

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of September 28, 2009**

- I. **ROLL CALL.** Chair Kenneth Johnson, Selectmen Melvin Adams, Kenneth Goslant, Charles Morse, and Gregory Sanders. Also present were Town Manager Nanci Allard, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Police Chief Jeffrey Shaw, Ambulance Supervisor James Baraw, L.T. Rutter (NAVI), Mark Podgwaite (NAVI), Laurie Beth Putnam (NAVI), Thomas Barrett, and Matt Gadbois.

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

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **September 14, 2009 (Joint Board Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Sanders, to approve the minutes. One correction: III. a. under the paragraph "Public Works Superintendent." Selectman Morse wanted to clarify that the statement that he "did not believe that the redistribution above was appropriate" should include the phrase "without an explanation." **Amended minutes passed 4-0-1, with Chair Johnson abstaining.**

III. **APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. **Warrant #07-10.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Adams, to approve Warrant #07-10 in the amount of \$97,704.01. Selectman Goslant questioned the hiring of a contractor to perform tree removal in a cemetery; couldn't Town employees do that themselves? Selectman Morse stated that concerns about damaging headstones usually meant hiring an expert. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

IV. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

- a. **Thomas Barrett: Request to Operate ATV on Town Road.** Mr. Barrett had sent a letter to the Selectmen asking that his son (Sean), who has a permanent disability, be allowed to drive a Polaris Ranger four-wheel drive vehicle on Hallstrom Road for approximately one-half mile from their home (1205 Hallstrom Road) to an access point (1832 Hallstrom Road) to a logging trail leading to their camp. He also included a doctor's letter that emphasized the therapeutic benefits of permitting this activity. Mr. Barrett had believed that this vehicle fell under the "farm vehicle" exclusion but learned recently that this was not the case. The Board briefly discussed whether an ordinance was necessary to grant this waiver. Police Chief Shaw confirmed that an ordinance was necessary though it could be written specifically for Mr. Barrett's benefit. Chair Johnson asked if there was any way to expedite this matter, as a Town ordinance does not take effect for forty-five (days). Chief Shaw stated that the Town could write a letter that would allow Sean Barrett to drive along the road pending the ordinance taking effect. This letter would be sufficient for the Northfield Police but he was unsure whether outside agencies would honor it. Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to permit Sean Barrett to drive his Polaris Ranger for approximately one-half mile on Hallstrom Road pending the ordinance taking effect provided that the vehicle had proper lighting and met all other State requirements. The ordinance will be written as provisional for the sole benefit of Sean Barrett. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

V. **MANAGER'S REPORT**

- a. **Tentative Town Budget Schedule.** Manager Allard had distributed a tentative schedule to the Board. The schedule includes a joint budget meeting with the Village Trustees in order to discuss the highway budgets. Chair Johnson hoped that the Board would be able to keep this schedule. Manager Allard stated that this was a draft schedule and could be adjusted if necessary.

VI. SELECTBOARD

- a. **Proposed Police Department Purchases (Rifles, Shotguns, etc.).** The current federal grant for the Northfield Police Department (\$31,950) included funds for the purchase, among other items, of one (1) shotgun, four (4) patrol rifles, and seven (7) sets of riot gear. At the last meeting (09/14/09), the Board voted to put a hold on these purchases until there was a further explanation as to their necessity. Police Chief Shaw explained that when he wrote the grant application, he focused upon items that his department did not currently have but would be good to have on hand. This not only included the items under discussion tonight but also new computers, digital recorders, a dictation machine, etc. If these new weapons and the riot gear were purchased, proper procedures regarding their usage would be developed before being utilized by the officers. Selectman Sanders had concerns about how and when these new weapons would be used. Selectman Goslant stated that he did not want to give the impression that he did not want the police officers properly equipped but it seemed to him that the proposed equipment was “overkill” and not necessary. He also disputed the statement that grant money was “free;” someone has to pay for it eventually. After further discussion, Chair Johnson asked if the grant money could be reallocated to other purchases without having to return it to the government. Chief Shaw said that it could. Chair Johnson then suggested a compromise in which the one (1) shotgun be purchased along with two (2) patrol rifles and five (5) sets of riot gear. There was no dispute over reducing the number of patrol rifles but there was some debate on the riot gear. Selectman Adams felt that if extraordinary circumstances (such as outside agitators) required that riot gear was needed in Northfield (or a neighboring community), then all the officers should be equipped properly. Chief Shaw added that the term “riot gear” was perhaps misleading; it would be more accurate to say “protective gear.” Motion by Selectman Morse to authorize the purchase of the riot gear but hold the purchase of the shotgun and the patrol rifles until procedures for their use have been developed. **Motion died for lack of a second.** Motion by Selectman Adams, seconded by Selectman Sanders, to authorize the purchase of one (1) shotgun, two (2) patrol rifles, and six (6) sets of riot gear. **Motion passed 4-1-0, with Selectman Goslant voting in the negative.**

Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman to take a brief recess. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into recess at 8:17 p.m. The Board came back to order at 8:25 p.m.

- b. **Northfield Ambulance Volunteers, Inc. (NAVI) By-Laws.** It was noted that former Selectboard Chair Roger LeClair had worked with NAVI on rewriting these by-laws during his time on the Board and for some period afterwards. NAVI President Mark Podgwaite confirmed that the current document was about sixty percent (60%) new. He then reiterated NAVI's purpose, as indicated in Article I of the by-laws, to act in support of the Northfield Ambulance Service through fundraising activities, other financial assistance, community education, and other support services. Ambulance Supervisor James Baraw stated that the document did an excellent job of stipulating membership requirements, disciplinary procedures, etc. Manager Allard confirmed that former Selectman LeClair favored the current version. Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Sanders, to approve and sign the NAVI By-Laws. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Revised Northfield Ambulance Rates.** Ambulance Supervisor Baraw provided the Board with the proposed rates, which he said were an attempt to remain comparable with neighboring ambulance services while also keeping the rates within the ability of people, especially the uninsured, to pay. Selectman Sanders inquired about the rate for providing oxygen, which seemed high to him. Supervisor Baraw will look into this. Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Adams, to approve the 2009/2010 Northfield Ambulance Rates. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **Plowing and Sanding Proposals for One- and Two-House Roads.** Manager Allard stated that Superintendent of Public Works William Lyon had developed a proposal to go out to bid and have subcontractors assist with highway maintenance after snowstorms. The affected roads are divided geographically into six (6) groups. It was noted that although most of these roads had only one or two houses, there also were some with three, four, or five.

Chair Johnson stated that this proposal developed out of an attempt to save wear and tear on Town-owned equipment while having the backroads plowed a bit quicker after snowstorms. Selectman Adams was concerned that if one contractor successfully bid for all six groups, there probably wouldn't be much of a timesaving. There also were concerns that the bids might come in too expensive, so that there would not be any money saved either. Selectman Sanders noted that the bid specifications clearly state that the Town could accept or reject any and all bids if these became concerns. Selectman Adams would like the specifications to require that the subcontractor would have to mix sand with road salt at the same ratio as the Town. He also wanted the sand used to conform to the Town's own specifications. Selectman Morse wanted it stated that the Certificate of Insurance should be for \$1,000,000 and that the Town would be named as the insured party. As Selectman Morse himself provides similar services, he will recuse himself from this matter in the future. Motion by Selectman Adams, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to go forth with the advertisement for bids once the above changes to the specifications are made. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Selectman Morse abstaining.**

- e. **Personnel Policy Revisions.** Manager Allard had provided the Board with a number of proposed changes to the Personnel Policy. Most are minor clarifications. One change is a new employment classification: Exempt Full-Time Employment. Selectman Morse is unsure of the definitions regarding this proposed classification and will discuss this with Manager Allard. Another significant change is a policy restricting use of cell phones in company-owned vehicles and/or on company business. This policy has been recommended by the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) as there could be liability issues involved. The Village Trustees will review these and other recommended revisions at their meeting so approval of these revisions will be on a future agenda.
- f. **Highway Subcommittee.** Manager Allard distributed information regarding road maintenance priorities for all Town and Village roads. Longer roads have been broken down into smaller sections. She would like the Highway Subcommittee to review this information as soon as possible so that its recommendations will be available before the budget process begins. Selectman Adams also would like this information reviewed soon along with the possibility of looking into bond funding in order to catch up on the most neglected roads before the regular maintenance cycle begins.
- g. **Status Reports: Various Projects.**
 - 1. **Water Project.** Chair Johnson stated that he drives through the affected area twice a day and found that the traffic delays have been minimal.
 - 2. **Police Vehicle Purchase.** Selectman Goslant noted that the Police Department was planning to purchase a new four-wheel drive Chevy Tahoe. The estimated price was \$36,000. He thought that this was extravagant given the current budget situation. Chair Johnson stated that this purchase had been planned over a five (5) year period through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Selectman Adams added that this item has not gone out to bid yet so the price is not yet set. He also felt that a two-wheel drive vehicle would not be able to access some of parts of town.

VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Non-agenda items. None.

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

The Board adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

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