

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, September 24, 2019**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, Kenneth W. Goslant, and Nathaniel Miller (absent). Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), Thomas Alsheimer (Board of Listers), Sally Davidson (Recreation Committee), Bethany Drum, Jeffrey Ott, David Hanna, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 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.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)

- a. Thomas Alsheimer, Board of Listers: 2019 Grand List Errors & Omissions.** Mr. Alsheimer asked the Select Board members to decrease the assessed value of a Shaw Circle property by \$40,000. The property owner submitted his paperwork for a Veteran's Exemption on time but the State of Vermont did not process it in a timely manner. Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the requested Grand List adjustment. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- b. Sally Davidson, Recreation Committee: "Trunk or Treat," etc.** Ms. Davidson first thanked the Select Board members for their support as a lot of work was accomplished in the public parks this past summer. She then asked for their permission to hold this year's Halloween "Trunk or Treat" on the Common. This would be the third year for this event and Ms. Davidson is asking that the south side of the Common be closed to through traffic for safety reasons. She expects about fifteen (15) to eighteen (18) vehicles with candy to be distributed and there might be an effort to shift the activity area away from the parking spaces and closer to the center of the Common. The event will take place on Thursday, October 31, 2019, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. so Ms. Davidson would like the road closure to start around 3:00 p.m. for the setup. She will contact personally the nearby businesses so their employees will be informed to park elsewhere after lunch. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the request to temporarily close the south side of the Common so that the "Trunk or Treat" event can be held. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

- a. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio.** Ms. Baroffio had provided the Select Board members with copies of financial statements for fiscal year 2018/2019, which ended on June 30, 2019. She has not yet received the final report from the contracted auditors but doesn't expect much of a difference from what she submitted to the Select Board members. Ms. Baroffio noted the Select Board had budgeted \$4,517,380 for this fiscal year and the actual expenditures, debt, etc. came out to \$4,476,380.57. This is a variance of less than one percent (1%). The Town General budget had a positive balance of \$76,750.38 but the Highway Department budget had an overage of \$43,631.34. Ms. Baroffio noted there was a time during the previous fiscal year when the Highway Department budget projected a deficit of around \$73,000. This was reduced due to a vacancy in the Mechanic position and the transfer of cost to the FEMA grant for the April storm.

Ms. Baroffio said the Undesignated Fund Balance for the municipality remained positive (\$142,635.96) despite a deficit in the Highway Department (\$27,118.31). She then noted some special circumstances that affected certain departments. For example, the Accounting Department had a \$4,762.47 deficit because a twenty (20) year employee retired and there were accrued payments that had to be made. In addition, the Northfield Police Department (NPD) had a \$26,625.25 overage in its overtime line item but this was offset by other personnel savings. This included the fact that the current police chief (John Helfant) wasn't hired until almost four (4) months into the fiscal year.

Chair Maxwell noted the NPD budget for the current fiscal year includes a significant increase for overtime expenses in order to avoid the possibility of future shortfalls. He also said the Northfield municipality is very fortunate to have a financial director of Ms. Baroffio's ability. Chair Maxwell then asked if Ms. Baroffio saw any major concerns that should be addressed. Ms. Baroffio said NPD overtime will continue to be reviewed throughout the year and during the upcoming FY 2020/2021 budget-making process. Chair Maxwell thought it would be helpful if the biweekly payroll sheets would indicate the NPD overtime budget for the current fiscal year and the total amount spent to date. Ms. Baroffio said this information could be added manually. She warned NPD overtime expenses are not consistent throughout the year (due to summer vacations, winter holidays, etc.) and this might lead to false projections.

Ms. Baroffio also noted \$28,000 in savings in the debt retirement account because the Select Board members decided not to borrow funds for Brown Public Library building improvements. The cost was less than expected and we were able to use the savings from the debt payment to pay for the repair cost. Board member Goslant felt the building still required some work, especially the entryway. He also said the Town Mechanic vacancy might have resulted in some personnel savings but it also meant some road maintenance work was not being done. Chair Maxwell and the other Select Board members then thanked Ms. Baroffio for the good report and her continued excellent work. Ms. Baroffio will share this appreciation with her staff members.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **September 10, 2019 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #06-20.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve Warrant #06-20 in the amount of \$331,384.23. Board member Goodrich noted some refunds to Northfield Electric Department (NED) customers. Manager Schulz said the format for these refunds seemed to have changed so he will inquire about this. Chair Maxwell noted a \$26,635 payment for stone/gravel and asked if this was for a special project. Manager Schulz this was regular road maintenance with material being put down on some of the higher priority backroads including Stony Brook Road, Monti Road, etc. Chair Maxwell noted the Sewer Department purchased a large amount of chemicals in the past month. Manager Schulz said with Norwich University back in session, the wastewater treatment facility now is getting more of a workout than it did during the summer. Board member Goslant noted of the total warrant amount, about \$145,000 was spent purchasing power for NED. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through September 8, 2019.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$95,749.84. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Public Forum: Northfield Town Forest Stewardship Plan.** Manager Schulz said the Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC) made use of grant funds to draft a Town Forest Stewardship Plan. This plan includes an inventory of flora and fauna in the Town Forest, recommendations its preservation, etc. NCC will hold a public forum tomorrow night (09/25/19) at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room located in the Brown Public Library (93 South Main Street). This forum will seek initial public feedback on the stewardship plan. NCC Chair Deborah Zuaro then will address the Select Board members at their October 2019 regular meetings for additional input before asking for formal Select Board approval for the plan. Manager Schulz already has suggested to Ms. Zuaro that the plan should make clear that as the local elected legislative body, the Select Board should be clearly designated as the final authority for any decisions involving the Town Forest.

Board member Goodrich asked if this was an original document or if this was an update of an earlier one. Manager Schulz said this stewardship plan is a brand new so there are no precedents to which it could be compared. He noted in the past decisions regarding the Town Forest were done on a case-by-case basis. Board member Goslant said he would have some suggestions of his own at the appropriate time. His main concern is over-regulation that might restrict certain lawful uses of these public lands. Chair Maxwell has similar concerns. He added the stewardship plan is extensive in scope and contains a lot of valuable information. Chair Maxwell then encouraged interested members of the public to attend tomorrow night's forum.

- b. Public Hearing: Proposed Northfield Town Plan.** Manager Schulz said the Planning Commission (PC) members have been working diligently since mid-2017 on revising the local municipal plan that was last approved in September 2014. With the use of grant funds, the PC members have prepared a finalized draft that will be presented for questions, comments, etc. at a PC public hearing on Monday, October 21, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room. Based on the feedback received at this initial hearing, the PC members may further revise the plan or send it "as is" to the Select Board members so they can schedule the first of two (2) public hearings it is required to hold before formally approving the document. If substantive changes are made at that time, the document would have to be returned to the PC members for further input. If the revisions are significant, it may be necessary to hold additional public hearings prior to approval. Manager Schulz noted the current draft of the proposed Town Plan (dated 09/04/19) is available for download at the municipal website (www.northfield-vt.gov) and hardcopies are available for review at the Municipal Building (51 South Main Street). Board member Goslant still has concerns about possible new restrictions that might discourage economic development in the lower-density sections of the community. Manager Schulz said the approved Town Plan will make recommendations but will not have the force of law until local zoning regulations are themselves revised. That will be the PC members' next major project after the Town Plan itself has been approved.
- c. Ratification of IBEW Union Contract.** As this matter involves contract negotiations, Chair Maxwell would like this discussion held later in the meeting in executive session. There was no objection.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. Norwich University (NU) Bicentennial Homecoming Weekend.** Chair Maxwell wanted to thank NU administrators, NU students, NU alumni, Northfield residents, and all others who helped to make this event such a great success. Initial estimates put the number of participants at around 6,000. Board member Doney noted the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) had a presence on the NU campus over the weekend for not just the homecoming activities but also for various scheduled sporting events. The NAS crew did an outstanding job. Board member Goslant also wanted to thank the municipal employees, volunteers like the Northfield Gardeners club, and all others who helped clean up and beautify the downtown area before all the visitors arrived. This special event was a massive undertaking with temporary parking areas, shuttle buses, etc. and he hasn't heard any complaints about the inevitable inconveniences. Board member Goslant feels the Northfield community has a lot to be proud of.
- b. Northfield Police Department (NPD) Kudos.** Board member Doney wanted to thank the NPD officers for their strong presence on the Common over the Labor Day holiday weekend. He also wanted to thank them and Chief Helfant for their increased patrol work as their visible presence in the community is a great benefit to all.
- c. Memorial Park update, etc.** Board member Doney reported the lights have been installed at the basketball courts for nighttime use. He felt there should be more illumination of the courts so there is the possibility of installing bigger lights next spring. Also, the smaller "kids court" has been resurfaced and sealed. The picnic tables and trash cans that were "borrowed" for use on the Common over the Labor Day holiday weekend will be returned to the park in the next few days. In addition, Board member Doney would like Highway crew to freshen up the area around the student-painted wall mural on North Main Street. Manager Schulz will see to this.

- d. **Nantanna Mill Renovations.** Board member Goslant is very impressed with the work recently done at Nantanna Mill (AKA College Town Industrial Plaza). Cabot Hosiery is renting part of the facility to sort and prepare for shipment its popular Darn Tough Vermont brand and this required installation of new loading docks, improved driveways, new parking spaces, etc.

X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **State Grant Availability.** Manager Schulz has been informed of additional state grant opportunities. He is most interested in one that will provide funding to build a new and larger salt shed. The municipality already has one in Northfield Falls but it is old and too small for its purpose.
- b. **Cox Brook Road Paving Project.** Manager Schulz said Pike Industries ground down the old pavement about a month ago with the intention to let the area settle for a few weeks. The current schedule now has Pike Industries installing a new base coat over the next couple weeks. The final coat would be put down about three (3) weeks after the base coat has been allowed to settle. This will complete the project.
- c. **Union Street/Water Street Stormwater Project.** Manager Schulz said now that the sidewalks have been paved, the only part of the project left to be done is the restoration of the paved road where it was disturbed. He said Pike Industries will be doing this work after the Cox Brook Road paving project has been completed. Jeffrey Ott lives on Bear Farm Road and is disappointed the repaving is going to take so long. There are some significant potholes in the road now and he hopes they can be filled in during the interim. Manager Schulz will speak to Highway Foreman Trent Tucker about this.
- d. **East Street/North Main Street Sidewalk Project.** Board member Goodrich asked about the remaining work to be done on this. Manager Schulz said the paver would be returning later this week to add about sixty feet (60') of sidewalk that would link the East Street businesses to the adjacent parking lot. Additional cleanup work also will be done then. Board member Goslant feels they have done an outstanding job. However, there are other bad sections of sidewalk in town also needing to be addressed. Chair Maxwell noted some rough spots on the Wall Street sidewalk were recently patched.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Jeffrey Ott and David Hanna: Hallstrom Road Pavement Problems.** Mr. Ott said the paved section of Hallstrom Road at the termination of Union Brook Road is in very bad condition and should be fixed before wintertime. Board member Goslant would like to inspect the site with Manager Schulz tomorrow afternoon to see what should be done. Mr. Hanna lives at that location and said the usual maintenance procedure of adding loose gravel doesn't seem to help very much as it just washes away in the next storm.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a contract and personnel matters with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:15 p.m.

Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:05 p.m.

Without objection, the Select Board authorized Manager Schulz to sign and finalize ratification of the contract agreement between the Town of Northfield, Vermont and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 300. This agreement will be in effect from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2024.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:08 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 regular Select Board meeting of October 8, 2019.