

**TOWN/VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD
JOINT BOARD MEETING
BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN
BOARD OF VILLAGE TRUSTEES
Minutes of October 12, 2010**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Selectboard Chair Gregory Sanders, Selectmen Melvin Adams, Kenneth Goslant, Kenneth Johnson, and Charles Morse; Trustees Chair Doug Lawson (absent), Vice-Chair Colin Bright, Trustees Samantha Baraw (absent), Libby Hambleton, and Larry Porter. Also present were Municipal Manager Nanci Allard, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Gary Cohen, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None.

III. JOINT DISCUSSION

- a. FY 2011-2012 Inter-Company Charges Policy.** Manager Allard asked the Boards to approve the proposed policy prior to the beginning of the FY 2011-2012 budget process. The only change is that the Superintendent of Public Works position has been eliminated and replaced with a "Public Works Foreman." The new position is funded by Town General (5%), Town Highway (63.3%), and Village Highway (31.7%) (with nothing from utilities). Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Morse, to approve the FY 2011-2012 Inter-Company Charges Policy. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**
- b. DRAFT Town Road and Bridge Standards.** Selectman Adams stated that the State, at the request of the Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), had revised the recommended standards for local roads "in order to address pollution caused by transportation-related stormwater runoff." Municipalities must adapt their own standards to meet these recommendations in order to receive a "10% reduction in local match funds for municipal projects funded" by VTrans. Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to adopt the draft Town Road and Bridge Standards. Selectman Adams stated that the draft was intended for communities that did not have their own adopted road standards; the Town and Village already have their own roads standards that could be revised to incorporate the new requirements. **Motion to approve failed 0-8-0.** The current Town and Village road standards will be revised and brought to their respective boards at the next regular meetings. Selectman Johnson felt that the new requirements on additional seeding and mulching would require additional highway funding and this should be addressed during the upcoming highway budget sessions.
- c. Road Surface Management System (RSMS) Program.** The Boards were provided with a summary of the RSMS costs as well as updated road spreadsheets. Manager Allard noted that there were cutbacks in the amount of road coverage in order to reduce costs. She added that the consultant from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (Bob Turner) will work with Public Works Foreman Peter G. Demasi in order to update the database and prioritize for next year. Selectman Morse noted that the paving on South Main Street was not on the original proposal and he felt the public should be informed why there was this deviation from the plan approved on Town Meeting Day. Manager Allard stated that residents had approached the Village Trustees and asked them to address the poor condition of the paving this year; there was money in the Village Highway budget to do this. She added that all Town and Village roads were reevaluated in the spring (after Town Meeting Day) and some alterations in the initial plan were made to address actual road conditions. Selectman Adams stated that since there are two separate boards making road decisions, it is impossible to expect rigid adherence to a plan developed months beforehand. Trustee Porter noted that the State provides Northfield with \$10,000 each year for the maintenance of the non-State Highway section of Vermont Route 12; the South Main Street paving was funded out of these monies. Selectman Johnson stated that although there is always room for improvement, he felt that the first year of the RSMS program had been a real success.

IV. BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN

a. Approval of Minutes

1. **September 27, 2010 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Adams, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

b. Approval of Bills

1. **Warrant #08-11.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to approve Warrant #08-11 in the amount of \$197,687.36. There was a question about a phone line installed for voting. Manager Allard stated that because of the federal election this November there was a requirement to install a phone line at the Northfield Middle/High School. The phone line will be removed right after the election. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- c. **Town Highway Subcommittee Report.** Selectman Goslant and Johnson serve on this subcommittee and they met with Manager Allard and Public Works Foreman Demasi a couple weeks ago (09/28/10) to discuss various matters. Selectman Johnson reported that most of the discussion was on subcontracting plowing winter road maintenance (plowing and sanding) of some of backroads and side roads to a private contractor as was done last year for the first time. He noted that the initial year had been a trial period and he had seen real advantages in saving wear and tear on municipal equipment and crew, reducing overtime and material costs, etc. In addition, the feedback that he had received from the public was all positive. He added that Barre Town also had tried this sort of winter road maintenance subcontracting last winter and will do so again this year. Selectman Johnson felt that a three-year trial period would be best to properly evaluate the program. He stated that there had been some tweaking to program with some of the targeted roads regrouped or eliminated in order to improve efficiency and further reduce costs. Selectman Morse feels that the program has not been budgeted properly and would like any alleged savings to be documented. Selectman Johnson stated that there are some benefits that cannot be quantified, such as a properly rested highway crew, the lack of major damage to municipal equipment, etc. Selectman Adams also saw some value in the program. He added that there always was a balance between not overworking the highway crew as opposed to having all roads plowed for the morning commute. This program, by allowing the municipal crew to focus on the main roads while the subcontractor took care of the smaller, feeding roads did seem to allow a proper balance between the two. He did suggest that some methodology could be developed to properly compare how much it would cost for the municipal crew to provide winter road maintenance to these minor roads as compared to the cost of subcontracting their maintenance. This could include tracking material costs, labor costs, the mileage covered, etc. Selectman Adams felt that the details of this should be left to Foreman Demasi and the subcommittee so that the program could be put out to bid as soon as possible. Motion by Selectman Johnson, seconded by Selectman Adams, to authorize Foreman Demasi and the Town Highway Subcommittee to seek bid proposals for the winter road maintenance of selected roads with a revised list of affected roads and conditions and with the stipulation that costs do not exceed the \$29,000 allotted in the budget for this purpose. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Selectmen Morse abstaining (for lack of information).**

- d. **Town-Wide Reappraisal.** Selectman Adams stated that Board of Listers Chair Arlington Supplee had provided the Board with a substantial amount of information regarding the Listers' preparations for the next town-wide reappraisal. It is expected that the State soon will determine that Northfield's "Common Level of Appraisal" (CLA) has dropped below the 80% threshold and will mandate a town-wide reappraisal. Mr. Supplee suspects that the mandate letter would be received next spring and he would like Northfield already prepared to go out to bid when that happens. Since there is a scarcity of qualified appraisers for these projects, there might be some delay (a year or two) before the actual starting time of the reappraisal process. The Listers also have requested that there be an article on the Town Meeting Warning that would authorize them to seek bid proposals. Chair Sanders noted that the State would probably accept the delay better if it is clear that Northfield had made serious efforts to comply.

Selectman Adams added that the Listers will need to update their computer hardware and software in preparation for the reappraisal. This expense should be discussed during the upcoming budget sessions.

e. Status Reports: Various Projects

- 1. Town Highway 76 (off Vermont Route 12).** Chair Sanders has been informed by the landowner that the street sign is missing and needs to be replaced. In addition, the sign that indicates that the Town Highway ends at that location also is missing.
- 2. Manager's Evaluation.** Chair Sanders stated that the Selectmen are looking to conduct the annual Manager's Evaluation at their next regular meeting (10/25/10). He invited the Trustees to join them if they chose. Trustee Bright stated that they will probably wait until Chair Lawson returns from his vacation.

V. BOARD OF VILLAGE TRUSTEES

a. Approval of Minutes

- 1. September 14, 2010 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Trustee Hambleton, seconded by Trustee Porter, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

b. Approval of Bills

- 1. Validation of Warrant #07-11.** Motion by Trustee Porter, seconded by Trustee Hambleton, to validate the previous approval by signature of Warrant #07-11. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- 2. Warrant #08-11.** Motion by Trustee Porter, seconded by Trustee Hambleton, to approve Warrant #08-11 in the amount of \$791,543.18. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

- c. Bond Anticipation Note (Water Project-West Phase): \$518,819.43 at 2.25% interest.** Manager Allard explained that this note was for interim borrowing as the loan for this project was closed out. Motion by Trustee Porter, seconded by Trustee Hambleton, to approve and sign the Bond Anticipation Note for "Water System Upgrade" in the amount of \$518,819.43 at 2.25% interest; approve and sign the Resolution for Bond Anticipation Borrowing; and approve and sign the No-Arbitrage and Use of Proceeds Certificate. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

- d. Northfield Electric Department Rate Case.** Manager Allard stated that now that the Public Service Board has approved Northfield's rate case, she has met with VPPSA and will meet with NED Technical Advisor Stephen Fitzhugh and Utility Office Manager Doug Reed in order to determine the proper rate increase amount. She believes that the increase will be kept less than 5%.

- e. Status Reports: Various Projects.** The Trustees had nothing to add.

VI. MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Status Reports: Various Projects

- 1. Northfield Recycling Depot and Transfer Station.** Manager Allard stated that she will meet with Kevin Elnicki (East Waste Systems) soon in order to discuss improvements to the area.
- 2. West Hill Road Bridge.** The State has requested that the damage to this bridge (weakened concrete abutment) be addressed as soon as possible. Manager Allard has learned that an engineering study of the bridge needs to be done before any additional action can be taken. This study probably will have to wait until the spring.
- 3. Reflective Road Signs.** There is a requirement that all current road signs be replaced with reflective ones by 2015. Public Works Foreman Demasi has attended a workshop on this and will develop a sign replacement program (with cost estimates for budgeting purposes).
- 4. Lovers Lane Project.** The work on the road is about done.
- 5. Municipal Employee Compensation Study.** Manager Allard met last week with Frank Sadowski from Gallagher, Flynn, & Company, which is the firm that will be developing the study. The process begins this week.

6. **Town Garage Lift.** The lift at the Town Garage has failed an inspection and will need to be replaced.
7. **Proposed Wireless Communications Facility.** Manager Allard received a letter from StoneHill Environmental, Inc. indicating that they had been retained by Verizon Wireless to look into the possibility of siting a cell tower on private property on Camp Road. This proposal is in a very early stage and the company will be seeking public feedback.

On a related note, Selectman Adams reported that on Wednesday, October 27, 2010, there will be a forum held at 6:00 p.m. at the Northfield Middle/High School on the proposed installation of large industrial wind turbines on the Northfield Ridge (near Bear Farm Road).
8. **Water Project-South Phase.** Manager Allard stated that she has not heard back yet about the USDA Rural Development grant application for the third (and final) phase of the Water project. She hopes that we may hear back in the spring.
9. **Central Street Culvert Replacement Project.** Manager Allard stated that the project has been completed. Norwich University will pay the cost for the additional sidewalk and curbing installed south of the President's House. Trustee Porter would like the cost of this detailed so that the information can be applied to any similar work done on the Village Common.
10. **Municipal Water Loss.** Manager Allard stated that she and the Utilities Department are still trying to get a handle on the amount of municipal water lost on the system (i.e. unbilled).

VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Non-agenda items

- a. **Kathleen Lott: Superintendent of Public Works (SPW) position.** Ms. Lott asked what has become of the SPW position now that former SPW William Lyon has retired. Manager Allard stated that the position has been eliminated and the duties reassigned to other employees. Ms. Lott asked about the function of the new position of Assistant Public Works Foreman. Manager Allard stated that the former Highway Foreman (Peter G. Demasi) had been promoted to the management position of Public Works Foreman. The new assistant position is for someone who can assume some of Public Works Foreman's responsibilities when that person is on vacation, ill, etc. The Assistant Public Works Foreman is a union position.
- b. **Gary Cohen: SPW Position, etc.** Mr. Cohen asked why, when the SPW position was eliminated, some of the money previously allotted to it was used to increase the Municipal Manager's salary. Selectman Adams stated that this was not the case. The Municipal Manager's salary is set by contract and the salary specified in the current contract has not been increased. He added that misinformation about this has been circulating for some time. Mr. Cohen then brought up alleged hostile confrontations between Manager Allard and private citizens. Chair Sanders cut off Mr. Cohen at this time, stating that he was engaging in personal attacks. Selectman Adams agreed, adding that such personnel issues cannot be discussed in a public forum, especially when they involve allegations based on conjecture and rumor. These accusations should not have been brought up in this manner.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Trustee Porter, seconded by Trustee Bright, to adjourn. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

The Boards adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting.