

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
Minutes of November 10, 2014**

- I. **ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair John Quinn III, Selectmen Kevin T. Beal, Brad Denny, Dennis Donahue (absent), Lynn Doney, Matthew Gadbois, Kenneth W. Goslant, K. David Maxwell, and James R. Wilson. Also present were Town Manager Jeffrey Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Road Foreman Ray Hudson, Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi, Arlington Supplee (Board of Listers Chair), John Kiernan (Phelps Engineering), Annette Lorraine (Annette Lorraine PLC), Brenda Cruickshank, Jeffrey Reilly, Louisa Reilly, Frank Plumley, Rob Higgins, Billi Higgins, Thomas Mayo, Ann Mayo, Betsy Higgins, Scott Higgins, Sharon Alderman, Michael Sullivan, William Smith, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

Chair Quinn called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

- II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
- III. **SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** Due to the large number of Central Street residents present, Chair Quinn asked that the discussion of proposed street changes as part of the Central Street Water Main Replacement Project be moved forward in the meeting.

IV. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):**

- a. **Arlington Supplee, Board of Listers: Town-wide Reappraisal Update.** Mr. Supplee reported that the final phases of the Town-wide reappraisal were going as well as could be expected. Data has been collected for almost all of the over 1800 residential parcels and work now is focusing on the remaining commercial properties. This data collection should be completed by early December and the data will be evaluated over the winter. He still expects that the reappraisal report will be ready to be sent to the printer in April 2015 and afterwards distributed by mail to all Northfield property owners.
- b. **Arlington Supplee, Board of Listers: 2014 Grand List Errors & Omissions.** Mr. Supplee is requesting that the Grand List be increased by \$31,190 to reflect that a mobile home was moved from one lot to another without notification to the Town Clerk's Office. Since paperwork was not filed with the Town, the taxable real value of the new location erroneously was listed at \$0. Motion by Selectman Beal, seconded by Selectman Wilson, to correct the 2014 Grand List as requested. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**
- c. **John Kiernan, Phelps Engineering: Central Street Water Main Replacement Project Proposed Street Changes.** At the last meeting (10/28/14), Mr. Kiernan presented a proposal to the Select Board that as part of the upcoming project to replace water mains on Central Street that the location of the new mains (and hydrants) be moved off of private property on the west side of the street (where they now reside) and into the Town's right-of-way. This would necessitate narrowing the street and restricting on-street parking to the east side of Central Street. Mr. Kiernan added that the new water mains must be located on the west side of the street since the existing sewer lines are located under the street's center and the east side of the street is being reserved for potential new storm water lines. The redesigned street would have two travel lanes about twelve feet (12') wide each, which would make the street too narrow for parking on both sides. There would be about fifty (50) marked parking spaces located along the east side of the street. Narrowing the street also could be considered a safety measure. The posted speed limit on Central Street is twenty-five miles per hour (25 MPH) but this is rarely observed. Although they would lose the right to park in front of their homes, residents on the west side would have their front lawns extended by a few feet when the water lines and hydrants are shifted off their properties. As this proposal was new to the Select Board and there were only five (5) members present, action on this proposal was tabled until Central Street residents could be contacted in order to obtain their views on this proposal.

Sharon Alderman asked if there had been any consideration for the residents on the west side who would like to park in front of their homes to unload vehicles, etc. when this proposal was first considered. Chair Quinn said that his main concern when he first heard of this proposal was for Central Street residents living in apartment buildings or multi-family residences and where they would park. He also wondered where people visiting to the street would park.

Brenda Cruickshank shares this apprehension about where residents would park since there already are parking restrictions in place for the south end of the street near the Norwich University campus. She also is concerned that home values on the street might go up or down based upon whether residents live on the west side with extended lawns or on the east side with marked on-street parking.

Scott Higgins thinks that Central Street is a nice wide street and does not see the point of narrowing it. He also does not want marked parking spaces in front of his house that would make the street look like a Walmart parking lot. He would like Central Street kept as it is.

William Smith sees this water project as an opportunity for street improvements. He feels that due to its proximity to Norwich University, this probably is one of Northfield's busiest pedestrian streets and drivers do tend to speed through since it is extra wide in places. He is concerned about his and other children on the street and would like to see drivers slowed down.

Jeff Reilly fears that if the street is left as is and the new sidewalks are widened to five feet (5'), west side residents actually would be losing even more of their front lawns since he estimates that the current sidewalks there are about three feet (3') wide. Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi stated that one of the reasons this proposal was developed was because some of these residents did lose part of their front lawns when sidewalks were first installed on Central Street.

Frank Plumley lives on the west side of Central Street and since he is legally blind, he depends on people driving him around and stopping in front of his house to pick him up. He would not like to have to cross the street and have to wait there to be picked up. He also is a member of the Congregational Church, which has its parsonage located on Central Street. The church holds many evening meetings there and Mr. Plumley is concerned that the nearby on-street parking would be insufficient if limited to one side of the street. He also would like to see traffic speed reduced on Central Street but feels there should be better solutions than reducing the amount of on-street parking. Michael Sullivan believes that pedestrians are safer when there is a buffer of parked cars between them and street traffic. Ms. Cruickshank worries that if on-street parking is further restricted on Central Street, parkers might shift over to Washington Street, which is a much narrower street.

Chair Quinn then asked if any of the Select Board members would like to comment on this. Selectman Wilson said that he also likes Central Street as it is. If easements are required to keep the water lines and hydrants located on private property, so be it. Selectman Maxwell asked if the project could be delayed if easements are not provided. Mr. Kiernan stated that if someone does not want a hydrant located on his/her property, it could be easily relocated. In that case, Selectman Maxwell sees no need to make any substantial street changes. Selectman Doney agreed with this.

Selectman Gadbois asked the Central Street residents present if any of them would object to having a hydrant placed on their properties. There were no objections. In fact, as one of them pointed out, having a hydrant that close to your house can result in reduced home insurance costs. Chair Quinn also would like the street kept the way it is. Selectman Beal felt that there were some significant advantages to the proposed changes to the street and he would especially like to see traffic speed reduced. However, since it appears to be the consensus of the Central Street residents present tonight that the street should be left as is, he would defer to their judgment. Selectmen Goslant and Denny also felt that the street should not be redesigned as part of this project. Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, that the design plans for the Central Street Water Main Replacement Project should remain as originally drafted. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

Selectman Maxwell advised that if Central Street residents have any suggestions for reducing traffic speed, they should forward them to Manager Schulz so that he can consult with Police Chief James Dziobek and the Select Board to find solutions. One option brought up tonight was the installation of speed bumps at regular intervals. Manager Schulz noted that since there are no speed bumps on any Northfield road at this time, he would have to do some further investigation on this possibility.

- d. **Annette Lorraine: Request for River Corridor Conservation Easement.** Ms. Lorraine is the attorney representing Joseph and Deborah Zuaro, who are working with the Vermont River Conservancy to conserve an 8.7 acre area of their property that borders the Dog River. In order to do this, the Select Board must authorize Manager Schulz to sign a "Consent to Conservation" form that would waive the Town's "historic lease interest" in this property. Chair Quinn asked if this area was located in a flood plain. Ms. Lorraine confirmed that it was. Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve the "Consent to Conservation" form and authorize Manager Schulz to sign it. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

## V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

- a. **Road Foreman Ray Hudson.** Mr. Hudson had distributed a written report to the Select Board members in advance and now asked if they had any questions about its contents. Chair Quinn asked if the autumn grading had been completed on all roads. Mr. Hudson confirmed this and added that the crowns in the middle of the roads had been reduced to make snow plowing easier.

**VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **October 28, 2014 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-3, with Selectmen Beal, Maxwell, and Wilson abstaining.**

**VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. **Warrant #10-15.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Beal, to approve Warrant #10-15 in the amount of \$381,442.87. Selectman Goslant noted the continued high cost of heating the Brown Public Library and asked if anything was being done to address this. Selectman Denny is on the Town Buildings & Energy Committee, which looked into this matter and determined that a major cause was that none of the current building staff knew how to operate the control panel for the heating system. This was fixed a couple weeks ago and this should be reflected when the next batch of heating bills are received.

Chair Quinn noted that the Northfield Fire Department (NFD) received a grant to purchase new pagers. Does this mean that NFD will not be requesting funds for pagers in the upcoming budget sessions? Manager Schulz will look into this. Selectman Maxwell asked if all payments have been made for the Village Common Rehabilitation Project completed earlier this year. Manager Schulz confirmed this was the case and that the project came in about \$20,000 under budget. There had been some delayed payments due to change orders, etc. Selectman Gadbois asked if it were possible to upgrade the pumps at the well field in order to decrease their electric usage. Mr. DeMasi said that the pumps there all were fairly new and energy efficient. Selectman Goslant asked if electric bills for the well field were billed to taxpayers. Manager Schulz stated that this expense was charged only to utility customers. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

- b. **Bi-Weekly Payroll through October 26, 2014.** Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$71,426.29. It seemed to Selectman Gadbois that clerical labor expenses for the Electric Department went up sharply over this last pay period. Manager Schulz will check on this. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

**VIII. SELECT BOARD**

- a. **Request for Waiver of Homestead Late Filing Fee.** The Town has received requests that the Select Board waive the fee for late filing for homestead property tax status. Although it is set by the State, the late fee does go to the Town so the Select Board does have the right to waive it and reimburse those affected. Manager Schulz noted that in the past year, forty-three (43) Northfield taxpayers paid this late fee for a total of \$2600. In his experience, some towns choose to waive this penalty while others will not. He believes that a blanket waiver and reimbursement makes more sense than deciding on a case-by-case basis. So far, there have been three (3) verbal requests for late fee waivers but nothing has been submitted in writing. Selectman Denny felt that if Northfield was a rich town this would not be a problem; since it is not, he sees no reason to reimburse these funds. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Goslant, that the Select Board deny any current and future requests that this late filing fee be waived. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

**IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS.** There were none.

**X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT.** Selectman Maxwell was grateful for Manager Schulz's emailed report but would be grateful if it could be sent before the day of the meeting. Manager Schulz will try next time.

**XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).** There was none.

**XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a legal matter with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:30 p.m.

Motion by Selectman Beal, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 8:50 p.m. No action was taken.

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Beal, to adjourn. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the Select Board meeting of November 25, 2014.