

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of March 9, 2009**

- I. **ROLL CALL:** Selectmen Melvin Adams, Kenneth Goslant, Kenneth Johnson, Charles Morse, and Gregory Sanders. Also present were Town Manager Nanci Allard, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Linda Barrows, Sally Davidson, Jacob Dorman, Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*), and Larry Drown (8:25 p.m.).

Manager Allard called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. **ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE BOARD**

- a. **Election of Chair.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to appoint Kenneth Johnson as Chair. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Election of Vice-Chair.** Motion by Selectman Adams to appoint Charles Morse as Vice-Chair. Motion died for lack of second. Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to appoint Gregory Sanders as Vice-Chair. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Committee Appointments (Highway Standards, Inter-Local Agreement, etc.).** The committee appointments were as follows. Conflict of Interest: Selectman Sanders; Highway Standards: Selectmen Goslant and Sanders; Inter-Local Agreement: Selectmen Goslant and Morse; Joint Management: Selectmen Adams and Johnson; and Labor Agreement and Bargaining: Selectman Morse.
- d. **Regular Meeting Schedule.** The Selectmen will continue to hold their regular meetings at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month in the Brown Public Library's Community Room. Decisions were deferred on whether to hold as scheduled, reschedule, or cancel the meeting that would conflict with the Memorial Day holiday (05/25/09) and the one scheduled for the Monday after Christmas (12/28/09).
- e. **Official Newspaper(s).** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Adams, to designate the *Northfield News* and the *Times Argus* as the official newspapers. Selectman Morse wanted to clarify that not all notices published in the *Northfield News* are also published in the *Times Argus*. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

III. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **February 23, 2009 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Sanders, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-2, with Selectmen Adams and Goslant abstaining.**
- b. **March 2, 2009 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Sanders, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Selectman Goslant abstaining.**

IV. **APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. **Warrant #18-09.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Adams, to approve Warrant #18-09 in the amount of \$106,951.43. Chair Johnson questioned the high cost of heating the Brown Public Library. Manager Allard stated that the amount also included heating the Northfield Historical Society building. Chair Johnson asked why the old police station still had bills for electricity. Manager Allard said that the Maintenance Worker's vehicle was stored there overnight; the building has an electric garage door. Selectman Sanders asked about a payment to E.F. Wall; was this related to the icing problem on the new police station's roof? Manager Allard stated that the engineers have spent considerable time there solving the problem by repacking the insulation, etc. The project remains \$30,000 under the estimate; some work still has to be done in the spring. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

V. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

- a. **Linda Barrows: Town Meeting Questions.** Ms. Barrows had various questions and concerns regarding last week's Town Meeting (03/03/09).

Regarding Article 6 (Combined Town and Village Highway Tax), Ms. Barrows asked now this has passed, is there any need for a Highway Maintenance Agreement ("contract") between the Town and Village? Selectman Adams stated that there is not, as the Town now acts as the broker for the combined highway fund but the Village Trustees still administer the maintenance of the roads and determine the amount needed. Selectman Sanders asked why there should not be such an agreement. Manager Allard stated that if the Boards wanted one, such a document would be developed for Board signature. Selectman Sanders noted that the line item specifically stated "contracted services" so there probably should be a written contract.

Ms. Barrows then inquired regarding Article 7 (General Fund Expenditures). She had noted at Town Meeting that the budget contained an approximate seven percent (7%) increase in employee salaries and benefits. She was told at that time that this amount had been put in the budget as an estimate before the actual Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA) figures for 2009 were available. Since the estimated COLA amount has been much reduced, the actual increase will probably be around three percent (3%) Ms. Barrows asked if the budget could not have been adjusted to prevent the large surplus amount that will result. Chair Johnson stated that the budget was developed last November and the Board had to proceed based on the information then available. Manager Allard added the estimated surplus would be around \$20,000, which is not that sizable an amount.

Ms. Barrow then asked about Article 8 (Highway Fund Expenditure). She wanted to know why it was not made clear in the Town Report that the passage of Article 6 meant that the amount of taxes raised would increase from \$638,470 last year to \$1,128,440 this year. Selectman Adams stated that Article 6 had been approved at a Special Town Meeting last November and the budget had been based upon that fact. Selectman Morse stated that had Article 6 been overturned at Town Meeting, the article would have been amended on the floor with new amounts. Ms. Barrows still felt that this should have been explained better beforehand.

Ms. Barrows then expressed her concerns regarding the way in which the Town Moderator handled attempts to amend from the floor the wording of Article 9 (Voting All Public Questions by Australian Ballot). She felt that the Town Moderator had predetermined how this article would be dealt with at Town meeting (as indicated in several emails) and that this article (and Article 6) should be struck down by the Selectmen because of the Town Moderator's behavior. Selectman Sanders asked if the Board should do this. Selectmen Adams stated that the Board could not overturn articles that had been approved by the voters. He added that the Town Moderator has a responsibility to follow State law as regards to the conduct of Town Meeting. The content of the email messages from the Town Moderator to the Town Manager and Selectmen on this particular matter had been fully revealed at Town Meeting; nothing was hidden. Selectman Morse explained that Australian Ballot votes fall into three (3) separate categories: election of officials, budget questions, and public questions. The sense he had at Town Meeting was that the persons who had petitioned to have this article put on the warning meant it to apply to budget questions; however, this was not how the petition was worded (i.e. "all public questions"). Amendments can be made within these categories, i.e. vote for some officials by Australian Ballot but not others, for some budget questions but not others, etc., but not between categories. Ms. Barrows asked why the Selectmen did not correct the wording of the article when this mistake was discovered. Selectman Morse said that once the petition was received, the wording on the article had to be exactly what was on the signed petition. The Selectmen had no right to "correct" it. Had the petitioners sought the Selectmen's advice before circulating the petition, this mistake might have been caught in time and corrected. Selectman Adams added that the whole point of such a petition is to bypass the Selectmen.

VI. MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Status Reports: Various Projects

1. **Northfield Ambulance Volunteers, Inc. (NAVI) Bylaws.** Manager Allard stated that she is working with former Selectman Roger LeClair on updating the bylaws. Once completed, this will be brought back to the Board.
2. **Police Station Open House (02/28/09).** Manager Allard stated the event was well attended and enjoyed by all.
3. **Traffic Problem Areas.** The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) has identified two (2) trouble areas in Northfield: the Village Common and Union Brook Road near its intersection with Hockman Hill Road. Management will look at the report and look for ways to address these problems.
4. **Northfield Falls Drainage Project.** Stantec Consulting should have a draft report soon.
5. **Water Projects.** The Village is looking to apply for federal stimulus money for some upcoming water projects. One focus will be the bad culvert on Central Street.
6. **Safety Training.** Additional safety training will be scheduled in order to reduce our insurance costs. A VLCT PACIF representative will meet with Manager Allard later this week to discuss this.

VII. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

a. 2009 Liquor License Renewals

1. **American Legion.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve this liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
2. **Pub at Fiddler's Green.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve this liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

b. 2009 Tobacco License Renewals

1. **American Legion.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve this tobacco license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. SELECTBOARD

- a. **Executive Summary: Annual Town Bridge Inspection Reports.** Motion by Selectmen Morse, seconded by Selectman Adams, to sign the form that acknowledges receipt of these bridge inspection reports. Kathleen Lott asked about a particular bridge that the report stated was in very poor condition. Selectman Adams stated that the point of these reports was to provide information to the Town on how to prioritize repairs, seek State funding, etc., to deal with such concerns. Selectman Goslant noted that the Town (outside the Village) has forty-one (41) bridges while the Village had only six (6). He thought this indicated a great expense for the Town to maintain all these structures.

b. Status Reports: Various Projects

1. **Delinquent Taxes.** Selectman Sanders would like to create a policy that, unless there is an agreement, the time limit for delinquent taxes should be two (2) years. Also, if a contract is broken, there should be an immediate tax sale.
2. **Selectboard Retreat.** Chair Johnson would like to hold a retreat in the near future. Board members should let him know which dates (Saturdays) they are available so this can be scheduled.
3. **Winter Maintenance Contracting.** Selectmen Sanders would like the Highway Committee to look at the possibility of putting the winter maintenance (snow removal) of one (1) and two (2) house roads out to bid to private contactors. Chair Johnson agrees that this is something for the Highway Committee to consider. Selectmen Morse is concerned that the Town may lose State funding if it no longer maintains some of its roads. Selectman Adams also cautioned that the terms of any such contract should specify such items as work standards, the source of materials (the Town or the contractor), accountability, etc.
4. **Road Service Management Program (RSMP).** Selectman Sanders asked about the status of this program. Manager Allard stated that Highway Foreman Peter G. Demasi and Highway employee Chris Alger have been working with CVRPC consultant Robert Turner on this. She expected a draft report to the Board by the time of its first meeting in April (04/13/09).
5. **Special Meeting Notification.** Selectman Sanders wants the Board to consider a policy in which all registered voters are informed by mail when there is a Special Town Meeting. Selectman Morse feels that if this policy is adopted, then funds should be put in future budgets to pay for it. Chair Johnson feels that the Board should consider this policy.
6. **Certification Tracking.** Selectman Sanders would like Management to track when employee certifications are due to expire so that they can be contacted beforehand and warned in time. He wants no more surprises.

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Non-agenda items

- a. **Sally Davidson.** Ms. Davidson would like a Town policy that whenever anyone is hired, that position should be posted and advertised. Manager Allard has stated that she would like to rehire the same Pool Director as last year without a formal search. It was the consensus of the Board that the position would be posted but there would not be any paid advertisements.
- b. **Kathleen Lott.** Ms. Lott noted that Police Chief Shaw was seeking to have his decertification overturned. She asked if his certification was valid during the appeal process. Manager Allard stated that this was correct.

X. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Selectman Sanders, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to go into executive session to discuss a personnel issue and a legal matter. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:25 p.m.

Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Sanders, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:45 p.m. No action was taken.

XI. ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Sanders, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

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