

**VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
Minutes of July 14, 2009**

- I. **ROLL CALL.** Chair Samantha Baraw, Trustees Libby Hambleton, Doug Lawson, and Thomas McCarney. Also present were Village Manager Nanci Allard, Utility Assistant Doug Reed, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Trish Coppelino (Northfield Conservation Commission), Leslie Matthews (Northfield Conservation Commission), Russ Barrett (Northfield Conservation Commission), Richard Wobby, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

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

II. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled)**

- a. **Trish Coppelino, Northfield Conservation Commission: Village Forest Trails.** Ms. Coppelino said that the Conservation Commission has been working on plans to preserve the trail system in the Village Forest. They have met with the Northfield Trails Association, which consists of mountain bikers, regarding what part of the forest should be open to mountain bikes and which should not. They also have met with VASA (Vermont All-Terrain Vehicles Sportsman's Association) about ATV use in the Village Forest. She would like to meet with local ATV users about taking care of the trails but has not been able to determine if there is a local organization of ATV enthusiasts. The commission also would like to meet with hikers about their preferences. She added that the commission had received a \$7100 trail grant from the State that could be used to stabilize the trail system and maintain the lean-to on the property.

Ms. Coppelino showed the Board examples of the signage that the commission would like to install in various parts of the Village Forest; the signs would indicate where motorized vehicles would be prohibited, designate the wetland restoration area, etc. Leslie Matthews then provided the Board with recent photographs of the Village Forest. Many showed damage to the trails from ATV use. She added that similar signage in other towns has acted to limit similar damage (without having to police the area on a regular basis). In addition, the commission recently has reached out to Norwich University to perhaps coordinate efforts to maintain its adjacent properties.

Trustee McCarney commended the Conservation Commission for its efforts and added that he too is concerned about ATV damage of the trail system. If necessary, he believes that the Board would vote to restrict ATV usage on Village land and try to enforce this ban through remote photography, etc. Ms. Matthews added that, technically, the ATV users are already breaking the law if they do not have specific permission to operate their vehicles on Village property.

Ms. Coppelino would like the Trustees' permission to place the aforementioned signage on Village property. Motion by Trustee McCarney, seconded by Trustee Hambleton, to authorize the Northfield Conservation Commission to place signage in the Village Forest at its discretion. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

Russ Barrett then provided an update on logging in the Village Forest (Dustin's Pasture). If there is a drying period soon, the timber could be logged this summer by accessing a neighboring property. The timber would be sold on the open market and he estimated a return of about \$15,000 (which would go to the Village). Ms. Coppelino added that there had been discussion at one time about designating a percentage of this sale price towards forest restoration. Mr. Barrett also reported that the Vermont Audubon Society had chosen the Village Forest for a bird assessment on Friday, August 7, 2009. The exact time has not been set but it should be in the early morning.

- b. **Richard Wobby: Request for Permission to Hold Concert on Village Common.** Mr. Wobby is seeking the Trustees' permission to close down the south side of the Village Common on Saturday, August 8, 2009 from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. in order to hold a concert. The concert itself would begin around 7:00 p.m. The group is called "Factal Groove" and is composed of Northfield youths who have already performed this year as part of the "Summer on the Common" program. Mr. Wobby will be the contact person and will work with the Town Manager, Superintendent of Public Works, the Northfield Police, etc. to make sure all goes smoothly. Motion by Trustee McCarney, seconded by Trustee Hambleton, to authorize the closure from traffic on the south side of the Village Common on Saturday, August 8, 2009 from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. provided that the group coordinates its efforts with the aforementioned local authorities. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- c. **David Mullett, VPPSA: Northfield Electric Department (NED) Tariff Terms and Conditions.** Mr. Mullett was not in attendance so Utility Assistant Doug Reed will try to answer the Board's questions. Mr. Reed stated that the whole purpose of the document is to upgrade the Northfield Electric Department's policies and to specifically institute the ability to bill customers for various connection, disconnection, and reconnection charges. He estimated that NED loses about \$10,000 per year in non-charged expenses. Mr. Reed is working with Mr. Mullett on this upgrade, which is similar to what is happening in other Vermont communities with public power systems.

Regarding the specified new charges for disconnects, reconnects, etc., Mr. Reed stated that there needed to be a careful balance between charging enough to defray a portion of the actual cost for doing the work (as specified under contract with Green Mountain Power [GMP]) without charging too much so that the customer might be tempted to attempt the work personally (such as tree removal), which could result in severe injury as well as damage to the power system. Trustee McCarney stated that he understood this concern but did not want all NED customers to subsidize the costs incurred by some individuals. He thought that the charges should be at the amount that NED is billed by GMP to do the work. Mr. Reed stated that connection/disconnection/reconnection charges varied depending upon whether GMP had to come into Northfield to do one job or whether numerous jobs were grouped together for the same visit. Trustee Lawson asked if it were possible to average out the costs over the year (both grouped and single jobs) so that a more accurate charge figure could be assigned. Mr. Reed said that this was possible, as all contracted work is recorded along with GMP billing statements.

The Board then went through the document page-by-page in order to see if any member had concerns on particular items. Additional concerns were expressed regarding the suitability of the proposed charge amounts. There also were concerns on whether it was possible to charge interest on combined utility bills for late electric payments (if this was not also done for late water and/or sewer payments on the same statement); over the definition of “sole negligence” as it pertains to NED liability (or lack thereof); and the whole topic of “net metering.” Mr. Reed and Manager Allard will work with Mr. Mullett and VPPSA regarding the Board’s specific concerns and bring back the needed information at a future meeting prior to Board approval.

### III. ACTION ITEMS

#### a. Approval of Minutes

1. **June 23, 2009 (Joint Board Meeting).** Motion by Trustee McCarney, seconded Lawson, to approve the minutes. An incorrect name in the Roll Call will be fixed. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
2. **July 8, 2009 (Joint Board Meeting).** Motion by Trustee McCarney, seconded by Trustee Hambleton, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

#### b. Approval of Bills

1. **Warrant #02-10.** Motion by Trustee Lawson, seconded by Trustee McCarney, to approve Warrant #02-10 in the amount of \$389,887.01. There were some questions on cell phone and software charges. Trustee Lawson noticed a charge for traffic control and asked if the Northfield Police could have done it instead. Manager Allard will look into this. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
2. **Warrant #02-10A.** Motion by Trustee McCarney, seconded by Trustee Hambleton, to approve Warrant #02-10A in the amount of \$53,332.00. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- #### c. Water/Sewer Rates.
- Chair Baraw stated that the Inter-Local Agreement Committee met last week (07/08/09) and approved the proposed water and sewer rates. The only change is an increase in the Water Department Capacity Rate from 10.52 to 12.22. This increase is associated with the next phase of the Water Project. The sewer rates remained unchanged. Trustee McCarney was present at that meeting and reported that the committee also looked at the topic of wellfield protection, including such possible solutions as extension of the sewer line towards the wellfield, the installation of guardrails along Vermont Route 12A (near the wellfield), etc. Motion by Trustee McCarney, seconded by Trustee Lawson, to approve the proposed water and sewer rates, effective with the August 2009 billing. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- #### d. Transco Equity Call.
- Manager Allard reported that an additional \$3,000,000 in equity is available to VPPSA members and wanted the Board’s authorization to approve the suggested “Load Ratio Share” and to indicate an interest in oversubscription beyond that amount. Trustee McCarney was concerned that this had been a good deal in the past but he was not so certain that it still was. Manager Allard stated that the interest rate has stayed about the same (12%); about half of that amount (5%-6%) goes back to the Village. There would be no need for a rate increase to fund this equity purchase. Motion by Trustee Lawson, seconded by Trustee McCarney, to approve the suggested Load Ration Share of 198.11. **Motion passed 4-0-0.** Motion by Trustee McCarney, seconded by Trustee Lawson, to indicate the Village of Northfield’s interest in looking into oversubscription. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- e. **Motorcycle Parking.** Trustee McCarney was concerned that a “Motorcycle Parking Only” spot had been located on the Village Common, taking away a prime parking spot opposite the Northfield Pharmacy. He also has a problem with the lack of enforcement, as there is nothing in the parking ordinance regarding motorcycle-only parking spaces. He felt that this only added to the current problem on the Village Common, as there appears to be no enforcement of the two-hour parking spaces in front of the businesses. Motion by Trustee McCarney to remove the motorcycle parking only sign until Management brings forth a proposal to re-site the signage. Trustee Lawson said that he had not seen the sign yet so he did want to take action at this time. Manager Allard stated that she was only trying to accommodate someone who worked on the Common and wanted to park her motorcycle near work. Manager Allard did not consider this a major issue and was willing to remove or relocate the sign if the Board so desired. **Motion died for lack of a second.** This issue will be discussed at a future meeting. On a related topic, Trustee Hambleton had been approached about adding another handicapped parking space on the Common. Trustee McCarney had no objection but was unsure about the best location for it. He would like a recommendation from Management.

#### IV. REPORTS

##### a. Village Manager

- 1. **Water Project Bid Opening.** Manager Allard stated that bids for the next phase of the Water Project would be opened tomorrow (07/15/09) at 10:00 a.m. in the Municipal Building.
- 2. **Road Surface Management Software (RSMS) Program.** Robert Turner will meet again with members of the Northfield Highway Department before submitting his final report.

##### b. Committee Reports.

Trustee McCarney already had provided information above on the recent Inter-Local Agreement Committee meeting

##### c. Miscellaneous

- 1. **Northfield Safety Day.** Chair Baraw noted that the Annual Safety Day would be held this coming Saturday (07/18/09) between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. behind the Northfield Fire Station on Wall Street.
- 2. **Village Clock.** Trustee Hambleton had been contacted by someone who was kept awake by clock chiming in the early hours. She wanted to know if the chiming could be restricted after a certain hour. Manager Allard stated that there was a timer on the clock chimes; she suggested that they be silenced between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.
- 3. **Village Common Retaining Wall.** Trustee Lawson asked whether the retaining wall near the United Church could be removed and the lawn sloped downwards to the south side of the Common. Trustee McCarney thought this might be worth exploring, as this would cost less than rebuilding the wall. Manager Allard thought that an easement to do this work could be obtained without any difficulty.
- 4. **Private Water Line.** Trustee McCarney had asked last April that a meeting be set up to resolve a dispute over Water Department employees accessing a private water line (during an emergency) on Vermont Route 12A. Has this been done? Manager Allard said that it had not. In any case, the new water ordinance would deal with similar matters in the future. Trustee McCarney still felt that the suggested meeting should be held so that this particular issue can be resolved.

#### V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled). None.

#### VI. ADJOURNMENT.

Motion by Trustee Lawson, seconded by Trustee Hambleton, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

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