

**VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Minutes of August 25, 2009**

- I. **ROLL CALL.** Chair Samantha Baraw, Trustees Colin Bright, Libby Hambleton, Doug Lawson, and Thomas McCarney (absent). Also present were Superintendent of Public Works William Lyon, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Stephen Fitzhugh, Michael Popowski, Susan Popowski, Jill Donahue, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

Chair Baraw called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She noted that since Village Manager Nanci Allard was attending a meeting in Montpelier this evening, Superintendent William Lyon is here in her place.

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

III. **ACTION ITEMS**

a. **Approval of Minutes**

1. **August 11, 2009 (Joint Board Meeting).** With Trustee Thomas McCarney absent tonight, there were not enough Trustees present who were at the Joint Board Meeting in order to approve the minutes. Approval was postponed until the next meeting.

b. **Approval of Bills**

1. **Warrant #05-10.** Motion by Trustee Hambleton, seconded by Trustee Lawson, to approve Warrant #05-10 in the amount of \$36,353.80. Trustee Hambleton asked why the Village credit card was used for some purchases. Superintendent Lyon stated that this was done sometimes when the Village did not already have an account set up yet with a merchant. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- c. **Northfield Electric Department (NED) Line Tree Trimming Proposal.** As requested at a previous meeting, NED Technical Coordinator Stephen Fitzhugh developed a proposal for multi-year cycle plan options for tree trimming along the entire NED power system (approximately thirty-five miles). Mr. Fitzhugh provided the Board with a memorandum that detailed the estimated annual costs of either a five (5) year cycle (\$49,050) or a seven (7) year cycle (\$37,350). He noted that Green Mountain Power had been on a ten (10) year cycle for some time but was now moving towards a five (5) year cycle. Based upon the cost estimates, Mr. Fitzhugh recommended that the NED adopt the seven (7) year cycle initially with a reevaluation after the third year of implementation. If there were problems, NED could then switch to the five (5) year plan. Trustee Lawson asked how long the trimmers would be in Northfield to accomplish the scheduled trimming. Mr. Fitzhugh estimated about nine (9) weeks per year. Trustee Lawson noted the cost of the "Cycle Buster" (outside supervisor) who locates trouble spots. He asked if current Village personnel already provided this service. Superintendent Lyon stated that difficult areas were monitored on a regular basis but it was good to have an expert come in and evaluate potential hazards. He added that he was in favor of Mr. Fitzhugh's proposal for a seven (7) year cycle, as it conformed better to current budgeting. Trustee Lawson asked about possible state or federal stimulus money to cover part of these costs. Superintendent Lyon stated that such funds usually are targeted for substation upgrades, i.e. net metering, rather than line maintenance. Mr. Fitzhugh stated that if the Board provided authorization tonight, he planned to work with Davey Tree Expert Company and other local tree trimmers on firmer cost estimates, bid specifications, etc. Motion by Trustee Lawson, seconded by Trustee Hambleton, to authorize NED Technical Coordinator Fitzhugh to work with tree trimming companies in order to develop a proposal for system-wide tree trimming plan on a seven (7) year cycle. The Board will act formally upon Mr. Fitzhugh's proposal once it has been presented. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- d. **Village Common Sidewalks.** Chair Baraw noted that the Board had received two (2) separate letters deploring the poor condition of the sidewalks on the Village Common, especially on the north side. Susan Popowski, who owns property in that area, stated that she had last addressed the Board about a year ago (08/25/08) on this problem (though she acknowledged that Board membership had changed somewhat since then). She said that nothing had been done in the interim to address her main concerns, especially the extreme safety hazard. This included the lack of curbing in front of most business fronts, which meant that vehicles often parked well into the sidewalk area. She is concerned that one day someone will not stop but drive right into one of the buildings. In addition, the poor condition of the sidewalks is dangerous to pedestrians. She noted that, ironically, the area by the handicapped parking space is especially bad. The other main concern is the very poor appearance of the sidewalks, which does not encourage businesses to locate there. Ms. Popowski has heard the same excuses in the past about lack of funding, including unsuccessful grant applications for state or federal money, but believed that something had to be done no matter the cost or whoever had to pay for it.

Michael Popowski agreed with his wife. He then read from the "Northfield Common Enhancement Project," dated 1995, which specifically called for a revitalization of the Village Common area, including the sidewalks. He said that no one can deny the current unsafe condition of the sidewalks and added that this situation did not reflect well on a supposedly picturesque Vermont community.

Jill Donahue, who also owns property in the area (Northfield Pharmacy), agreed with Ms. Popowski that the lack of curbing meant that an accident was just waiting to happen. She also agreed on the poor appearance of the sidewalks, which may be a contributing factor in the number of vacant storefronts on the north side of the Common.

Chair Baraw noted that Manager Allard and Superintendent Lyon both had provided memorandums that indicated cost estimates as well as the amount of Village funds currently available for sidewalk construction. Trustee Lawson added that it was Manager Allard's recommendation that the Village obtain a quote from Dubois Construction on designing/building new sidewalk with granite curbing. He strongly prefers granite curb and concrete sidewalk to blacktop but would like cost estimates for all options. He noted that the current Zoning Administrator was addressing some of the concerns, i.e. lack of a "Downtown Designation," that led to previous denials of grant applications.

Chair Baraw thinks that everyone agrees that something had to be done but the question was over funding and timing. Michael Popowski felt that the safety issue was paramount and that something needed to be done sooner rather than later. He added that the merchants (property owners) in the area pay a lot in property taxes but were not asking anything for themselves; they are truly concerned about public safety. He added that previous concerns about property owners granting easements should not be seen as an obstacle, as all felt something had to be done and were willing to work with the Village to resolve this problem. Motion by Trustee Hambleton, seconded by Trustee Lawson, to authorize Manager Allard to obtain a quote from Dubois Construction to design/build new sidewalk with granite curb. This quote will include cost comparisons between concrete sidewalks and blacktop. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- e. **VPPSA/Member VT Transco Equity Agreement.** Chair Baraw stated that the current version of this agreement was a (slight) revision what had been approved last March. There were no significant changes. Motion by Trustee Lawson, seconded by Trustee Hambleton, to authorize Manager Allard to sign the revised Transco Equity Agreement. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- f. **VPPSA East Mountain Wind Project.** Chair Baraw stated that the Village of Northfield had received a letter from VPPSA asking if it would like to increase its percentage participation in this project, as one of the thirteen (13) VPPSA members chose not to participate at all. She noted that Manager Allard had advised against this at this time. Motion by Trustee Lawson, seconded by Trustee Bright, that the Village of Northfield decline to increase its participation percentage in the East Mountain Wind Project. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- g. **Committee Appointments.** Trustee Bright was appointed to the Board at the last meeting but not assigned to any of the vacant positions on the Board committees. Chair Baraw therefore appointed him to the Facilities Committee and the Highway Committee. He will serve on both with Trustee McCarney.

IV. REPORTS

a. Village Manager

1. **Water Project.** Superintendent Lyon reported that the construction trailer for the next phase of the Water Project had been sited near the Police Station and the work itself will begin on Monday, August 31, 2009. Trustee Lawson asked whether the Village was coordinating with Northfield Schools on this project, as the construction area was near the school buildings. Superintendent Lyon affirmed that he has been working closely with the school's Director of Maintenance, Jeff Haggett, who in turn was keeping the School Superintendent's office informed of all developments. The contractor (J.P. Sicard, Inc.) has been provided with the school class schedule and will try, whenever possible, to do the work closest to the schools over long weekends and during school vacations. Trustee Lawson asked if there was any thought to making Cemetery Street a two-way road during the busy student drop-off and pick-up times. Superintendent Lyon stated that all such options are being reviewed.
2. **Green Mountain Motorheads Car Show.** Superintendent Lyon declared that last weekend's event was an overall success even though the rain on Friday night probably reduced attendance at the street parade and dance.
3. **Street Paving.** Superintendent Lyon reported that paving was largely completed except for some minor corrections.

b. Committee Reports. None.

c. Miscellaneous

1. **Joint Board Meeting: September 14, 2009.** Manager Allard would like the Town Selectmen and the Village Trustees to meet jointly in order to discuss Inter-Company Charges. Motion by Trustee Hambleton, seconded by Trustee Lawson, to cancel the regular Trustees meeting of Tuesday, September 15, 2009 and hold a Joint Board Meeting with the Town Selectmen on Monday, September 14, 2009. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
2. **9-11 Remembrance Ceremony.** Chair Baraw noted that a public gathering will be held on the Village Common on Friday, September 11, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

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 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

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