

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of July 26, 2022**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Julie H. Goodrich (absent), Charles Morse (absent), Lydia Petty, and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), Tom Davis (Economic Development Director), Matt Caldwell, Lois Melander, and Carolyn Stevens.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Those persons present were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The remote contingent also participated as much as possible.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

- IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):** None.

V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

- a. Laurie Baroffio, Finance Director.** In the packets were copies of financial statements prepared by Ms. Baroffio that covered fiscal year 2021/2022, which ended on June 30, 2022. Ms. Baroffio said the statements include all invoice payments for this fiscal year as of last Friday (07/22/22) but it may be several weeks until all the bills come in. For example, we still are expecting an invoice from Mountain Alliance. In addition, delinquent tax payments for previous fiscal years still are coming in. The Vermont Homeowner Assistance Program (VHAP) is helping households that suffered financial hardships related to the COVID-19 pandemic by providing funding to pay off back taxes. Manager Schulz said letters informing residents of this program have been included in the most recent delinquent tax notices, which are sent out monthly. There also have been warnings that parcels with more than one year of delinquent taxes may be subject to tax sale. Ms. Baroffio said the state already has made \$34,000 in local late/delinquent tax payments. Funds also have come in to assist with utility bills.

Ms. Baroffio said the outside auditors will be working in the Municipal Building the week of August 22, 2022. Their final report should be completed before the Select Board members begin budget meetings this fall in order to draft the next fiscal year budget. Ms. Baroffio then noted revenue for the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) was up \$35,000 during FY 2021/2022. The municipality also received about \$45,000 in net revenue from the COVID-19 testing sites NAS members operated several times each week. This program recently ended due to decreased demand in recent months. Ms. Baroffio then highlighted some budgets that had significant savings and/or unexpected revenue amounts during the previous fiscal year. For example, Current Use payments were up \$18,000. The Board of Listers budget had a \$16,000 positive balance and the Northfield Police Department (NPD) was under budget by about \$60,000. There were net savings of \$12,000 in the Economic Development budget as the Economic Development Director position was unfilled most of the year. There also were \$5,000 savings in debt management.

The Highway Department received about \$22,000 in unanticipated state aid and their overtime budget was down about \$14,000. There currently are favorable FY 2021/2022 balances of about \$207,000 in the Town General budget and about \$45,000 in the Highway Department budget. As indicated earlier, those amounts will change as more invoices arrive for material purchased and/or work performed for the municipality prior to July 1, 2022. In a final note, Ms. Baroffio said the number of NAS service runs in 2021 were about seventeen percent lower than pre-pandemic levels. The decrease in 2022 is down to about nine percent so we are moving in the right direction. Chair Maxwell then asked if the Board members had any questions for Ms. Baroffio. None did but all were grateful for the favorable financial report and for all the good work Ms. Baroffio and her staff perform throughout the year.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **July 12, 2022 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Approval of Warrant #02-23.** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve Warrant #02-23 in the amount of \$610,707.89. Board member Stevens noted a \$35,147 invoice for a "fuel system replacement" on the Highway Department's 2020 Chevy pickup truck. Manager Schulz said there was a significant problem with the vehicle's fluids. Insurance will cover the expense. Chair Maxwell asked about "corrective" water and sewer payments for the municipal pool. Manager Schulz said the amounts due had been readjusted for accuracy. Chair Maxwell then noted payments to Englobe to manage the sludge produced by the wastewater treatment facility. He asked if the sludge is still being treated to reduce its odor. Manager Schulz said the concern about excessive odor began when Casella Waste Systems said this was why they would no longer accept our sludge at their landfill in Coventry, VT. Measures were taken to reduce the offensive smell and the municipality also made arrangements with the City of Barre to have Northfield sludge delivered and stored at its facility before shipment to a Canadian site. Now the sludge is being picked up directly at our wastewater treatment facility by a Canadian company (Englobe) and transported across the border to be converted into compost and top-soil products. Chair Maxwell asked why the sludge isn't taken to Coventry, which is closer. Manager Schulz said that landfill no longer accepts sewer sludge (no matter how it smells). Chair Maxwell asked how much more does it cost to have the sludge shipped to Canada. Manager Schulz said the extra cost was about twenty percent. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through July 10, 2022.** Motion by Board member Petty, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$115,884.55. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Grand List Errors and Omissions.** Manager Schulz said the Listers have requested two changes to the 2022 Grand List. The first would be an addition of \$35,800, which is the assessed value of a trailer home located in the Northfield Falls Trailer Park that was removed by error from the Grand List. The second would be a \$200 reduction because the size of a home deck was entered incorrectly. Chair Maxwell asked if there had been any assessment appeals. Manager Schulz said a few grievances were filed but all were worked out. Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve the Grand List revisions as requested. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- b. **New Economic Development District.** Economic Development Director Tom Davis has been working on this matter and provided a brief memorandum to the Select Board members explaining the process. He also is present tonight to answer any questions. Mr. Davis said currently there are three multi-county economic development districts in Vermont covering the northern, eastern, and southern parts of the state. There remain four counties (Addison, Chittenden, Rutland, and Washington) left out of this and their regional planning commissions have started the process of forming a new one to be called the West Central Vermont Economic Development District. If the process is successful, these regional planning commissions would have improved standing when applying for grant funds from the U.S. Economic Development Agency. As the first step, these regional planning commissions have developed a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document. The municipalities in the affected counties were not included in the drafting process prior to the public comment period, which now is open and will conclude Friday, August 26, 2022. Mr. Davis said the CEDS document is over two hundred pages long and can be reviewed at the website www.westcentralvt.org. He noted the process of forming this economic development district can take up to five years before formal certification. However, just starting the process does create additional grant application opportunities. A majority vote from the involved communities is required before moving forward with the certification process.

Mr. Davis also provided from the CEDS tables labelled the Central Vermont Sub-Region SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) and SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results). These evaluate the current condition of such regional concerns as workforce, education, business climate, infrastructure, quality of life, etc. in communities located in the proposed district. Mr. Davis said whether this process will go forward would be based on the number of communities that are interested. In Northfield, this decision would be made by the Select Board members. Chair Maxwell asked who created the SWOT and SOAR tables. Mr. Davis said the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) developed them. Chair Maxwell asked if Mr. Davis fully agreed with the local assessments in the SWOT and SOAR tables. Mr. Davis believes that some of the highlighted strengths have been understated and some weaknesses overemphasized. He is willing to provide his own comments in writing for Select Board review. Chair Maxwell felt that would be very helpful when it comes time for the Select Board members to make a decision. Mr. Davis does have concerns that these four counties have significant differences from each other (i.e. some include large cities like Burlington and Rutland while others are more rural) but there are benefits to the new district having such a high population base. He also has spoken to CVRPC Executive Director Bonnie Waninger about the possibility of the other three counties being overwhelmed by Chittenden County. She said this is already happening to some extent but belonging to the same economic development district could help mitigate this imbalance. Board member Petty thought it might be helpful for Ms. Waninger to address the Select Board members herself on these matters. Manager Schulz also thought this was a good idea. Mr. Davis will discuss this possibility with her. Ms. Waninger did admit to Mr. Davis that CVRPC has not done much local public outreach yet on this matter but they have been hampered until recently by COVID-19 related concerns. Board member Petty thought it might be helpful in obtaining feedback from Northfield residents by putting the contact information and links to documents on local social media and the municipal website. Mr. Davis thought that was another good idea and will get this done as soon as possible.

- c. **Winter Sand & Crushed Stone Bid Results.** Manager Schulz said bid proposal documents were sent to several regional road material distributors recently and two bids were received before yesterday's deadline. McCullough Crushing (Montpelier, VT) provided the only bid for winter sand at \$10.75 per yard pit price. This actually is lower than last year's bid award amount (\$12.00 per yard). As has happened this past year, the municipality will contract with a hauler to deliver the material to Northfield. As for crushed stone, both McCullough Crushing and Pike Industries submitted bids. Pike Industries submitted the low bids in each category: \$12.20 per yard for ½" plant mix (pit price); \$12.88 per yard for 1¼" plant mix (pit price); and \$14.06 per yard for 1¼" clear stone (delivered). These prices are about \$1.00 more per yard over last year's amounts when Pike Industries was awarded the bids. Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Petty, to award the winter sand bid to McCullough Crushing for the pit price of \$10.75 per yard. **Motion passed 3-0-0.** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Petty, to award the crushed stone bids to Pike Industries for ½" plant mix for the pit price of \$12.20 per yard; for 1¼" plant mix for the pit price of \$12.88 per yard; and for 1¼" clear stone at the delivered price of \$14.06 per yard. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

IX. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **South Main Street Stormwater Mitigation/CSO Elimination Project.** Manager Schulz said the construction phase of the project will start tomorrow (07/27/22). The work will start first on South Main Street and the work on the side streets will begin afterwards. Since the new pipe installed will be close to the edge of the road, it should be possible to keep two-way traffic on the street throughout most of the construction phase. Flagger will be in place whenever needed. Chair Maxwell asked if the roadwork would impact the Labor Day Parade or any other events that holiday weekend. Manager Schulz said he has been working with the project engineer to make sure all or almost all of the work on South Main Street will be completed before September. If some minor work still needs to be done, patching work will be done along the roadway so there would be no disruptions to the events schedule.

- b. Wellfield Chemical Spill.** As Manager Schulz reported at the last regular meeting (07/12/22), there was a minor chemical spill (chlorine liquid) that morning caused by a delivery person in one of the wellfield's outbuildings. The spill was confined to the outbuilding and it did not reach the ground or get into the municipal water supply. One town employee and a hazmat responder were briefly overcome by toxic fumes but both have fully recovered. The cleanup doesn't appear to be costly and the delivery company's insurance will cover the full amount. Manager Schulz said our wellfield's standard operating procedures will be reviewed to determine if changes can be made to prevent this from happening again. He added that the Northfield water supply is tested regularly to ensure it is always safe to drink.
- c. Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant.** Manager Schulz said the first project to be funded by this state grant, restoration of the forest trail commencing at Slate Avenue, will begin tomorrow.
- d. Little Northfield Road Work.** Manager Schulz said the Highway Department has started a project on this road that will include tree trimming/removal, installation of new culverts, stone ditch lining, etc. All expenses will be covered by a state grant.

X. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. Northfield Common Sculpture.** Board member Petty wanted to thank all those who took part in the ribbon cutting for the new sculpture "Journeys" this afternoon on the Common. The artwork was designed and sculpted by local artist Tossy Garrett and this installation completes Northfield's Better Places grant.
- b. Cross Brothers Dam Removal Project.** Board member Petty asked if Manager Schulz had received any updates on this project. He said he hasn't heard anything lately but will reach out to the Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) to learn if there is any new information.
- c. Pleasant Street Bridge Status.** Board member Stevens asked if there were any updates regarding any needed bridge repairs. Manager Schulz said the most recent state inspection found that the bridge's abutments might need work in the near future. The situation is being monitored and there doesn't appear to be any urgency at this time. Funds are being set aside in the Town Highway CIP budget for when the repairs are needed. Chair Maxwell noted the bridge's deck was re-planked last year.
- d. Slaughterhouse Covered Bridge Status.** Board member Stevens asked about the timeline for the work to be done on this bridge. Manager Schulz has been informed by the repair contractor that the lumber needed to reinforce the bridge has arrived and work should start on the bridge in the next couple weeks.
- e. NAVI Golf Tournament.** Chair Maxwell noted Northfield Ambulance Volunteers, Inc. (NAVI) will hold an invitational golf tournament on Sunday, September 18, 2022 at the Northfield Country Club (2066 Vermont Route 12A). The proceeds will benefit the Betty Podgwaite Scholarship Fund as well as EMS training activities. Registration forms are available at the Northfield Ambulance Bay, the Northfield Country Club, and on the municipal website.

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

XII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Petty, to adjourn. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 7:54 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 regular meeting of August 9, 2022.