

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of December 10, 2024**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Charles Morse, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), Peter J. DeMasi (Chief, Northfield Fire Department), Pam Ricker, Susan Stillinger, and Elroy C. Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

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

III. DISCUSSION

a. Proposed FY 2025/2026 Town Budget

1. **Northfield Fire Department (NFD).** Manager Schulz noted NFD Chief Peter J. DeMasi is present tonight to answer any questions about the proposed NFD budget for the next fiscal year. Manager Schulz stated the NFD operations and maintenance (O&M) budget will see a 6.6% increase in FY 2025/2026. He noted that personnel costs will decrease by 5.9% to reflect a lower number of part-time NFD volunteers at this time. Chief DeMasi confirmed there are twenty-one (21) volunteers at this time, which is a sufficient number for effective fire protection even though the NFD has as many as twenty-five (25) volunteers in recent years. In the Contract Services budget, the Recertification line item will increase from \$5,000 to \$8,000 in the next fiscal year. Chief DeMasi said that he had asked that this budget be increased to \$10,000 due to the higher cost of the annual hose testing, which alone costs \$5,000. Chief DeMasi said this work used to be done in-house but the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) has required this be done by an outside contractor. Manager Schulz said the additional \$2,000 could be added to this budget. Chief DeMasi noted that other NFD equipment also has to be recertified in a regular basis. In the Materials/Supplies budget, the Personal Protection Equipment line item has been increased from \$10,000 to \$14,000 in the next fiscal year. Chief DeMasi said this would allow for needed purchases of replacement helmets, gloves, etc. He added that it costs \$10,000 to purchase two (2) complete sets of fire gear, which usually lasts about ten (10) years. In the NFD Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget, the only account is for Building Improvements, which now has a \$2,516 balance with an additional \$5,000 to be added in the next fiscal year. Manager Schulz noted the Fire Station has seen considerable improvements in recent years, including a new roof, and now is in pretty good condition. Chief DeMasi confirmed this but noted that the building's sprinkler system still needs to be extended to the upper levels and the bathrooms have to be upgraded. He doesn't have cost estimates for the work at this time. Board member Petty would like to see some cost estimates so that the Select Board members can be sure that the \$5,000 budgeted for the next fiscal year is sufficient.

In the NFD Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget, Manager Schulz noted that most of the accounts are level funded in the next fiscal year. The major concern is to determine whether vehicle replacement cost estimates remain fairly accurate. Chief DeMasi said he reached out to a fire equipment dealer and was told that the current \$920,000 estimate for replacing the 2007 pumper truck is correct. Chief DeMasi added that the current plan is to replace the 2000 aerial ladder truck with a used vehicle, which is now estimated to cost about \$650,000. He has been watching the used fire equipment market and feels this is a reasonable price for a good used truck. This vehicle replacement is scheduled for FY 2027/2028 and Chief DeMasi noted that the current aerial ladder truck still functions well. When the replacement vehicle is put into service, the current one will be sold even though Chief DeMasi did not expect such an old truck will bring in much money. Chair Maxwell said the ever increasing cost of such capital purchases is a major concern when trying to limit local tax rate increases. He asked if there is anything that can be done to alleviate the problem while still maintaining proper fire protection for the community. Chief DeMasi noted the fire equipment dealer with whom he spoke reported that some smaller fire departments are trying to cut costs by reducing their number of backup vehicles. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio noted that it has been past practice to budget for about half the purchase price of such expensive heavy equipment and borrow the remaining cost. However, due to the increasing expenses of such equipment, it sometimes has become necessary to borrow more than half the purchase price. Chief DeMasi then noted that there is now a three (3) year backlog to purchasing new fire trucks. Manager Schulz asked if the other NFD equipment, such as pagers, radios, computers, air pacs, etc., were in good shape. Chief DeMasi confirmed that they were. As this concluded the discussion of the proposed NFD budget, Chair Maxwell and the other Select Board members thanked Chief DeMasi for attending tonight's meeting and providing such valuable information about the proposed NFD budget.

The next budget meeting will be held on Thursday, December 12, 2024 starting at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room. The budgets under consideration will be for the Northfield Ambulance Service and the Highway Department.

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

V. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)], in order to discuss a personnel matter with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 6:25 p.m.

Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Morse, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 6:58 p.m. No action was taken.

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

The Board adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

A video recording of this meeting is available at <https://youtu.be/YJ0of9jJZdA>

These minutes are subject to approval at the next Select Board regular meeting.