can rinse off before and after using the pool. The building interior would be opened up in order to make the facility more welcoming. Mr. Reed said they did not include staffroom improvements in this concept other than making this working space more ADA compliant. Mr. Reed then discussed Option B, which is a bit scaled down and would include a hybrid vision with both gender-specific changing spaces along with smaller individual changing rooms. There also would be gender-specific showering areas. These showering areas would be located by the building entry/exit points in order to encourage swimmers to use them before and after using the pool. The building's plumbing features would be recessed and covered in order to reduce the risk of winter pipe freezing. In addition, access to the building would be controlled in order to reduce the risk of vandalism, etc. Mr. Reed said they also had a third option, which he called "bare bones" that would focus on ADA compliance concerns by removing some interior walls, expanding the changing rooms, and would make two (2) of the building's four (4) toilets fully ADA compliant. Mr. Reed said he has worked with various local YMCAs on similar projects and the current focus has been on creating "universal" changing spaces that are accessible to all sexes as well as the installation of larger family changing rooms. He added that the changing rooms should have quick turnover and would have interior latches for security. The doors would have a six inch (6") gap at the bottom but nothing in the way of accessible crawl space as sometimes is the case with traditional changing rooms. Board member Shernock said she has heard from adults that would prefer a floor to ceiling door design for privacy reasons. She also felt that the doors envisioned in this concept would work much better than curtains. Mr. Reed added that the door surfaces would be graffiti-resistant but there still was the risk of knife damage, etc.

Board member Shernock said she really prefers the large lobby area included in Option A. She also hopes the lifeguard-friendly upgrades are included in the final project design as it has become hard for communities to recruit lifeguards in recent years and a more comfortable working environment might be a recruitment bonus for Northfield. Board member Shernock also hopes that the building renovations will be long lasting so the community will not have to go through this process again for some time. Mr. Swartz asked if improved lighting would be included in the AES Northeast redesign concepts. Mr. Reed confirmed that they would. There also would be improved ventilation in the building and that would be very desirable during hotter summer days. Mr. Reed said there would be roll-up doors installed in the building to create greater flow at the entrances and exits. These doors would be kept rolled up when the pool is open. AWPS Task Force member DeLane McIlvene asked if the lobby width would be sufficient to allow wheelchair users to pull themselves through the length of the building. Mr. Reed said there should be sufficient clearance provided that the walls are left uncluttered. Mr. Swartz said the roll-up doors would be an improvement as propped open doors often create accessibility problems.

Mr. Reed then asked how the budget for this project would be developed. Manager Schulz said that would depend on the cost estimates for the various project options. Mr. Swartz said the availability of grant funding also should be considered when the budget is developed. Manager Schulz said if this project does require borrowing public funds, that would require voter authorization. Mr. Reed said AES Northeast would be willing to assist with finding available grant funds for a project of this nature. He will research this further. Mr. Reed gave a rough estimate of \$100,000 for the third “bare bones” option given the limited work that would be required for the minimal goals of improved ADA compliance, etc. He could not provide estimates at this time for Option A as the work envisioned is much more extensive. He soon would have a much better understanding of the estimated costs for this option as he has a YMCA project of similar scale presently going out to bid. Mr. Reed noted that the cost of building materials has become volatile in recent years so he could not provide even a rough cost estimate at this time. He added that AES Northeast could provide broken-down construction cost estimates for all the project options for an additional \$2,500 to \$3,000. Mr. Gillon then asked what would be the timeline for this project. Mr. Swartz doesn’t believe there is an established timeline at this time but he did not expect the building redesign to start for a few years. The availability of grant funding is another timing factor.

After some discussion, the consensus of those present was for Option A provided that sufficient funding can be generated. This concept was considered to be a great improvement over the current facility. Mr. Swartz felt the universal design concept was a great selling point and Manager Schulz like the way the interior redesign would really open up the building. Board member Shernock felt it also provided much improved privacy for individuals and groups using the pool house. Manager Schulz would like to see cost estimates for Options A and C before proceeding further with this project. Mr. Reed should be able to provide those cost estimates fairly soon, especially if all that is wanted at this time are ballpark figures. He added that it might be possible to reduce construction costs by using less expensive materials, etc. That ultimately would be a durability versus cost decision. Mr. Swartz felt that whichever design option is chosen, the expansion of the outside concrete walkway should be included even if that is an extra expense. Manager Schulz looks forward to receiving the cost estimates as that information will allow for a much greater sense of how this project should proceed in the near future. He also will provide a project update to the other Select Board members should they have some suggestions of their own on how to move forward. Mr. Reed will remain in email contact with Manager Schulz regarding the project cost estimates. He added that the Northfield Municipal Pool is a valuable asset for the community that should be preserved through such rehabilitation projects. Mr. Swartz said when the pool house redesign project has been completed, it will make for a much more pleasant experience for pool users, the lifeguards, etc.

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

V. ADJOURNMENT. Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 4:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk