

**VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Minutes of November 24, 2009**

- I. **ROLL CALL.** Chair Samantha Baraw, Trustees Colin Bright, Libby Hambleton, Doug Lawson, and Thomas McCarney. Also present were Village Manager Nanci Allard, Accounting Manager Laurie Baroffio, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Stephen Fitzhugh, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

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

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

III. **ACTION ITEMS**

a. **Approval of Minutes**

1. **November 9, 2009 (Joint Board Meeting).** Motion by Trustee McCarney, seconded by Trustee Lawson, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

b. **Approval of Bills**

1. **Warrant #11-10.** Motion by Trustee Hambleton, seconded by Trustee Lawson, to approve Warrant #11-10 in the amount of \$60,911.38. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Trustee McCarney abstaining.**

- c. **Stantec Consulting Design Contract (Route 12 South Water Line).** Manager Allard stated that Stantec Consulting had found a low pressure area along Vermont Route 12 between the intersection its Vermont Route 12A south to Gaylord (Terrace) Drive. Stantec Consulting would like to perform an engineering study for an estimated cost of \$9400. The work itself would be done as part of the next phase (South) of the Water System Improvements Project. Trustee McCarney is concerned that if this low pressure is a high priority matter, we should not wait until the South Phase construction (which might be years away depending on funding) to have it addressed. If fixing this is not a priority, he would not oppose waiting until the South Phase construction. Manager Allard stated that this has to be engineered no matter when the actual construction work is done. If grant money does become available, we should have the project engineering ready to go. Trustee Lawson asked if this amount was in the budget. Manager Allard stated that it was in the CIP Account for "Water Main Improvements." Trustee McCarney stated that he had no objection to the engineering study but repeated that he did not want the repair put on hold for the Water Project. If the work needed to be done sooner rather than later, it should be done separate. Motion by Trustee Lawson, seconded by Trustee Bright, to approve and sign the proposal from Stantec Consulting for an engineering study for a new water main on Vermont Route 12. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- d. **Village Common Sidewalk Improvements Funding.** Trustee Lawson noted that Zoning Administrator Michele Braun had provided the Board with a memorandum that outlined the background of a proposed federal grant application to rehabilitate the sidewalks around the Village Common. The monetary amount sought is based upon an engineering study that DuBois & King conducted in 2006 as part of a (unsuccessful) state grant application. He noted that Ms. Braun had spent considerable time and effort writing the application, obtaining letters of support, etc. There are no guarantees that the application will be successful though the feedback received so far has been positive. Since the Village would have to provide twenty percent (20%) non-federal matching funds, we also are looking at state funding and other sources. The application will be delivered to Burlington next Monday (11/30/09). Trustee McCarney thanked all those who have been working on this and considered this to be a positive effort to resolve a serious problem. He hoped that we could get some response by next spring since some decisions needed to be made by then regarding the sidewalks on the south side, the retaining wall, etc. Trustee Lawson stated that the south side sidewalks and the retaining wall would be addressed by the current phase of the Water Project and he has already discussed this matter with the contractor. In addition, he would like to hold informal meetings in the near future with representatives from Green Mountain Power (GMP), TDS Telecom, and Trans-Video regarding the possibility of moving utility lines underground. Trustee Hambleton stated that this was good information on this proposal and Chair Baraw concurred, thanking those responsible.

e. **Vermont Transco Equity update.** Manager Allard noted that at a previous meeting (10/13/09), the Board had authorized her to sign the Intent for VPPSA Purchase Resolution for 496 units of Transco Equity. Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) has now provided the final cost figures and the final purchase documents for signature. Motion by Trustee McCarney, seconded by Trustee Lawson, to authorize Manager Allard to sign the “Subscriber Signature Page” for the purchase of 31,415 shares of VT TRANSCO CLASS A and 39,983 shares of VT TRANSCO CLASS B for a total of 71,398 shares in the amount of \$713,980. Trustee McCarney had some concerns on how VPPSA owning the stock for the “benefit of Northfield” would affect the assets and liabilities of the Northfield Electric Department (NED). Accounting Manager Baroffio explained that, in according with Public Service Board (PSB) rulings, this stock is not registered as a liability but instead as an investment. Trustee Lawson noted that this was a complicated matter but NED had gained healthy returns on previous stock purchases. Manager Allard agreed that it was an excellent investment in that, historically, NED had received twelve percent (12%) returns. There was, however, no guarantee that this rate of return would continue. If the Village wanted out of the program, it always could sell the shares back to VPPSA for par. **Motion passed 4-1-0, with Trustee McCarney voting in opposition.**

f. **Village Highway Budget.** Manager Allard presented the proposed budget to the Board. She stated that the budget is up \$16,980, which would be less than a one cent (1¢) increase on the property tax. She then asked if there were any questions or comments.

Trustee McCarney asked why the cost for personnel services is up twelve and a half percent (12.5%). Accounting Manager Baroffio stated that this was mostly due to changes in the inter-company charges policy; the Village Highway Department now pays a portion of the Village Manager’s salary. Trustee McCarney also is concerned that there should be better tracking of when the Water/Sewer Department employees provide winter highway maintenance. He does not believe that this expense should be charged to the utility ratepayers. Accounting Manager Baroffio stated that the practice has been to charge regular hours to the Water/Sewer Department and overtime hours to the Village Highway Department. She suggested that this time be better tracked over this coming winter and any changes in billing could be incorporated into the FY 2011/2012 budget.

Trustee McCarney questioned the increase in the proposed budget for “Professional Service” from \$750 to \$2500. Manager Allard stated that this was to allow for any unanticipated engineering costs to be within the budget. Trustee Lawson agreed with Trustee McCarney that the increase was too large. The consensus of the Board was to set the amount at \$1000.

Trustee McCarney noted that \$41,400 was budgeted for streetlights. He asked if Northfield should follow the example of other communities and try to reduce costs by converting to more energy efficient lighting fixtures. Manager Allard stated that she had looked into an advertised grant to fund LED lighting conversion. Even though that particular grant had been pulled, we always are looking for other funding opportunities. Trustee McCarney suggested that the Village should take a more pro-active approach; he did not oppose self-funding this type of project if it would save money in the long run.

There were some questions on the projected cost of materials for the coming fiscal year; the projected cost of gasoline/diesel is down from last year’s estimate but the cost of road salt is up considerably. Manager Allard noted a new line item for “Safety Issues,” which is intended for the purchase of mandated safety equipment, etc. This is an attempt to show VOSHA that we are committed on this matter.

The discussion then turned to the Village Highway CIP Account. Trustee McCarney stated his concern regarding proposals to spend large amounts of the taxpayers’ money during this bad economy. He suggested that some purchases may need to be put off and some services curtailed or eliminated. For example, he believes that the leaf picker is a great expense and he would like Village residents to find another way to dispose of their leaves in the fall. Trustee Lawson would like to get rid of the street sweeper and hire someone else to do it. The Board postponed any decision on these issues until a later meeting.

On the projected spending for the Road Surface Management System (RSMS) Program, Trustee McCarney noted that \$60,000 is budgeted for the first year on Garvey Hill Road. He asked if this amount could be split over a couple years, as this road is listed as a low priority. Manager Allard will look into this.

IV. REPORTS

a. Village Manager

1. **Property Taxes on Utility Lines outside Northfield Village.** Manager Allard, along with three (3) of the Village Trustees (Bright, Hambleton, and Lawson) and a couple of Selectmen, attended the Listers Meeting on November 12, 2009 that addressed this matter. She asked the Board how it would like to proceed on this matter. Trustee Lawson believed that the Village had a legitimate objection to paying these taxes. There was a suggestion at the meeting that it would be a good idea for the Town Selectmen and Village Trustees to reach an agreement on this rather than resort to legal proceedings. If this is not possible, Trustee Lawson suggested that the Village may want to ask for a property tax exemption at next year's Town Meeting. This matter will be on the agenda of the next Joint Board Meeting (12/15/09).

b. Miscellaneous

1. **Northfield Electric Department (NED) update.** NED Technical Consultant Stephen Fitzhugh provided a brief update on various items, such as the proposed micro-hydro facility in Northfield Falls. He stated that Richard Podolec had received approval from the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), obtained a study grant, and was given a rate of 12½¢ per kilowatt hour if the facility is operational within three (3) years. Manager Allard is unsure about the timeframe for this project but there are a number of issues that still need to be resolved. Trustee McCarney suggested that Mr. Podolec should meet with the Board early next year and provide an update. Mr. Fitzhugh also noted that there will be some state money available for electric substation upgrades. He will keep the Board informed on this.
2. **December 2009 Meeting Schedule.** The Board would like to hold a Joint Board Meeting with the Town Selectmen on December 15, 2009 in order to discuss a number of issues, including ancient roads, street banners, and the aforementioned taxation of utility lines. In addition, the Board would like to cancel the meeting scheduled the week between Christmas and New Year's Day. Motion by Trustee McCarney, seconded by Trustee Hambleton, to cancel the regular meeting of December 29, 2009. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

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

VI. **ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Trustee Bright, seconded by Trustee Hambleton, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

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