

**VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
BUDGET MEETING #1
Minutes of March 30, 2010**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Samantha Baraw, Trustees Colin Bright, Libby Hambleton, Doug Lawson, and Thomas McCarney (6:17 p.m.). Also present were Village Manager Nanci Allard, Accounting Manager Laurie Baroffio, Superintendent of Public Works William Lyon, Water & Sewer Department Foreman Patrick Demasi, Stephen Fitzhugh (NED Technical Advisor), and Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann.

Chair Baraw called the budget meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

- II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None.

II. BUDGET WORK SESSION

The purpose of the meeting was to begin reviewing the Village General budgets for Fiscal Year 2010-2011. Manager Allard suggested that the review begin with the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budgets of the utility departments (Electric, Water, and Sewer) in order to accommodate the presence of Mr. Fitzhugh and Mr. Demasi at tonight's meeting.

Electric Department CIP Budget. Mr. Fitzhugh stated that he had met last week with Superintendent Lyon to discuss the budget priorities for the Northfield Electric Department (NED). He began by noting the deficit in the "Yearly Upgrade" account and suggested that this was largely due to tree trimming expenses that went way over budget this past year. He felt that part of this was because Northfield was now making up for previous inaction. Superintendent Lyon added that three (3) bad storms required an unanticipated amount of tree trimming/removal.

Mr. Fitzhugh then turned to the "Poles" account and stated that these funds were largely devoted to a survey of all the utility poles in Northfield. Poles already have been labeled so that they can be mapped properly and inventoried; this will allow us to know which are in most urgent need of replacement, which poles are owned outright by Northfield; which are shared, etc. The intent is to replace bad poles owned by Northfield first and then look at those jointly owned. He noted that there are 1700 poles total and Northfield owns two hundred (200) of them outright. Superintendent Lyon estimated that about four hundred (400) poles need to be replaced. He added that this study would provide an exact figure and was long overdue. In addition, some poles would be relocated further from the roads to lessen the chance of damage from automobiles, snowplows, etc. Some poles, he noted, just look "nasty" and reflect poorly on the community.

Mr. Fitzhugh then went on to briefly touch on other items in the Electric CIP accounts. Regarding the "Rebuild Circuits" account, he noted that some circuits on Union Brook Road need to be realigned as they are too close to the road. He then discussed the upgraded mapping project in the "Mapping" account, which includes a flyover; Zoning Administrator Michele Braun is now working on the RFP for this. He then spoke about the "Primary Metering Poles" account; he noted that there already is enough money in the account to upgrade the poles and move everything from old poles to new ones ("post to pedestal"). This also would allow for correction of anomalies on the system, such as meters located inside of structures. The "Reclosers" account, he stated, incorrectly indicated the cost of each recloser as \$43,000; the correct figure is \$33,000. Mr. Fitzhugh said that one (1) recloser at the King Street Substation already had been replaced; three (3) remained to be done. In addition to the funds already on hand, he stated that government money was available for this project ("smart grid investment" funds). Any extra money could be used to maintain the other reclosers and add additional circuit breakers ("sectionalizers") onto the system. The separate line item for sectionalizers was then deleted.

Manager Allard stated that tree trimming/removal account had been moved to CIP as it has become a quite large expense; we are in a "catch up" phase. Mr. Fitzhugh stated that when the Village has "caught up" on this, it would be possible to get into a more regular budgeting routine. Trustee McCarney stated that the situation had been allowed to become deplorable; this issue must be addressed so that the electric system would become both more reliable and safer. Mr. Fitzhugh added that some of the worst problems had been resolved already. Trustee McCarney stated that he was concerned that other items might have been similarly neglected over time and might become other unexpected large expenses.

Mr. Fitzhugh stated that the \$10,000 request for "Transformer Disposal" was probably too high. He said that there was a couple of old transformers that needed to be either sold or scrapped but it would not cost that much (if anything). This amount was removed from the proposed budget.

Water Department CIP Budget. Superintendent Lyon, along with Foreman Demasi, then addressed a number of items in the Water Department CIP accounts. Regarding the "Surveys" account, Superintendent Lyon stated that boundary surveys of Village property needed to be professionally done for the Cheney Farm, Dustin's Pasture, etc. Among other things, this would allow the Village to log on this land and bring in some revenue. At Accounting Manager Baroffio's suggestion, this account was renamed "Ownership Identification."

As regards the "Hydrants" account, Superintendent Lyon stated that the Water Department is looking to replace fifty to fifty-five (50-55) old hydrants that lack valves, are too close to the road, etc. Replacement costs range from \$3,500 to \$10,000 each, depending upon hydrant location, easement costs, etc. Hydrants in the Water Project areas are budgeted as part of that project. Trustee McCarney felt that it would take too long to replace all these hydrants at the pace contemplated; perhaps the annual amount devoted to this should be increased. Manager Allard suggested that the Board come back to this item later.

Superintendent Lyon stated that the proposed increase in the "Meters" account was an attempt to get a handle on water loss on the system; older meters would be replaced with newer, more accurate ones. Manager Allard noted that the Village could not account for twenty-five percent (25%) of its pumped water. Meter replacement could help track down and resolve this problem. The new "Meter Testing" account would be devoted to testing the new meters to insure their reliability over time.

Superintendent Lyon then discussed a couple upcoming projects in the "Mains & Sidestreets" account; these would be located on Cox Brook Road (new main under the river) and the Bean Business Park (improved fire protection). Trustee Lawson suggested that, given the current dispute with the Town Selectmen over the taxing of utility lines located outside the Village, it might be best to focus upon projects within Village boundary lines for the time being.

Noting the amount already accumulated in the "Valves Replacement" account, Trustee McCarney asked if this annual expenditure could be reduced. Superintendent Lyon said that this was a possibility.

Regarding the new "Correlator-Equipment" account, Superintendent Lyon explained that these were listening devices that were installed at intervals along the system and allowed tracking of low use periods, water leaks, etc.

Manager Allard stated that the "New 3-Bay Garage" account was for the construction of a structure near that Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) that would allow the Water Department to finally move out of the Municipal Building basement. If the Board prefers, this new expense could be deferred to another time.

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

V. ADJOURNMENT. Without objection, the budget meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

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