TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of October 13, 2026

I. ROLL CALL. Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Tim Davis, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens (absent). Also present were Town Manager Mary Smith, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Thomas Davis (Economic Development Director), Thomas Alsheimer (Chair, Board of Listers), Jeff Hatch, Sara Marble, Erica Holub, Lorna Doney, and Elroy C. Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Due to an internet outage in downtown Northfield, this meeting did not have its normal remote meeting component.

II. SET/ADJUST AGENDA. There was no change to the posted agenda.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED): None.

IV. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION (6:03 p.m.)

a. Liquor License Application: Depot Square Pizzeria (Holub Sisters LLC). Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Davis, to approve the liquor license application. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (6:04 p.m.)

a. September 22, 2026 (Regular Meeting). Motion by Board member Petty, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS (6:05 p.m.)

a. Approval of Warrant #07-27. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve Warrant #07-27 in the amount of $1,220,197.50. Manager Smith noted a number of payments (±$35,000) to Control Technologies for repairs to the Brown Public Library's air conditioning/heating system. These repairs were authorized by the previous manager and she is concerned that the payments exceed the amount that was budgeted for this purpose. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

b. Receipt of Biweekly Payroll through September 27, 2026. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to receive the biweekly payroll in the amount of $135,940.63. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

a. DRAFT Town Traffic Ordinance Revision. (6:08 p.m.) Manager Smith provided a draft revision of the current traffic ordinance that includes a few suggested changes from Northfield Police Department (NPD) Chief Eric Nordenson. These and other revisions that the Select Board members and others might request will be fully discussed at future Select Board meetings starting with the first meeting in November (11/10/26). Manager Smith said a number of local ordinances are in real need of revision and she thought the traffic ordinance was in most urgent need for updates. Board member Petty would like the next draft to include tracked changes so that the Select Board members can see the difference between the current wording and what is being proposed. She also would like to see some input from the new Highway Superintendent once that person has been hired. Board member Shernock believes one additional needed change would be to lower the speed limit in Northfield Falls in order to reduce speeding there. Board member Petty noted this section of Vermont Route 12 is a state highway so the municipality cannot reduce the speed limit below 35 MPH on its own.

Chair Maxwell said the speed limit on Vermont Route 12 North does go down to 30 MPH at the point it becomes a town highway. Lorna Doney asked if the recurrent roadside parking issue on Union Brook Road will be addressed by the revised ordinance. Manager Smith said this was one of the changes Chief Nordenson recommended. She then asked the Select Board members to review the draft document and to provide their own lists of any specific changes they would like included in the revised ordinance. Chief Nordenson will attend the 11/10/26 meeting to discuss his own suggestions. Board member Davis said there were a number of changes he would like to see in the downtown area, including further parking restrictions on Central Street, establishing one-way traffic on South Street and part of Washington Street, etc. Board member Petty would like separate motions for any proposed changes rather than just approving the whole revised document with one vote. Board member Davis said revising a local ordinance is a long process with public hearings, etc. and he would like to make sure there will be full discussions of any proposed revisions. There also should be significant public input. Chair Maxwell said the Select Board members will be commencing a comprehensive process to revise local traffic regulations starting with that first meeting.

b. Tax Stabilization Request (57 Freight Yard Way). (6:23 p.m.) Economic Development Director Thomas Davis said there is a proposed project that would convert a current structure on Freight Yard Way into a housing complex. The result would be six (6) two-bedroom housing units that will be energy efficient and most (but not all) of them will be fully ADA compliant. The developers are waiting for a sewer line to be extended to the site prior to construction. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve the tax stabilization request. Board member Petty asked why Mr. Davis was presenting this request rather than the developers themselves. Mr. Davis said they are both located out-of-state but would be willing to meet remotely with the Select Board members if needed. Board member Petty asked what would be the benefit to the community should this request be approved other than meeting the general goal of increasing the amount of housing in Northfield. Mr. Davis said the main purpose would be to assist the developers as they deal with the higher costs of construction, state permitting, etc., which have risen sharply in recent years. The State of Vermont has been implementing its own assistance programs for encouraging affordable housing developments and local tax stabilization is a good way for municipalities to also provide assistance. Mr. Davis said the municipality would not be losing any money through the process but will instead reap long-term benefits. He added that this is only the second tax stabilization request in recent years and the current tax stabilization policy and application form were significantly updated by the Select Board members in response to the initial request. Mr. Davis noted that although there already is an existing structure that will be renovated, the estimated total cost of the project will still be over one million dollars. He added that he was able to work with state administrators in order to obtain additional tax credits for this project. If approved, the request will provide the developers with reduced property taxes over a seven (7) year period. The property tax amount paid would increase incrementally each year until full tax payment on the building's assessed value in the eighth year. Mr. Davis said the exact amount is based on a job creation bonus that is applicable here in that by creating more local affordable housing, it is assumed some of the apartment dwellers will be locally employed. He has spoken to numerous business owners in recent years and they have said that one constant impediment to expanding their businesses has been the lack of local affordable housing that would attract new employees.

Board member Petty would like some assurance that the new housing units actually will be affordable. Mr. Davis said the expansion of the current local housing market would have the overall effect of keeping overall rental costs under control. He added that such tax stabilization agreements have become fairly common in communities seeking to expand their housing markets. Jeff Hatch noted that there is no requirement that those renting the new units would be employed in Northfield or pay local taxes. Mr. Davis said the building's property taxes will be paid by the building's owners and it is likely that the new residents will be spending money locally on groceries, meals, etc. Chair Maxwell said the value of the current structure will probably increase four-fold once all the renovations have been made and the housing units occupied. This will increase the local Grand List and thus bring in more money to the municipality in future years. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

c. Grand List Errors & Omissions. (6:48 p.m.) Board of Listers Chair Thomas Alsheimer reported that earlier this year a mobile home was removed from a trailer park and later demolished. However, the paperwork for this removal was not submitted to the municipality so its assessed value has remained on the Grand List. Mr. Alsheimer is asking that the Select Board members now authorize removing this mobile home's assessed value ($36,200) from the Grand List. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve this Grand List Errors & Omissions correction request. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

d. Public Hearing (Special Town Meeting Article). The Town Select Board will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday, October 27, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room for the purpose of providing written or oral views on the Warned Article to be voted upon by Australian Ballot at the Special Town Meeting on Tuesday, November 3, 2026. The warned article reads as follows: "Shall the voters authorize the Select Board to borrow an amount not to exceed eight hundred and fifty-five thousand dollars ($855,000) for a period not to exceed ten (10) years for the purchase of a Fire Pumper Truck?" Northfield Fire Department (NFD) Chief Peter J. DeMasi will be present to answer any questions regarding this ballot article. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve the posted warning for this public hearing. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VIII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT (6:52 p.m.) Manager Smith said the past few weeks have been rather busy. Interviews were conducted for applicants for the vacant Finance Director and the new Highway Superintendent positions. Job offers have been made but nothing is confirmed at this time. Manager Smith noted the Highway Department is in the process of replacing two (2) bridges on Chamberlin Road and has begun roadside leaf collection. Mr. Davis currently is working on grant applications including one for the Brown Public Library roof replacement and for a Better Connections grant. The Zoning Administrator's office recently issued three (3) new E-911 addresses. The Town Clerk's Office has received a large number of state-issued general election ballots with bad addresses that need to be corrected and remailed. Manager Smith said the outside auditors arrived last Monday (10/05/26) and completed their on-site work by Thursday afternoon. In addition, flood mitigation work on the stream near Kent Street began this week. This is the last of the FEMA funded projects related to the July 2023 flooding.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS (6:56 p.m.)

a. Cross Brothers Dam Removal Community Gathering. Board member Shernock noted there will be a celebration of the completion of the dam removal project held on site on Thursday, October 15, 2026 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Refreshments will be served. Board member Shernock is very excited about the dam removal as this will better allow for the potential of a future public path located along the Dog River.

b. Data Center Protections. Board member Shernock felt the Select Board members should consider what protections the community should put in place in case there are ever plans to site a data center in the area.

c. Women Kicking Glass 5k Run/Walk. Board member Shernock said Norwich University's Women Kicking Glass student club will be holding a fun 5k run/walk through Northfield on Sunday, October 18, 2026 as part of the weekend's Homecoming activities.

d. Ruth Ruttenberg. Board member Shernock reported that Northfield resident Ruth Ruttenberg recently passed away. Ms. Ruttenberg had been an active member of the Northfield Conservation Committee at the time of her passing and was a former member of the Brown Public Library Board of Trustees, the Northfield Planning Commission, as well as other community groups. Board member Shernock said dedicated volunteers such as Ms. Ruttenberg truly benefit the community and she will be sorely missed.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED) (7:01 p.m.)

a. Jeff Hatch: Various Municipal Concerns. Mr. Hatch said he and several other residents still have concerns about the bid process for purchasing winter sand and whether Board member Davis, who serves as Berlin Highway Superintendent, may have had an improper role in the decision-making process. Mr. Hatch also is troubled that a lot of money has been spent in the past year on repairs to the Slaughter House Road Covered Bridge that the road residents themselves did not want. In addition, he understands that the Select Board initial authorization for this spending came at a highway subcommittee meeting (08/01/25) later determined to be illegally warned. Mr. Hatch also believes the community is taxed enough already and that we cannot afford to spend $855,000 on a new fire truck. He noted Board member Davis also serves as the NFD Assistant Fire Chief and suggested that he may be using his position to improperly promote this special article. In any case, Mr. Hatch believes the current Select Board doesn't serve the best interests of the community and it might be time to start recalling its members. Elroy Hill routinely attends Select Board regular, special, and budget meetings and from his observations, he believes that the Select Board members have been doing a good job overseeing the municipality's finances. Ms. Doney feels that the Town Manager and the Select Board members are very easily approachable if anyone has any questions or concerns about how the municipal operations are being conducted.

XI. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved at the Select Board regular meeting of October 27, 2026.