

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD RETREAT
Minutes of May 7, 2024

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Charles Morse (absent), Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the Board Retreat to order at 10:00 a.m.

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

III. DISCUSSION

Chair Maxwell said that in the past, the Select Board members have used these Board Retreats to create lists of short-, medium-, and long-term goals for the community. The last Board Retreat was held on September 1, 2022 so there is much need to update the current list in order to remove items that have already been accomplished and to add new items. He thought the meeting should start with reviewing (in order of the priority list) the short-term goals developed at the last retreat to see which ones should be retained, removed, or otherwise updated.

Review and Update Municipal Policies. It was noted that some municipal policies, such as the purchasing policy, have been updated while others, such as the personnel policies, are still under review. Board member Petty felt the municipal ordinances also should be reviewed as some have not been updated for several years. This includes the rules governing the use of motorized vehicles in the Town Forest. The Animal Control ordinance is also quite out of date. Board member Shernock felt this item should be retained but should be tagged with a new category: "ongoing." Chair Maxwell asked if the review process should remain delegated to the Policy Review Subcommittee (Board members Morse and Stevens). Board member Petty thought all the Select Board members should be able to identify which policies and ordinances should be reviewed and then have the subcommittee members look into this. Manager Schulz felt the local traffic ordinance, which governs speed limits, parking regulations, etc., should also be reviewed as some of its provisions are also outdated. Board member Petty felt Northfield Police Department (NPD) Chief Pierre Gomez should be asked for his input on this.

Establish a Local Housing Task Force. Chair Maxwell noted that a Housing Committee had been established in November 2022 but the committee suspended its operations earlier this year. It was felt that it had become redundant due to the existence of the Housing Task Force that formed after the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) Community Visit held in Spring 2023. There has been some discussion of revitalizing the Housing Subcommittee by refining its responsibilities, etc.

Develop Welcome Packet for New Committee Members. Manager Schulz confirmed that the packet was drafted and is now distributed to new committee members.

Add Northfield Representation on Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission Transportation Advisory Committee. Manager Schulz noted Economic Development Director Tom Davis has served as Northfield's representative on this CVRPC committee for the past two (2) years.

Employee Succession Plan. Manager Schulz said this plan has been developed but since it will need to be updated periodically, this will be categorized as an "ongoing" item.

Electronic Tickler File. This document is provided to the Select Board members in the meeting packets so it will remain an "ongoing" item.

Rehabilitation of Fountain on the Common. Chair Maxwell said the engineering firm DuBois & King is now conducting a public outreach project to best determine public sentiment on how to best rehabilitate the entire Common, not just the fountain. This also will remain an "ongoing" item.

Address Municipal Building Deferred Maintenance Issues. Chair Maxwell asked what the status of this was. Manager Schulz said some work has been done to update the facility, including renovations of the bathrooms. In addition, an energy audit of the building was recently conducted and will be used to help develop plans to make the building more energy efficient. Manager Schulz felt there should be some grant funds available for this project. This will remain as an “ongoing” goal. Chair Maxwell asked if there are Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) funds already budgeted for additional building renovations. Manager Schulz confirmed that there were and the current balance is about \$50,000.

Refine Town Policy for Road Discontinuance Process. It was noted the Select Board members revised this policy in March 2023 in order to streamline the process through which one- and two-house roads can be privatized in order to reduce highway maintenance costs. Chair Maxwell would like this policy further refined in order to expedite the road discontinuance process when the sole property on a one-house road changes hands. Manager Schulz noted this information can be provided by the Town Clerk’s office and the Select Board members can be informed when such targeted properties change ownership. Given the potential cost savings, the Select Board members would like this explored.

Replace South Main Street Waterline. Manager Schulz noted that this particular project was the subject of a successful bond vote at this year’s Town Meeting (03/05/24) and the construction phase will go out to bid in the next month. The whole project will probably be completed by the end of 2025. This item will be removed from the list.

Install EV Charging Stations in Downtown Area. Chair Maxwell noted two (2) EV charging stations were installed on Depot Square last year so this item can be removed from the list. Manager Schulz said he will have a contractor look at the charging site in order to install a handicapped ramp to improve accessibility. He then confirmed that the revenue generated by the EV chargers does cover all the operating costs.

Develop Sidewalk Inventory and Plan for Sidewalk Replacement. Chair Maxwell said the sidewalk inventory has been completed but the sidewalk replacement plans still remain indefinite. Manager Schulz said the Highway Planning & Project Oversight Subcommittee did identify three to four sidewalk projects for this coming year. There already is \$100,000 in the Highway Department CIP budget for this work as well as a request for \$400,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. He felt the Select Board members should make a decision regarding the ARPA funds request as soon as possible so that we can start planning these projects. Board member Petty agreed that the decision on this shouldn’t be delayed much further.

Purchase Emergency Generators for Police Station and Ambulance Bay. Manager Schulz will be providing updated quotes for purchasing the generators for the Police Station, Fire Station, and Municipal Building. The current plan is to use ARPA funds for the purchases. Chair Maxwell said this seemed like an easy decision.

Construct Seasonal RV Site, Bike Campground and Showers at Memorial Park. This item was added to the list last year at the request of Board member Morse, who felt this would make Northfield a more attractive destination for visitors to the community. Board member Petty would like much more review of this possibility before moving forward on it. She also does not feel this should be a community priority at this time.

Install Pedestrian Crosswalk and Safety Measures at the Intersection of Route 12 and Cox Brook Road. Manager Schulz said this project went out to bid earlier this year and a qualified contractor has been engaged to perform the work. The flashing beacons have been ordered and this project should be completed by the end of June 2024. Chair Maxwell also would like better signage for the crosswalk located at the intersection of South Main Street and Prospect Street. One resident suggested that a flashing light at this location would greatly enhance pedestrian safety. Board member Petty asked about placing warning signs in the middle of the crosswalk. Chair Maxwell said that was done near Depot Square a few years ago but the signs didn’t last very long.

Develop a Policy and Maintenance Plan of Municipal Parks. Manager Schulz said this policy has been completed and copies were distributed to the Select Board members last year. Board member said the Dog River Park Committee does a good job of overseeing that park's special maintenance concerns, i.e. riverside knotweed control, etc.

Discussion of Policy and MOU for Campus Guidelines & Responsibilities between Norwich University (NU) and Northfield Municipal Departments. Manager Schulz said not much has been done with this. This relates to the relative responsibilities of the university and municipal departments regarding on-campus incidents and/or issues. The main focus of concern has been the roles of the NPD and NU Security when dealing with emergency situations or investigations. Board member Shernock thought it might be helpful to include NPD Chief Gomez in this discussion. Chair Maxwell felt the Select Board members should be the ones making the final decision should a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) be drafted. Manager Schulz said in the absence of a formal MOU, he has made it clear to the department heads that they are to stay off the NU campus without his permission. He added that previous NPD chiefs have been able to establish working relationships with NU Security and he will ask current NPD Chief Gomez about the current situation. Chair Maxwell said the Select Board's subcommittee regarding NU matters could bring this matter up again at their next meeting with NU administrators.

Develop a Plan to Address Northfield PD Dispatching Issue. Manager Schulz said the Vermont State Police has long provided free dispatching services to local law enforcement but in recent years there have been indications that they would like to end this free service. This has not yet come to pass but Manager Schulz felt it was wise to prepare by budgeting funds for this should this happen in the near future. There are private dispatching services available but the cost could be very expensive. Chair Maxwell agreed the municipality should be prepared if this change does occur. However, as this is primarily a budgetary matter, he thought it could be removed from the list of community goals.

Comprehensive Study of Northfield Electric System. Manager Schulz has reached out to the Utility Commissions about this but Stephen Fitzhugh, who is their expert on public power matters, believes the system is in good shape and that there is no need for a system-wide analysis. Manager Schulz added that capital funds are set aside for scheduled maintenance and/or upgrades of the electric system. Chair Maxwell felt that if there is no real need for this study, this matter should be removed from the list of community goals.

Explore Options for Screening of Junk Vehicles. Chair Maxwell noted Board member Stevens brought this matter to the attention of the other Select Board members at the last retreat as he felt the large number of junk cars situated by North Main Auto created a bad first impression for visitors to the community. It was noted that nothing has been done about this to date. Chair Maxwell wondered if this really is a Select Board matter to resolve. Manager Schulz will check with Zoning Administrator Mitch Osiecki to see if this is a more fitting concern for the Planning Commission and/or the Development Review Board. Board member Shernock thought it might be possible for the municipality to work with this business to see if state revolving loan funds were available to purchase fencing, etc. to improve the site appearance. Board member Petty thought any fences installed might not be that attractive an alternative. Chair Maxwell felt it best to keep this on the list of community goals while Manager Schulz explores the various options.

Complete Engineering Plans and Obtain funding for Extension of Municipal Sewer on Route 12 and 12A. Manager Schulz have been working with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) on obtaining state funding for this project. The ANR originally said they would not provide the funding as this sewer extension would not be in the direction of a "growth center." Manager Schulz then did additional research and focused on wellfield protection as the viable reason for municipal sewer extension. There are a number of private septic systems in the vicinity of the wellfield and should any of them fail, there could be serious repercussions. The ANR subsequently stated that they would pay for fifty percent (50%) of the cost of the planning study and project justification.

Manager Schulz said engineering plans for this project had been completed about fifteen (15) years ago but ANR said they needed to be updated. At this time, the project engineer is drafting a services agreement. Chair Maxwell is very concerned about wellfield protection given the real risk of outside contamination from nearby private septic systems. He would like this to be kept on the list of short-term community goals.

Chair Maxwell then asked if the Select Board members to provide their suggestions for new items to be added to the list of short-term community goals. If those suggestions are considered appropriate, they will be added to the remaining items from the current listing. In addition, the term "ongoing" will be attached to certain items that need to be done on a periodic basis.

Board member Shernock said her top priority would be to create a new full-time position: Director of Community Social Infrastructure/Parks & Recreation. She said this position would be similar to the Economic Development Director but instead focused on community development. Chair Maxwell noted that hiring a part-time Recreation Coordinator is currently on the list of medium-term goals. Board member Shernock would like this accomplished this year. As this position would include social infrastructure matters, this would be a full-time position. Part of the responsibilities would include creating a digital community center, maintaining a community calendar, planning/organizing special events in the public parks, etc. Board member Shernock also would like to see local volunteers honored on an annual basis. She also would like to see the informational kiosk returned to Depot Square as soon as possible. It was noted that this possibility in part of the Town Common Rehab project. Board member Shernock would like to see the municipal pool and pool bathhouse made fully ADA compliant. Board member Petty doubted all the work need for this could be completed within one year. Board member Shernock would also like the ARPA fund designation work completed as soon as possible to meet the federal deadlines. Board member Shernock would like the Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge reinforced with steel beams and a proper vehicle turnabout built for bridge visitors. Chair Maxwell thought that the bridge had been properly upgraded a couple of years ago. Manager Schulz said the bridge was reinforced to bring it back to its previous maximum weight limit after a VTrans inspection resulted in its being lowered. There have been past suggestions to add steel reinforcements but the quotes received for that were about \$700,000. Board member Petty thought it might be useful to seek outside funding for this.

Board member Shernock said the turnabout would make it much easier for leaf peepers to visit this covered bridge. She felt this should be done before this autumn. Board member Shernock also would like to see the completion of Phase I of the Riverwalk project that the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN) has proposed. Board member Shernock would like the local zoning regulations revised to allow for appropriate development in some low-density areas while also providing protections for the Town Forest. She also would like to see additional signage installed in the vicinity of the Cox Brook Road covered bridges to deter heavy trucks from using them. Manager Schulz said he has already reached out to Gillespie Fuels and other home fuel delivery companies about this. He said we can explore other options including new signage. Chair Maxwell noted that a "Comprehensive Study of the Covered Bridges" already is on the list of medium-term goals. Manager Schulz said VTrans has performed the initial engineering study of the Cox Brook Road covered bridges and is now completing the scoping. Elroy Hill said at their recent presentation (03/26/24), the VTrans representatives said that would be a five (5) year process. Chair Maxwell thought the photographic evidence provide then of bridge deterioration was disgraceful and showed the effects of deferred maintenance. He believes a maintenance plan should be developed for the regular painting and cleaning of these covered bridges. Board member Stevens liked the suggestion at that presentation of adding hanging metal bars to the bridges in order to block the entry of heavy trucks. Board member Petty would like signage installed by the intersection of Aseltine Road and Cox Brook Road that would alert truckers that they should detour by way of Aseltine Road to access the Northfield downtown rather than attempt to cross the covered bridges. Manager Schulz said installing this signage was a minor expense that could be done within the next few weeks once the proper sign wording is determined. This concluded the list of Board member Shernock's suggestions for short-term community goals.

Board member Petty had a few suggestions for the list of short-term community goals. She would like the review of municipal ordinances and policies to continue and felt completing the update of the municipal personnel policies should be a priority. Board member Petty would like all municipal committee members offered the opportunity to undergo Open Meeting Law training on an annual basis. The Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) usually offers an online course each year right after Town Meeting Day. She would also like Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) training also done on an annual basis for the municipal employees. Chair Maxwell thought it would be best to have guest speakers come in to conduct this. Board member Petty agreed that in-person training was much more effective than online training. Board member Petty would like the employee succession plan, which is already on the ongoing list, updated on a regular basis. Board member Petty would like the municipality to apply for grant funds for the already scoped pedestrian safety improvements for the Wall Street and Water Street route from Depot Square to the Dog River Park. This would include improving the pedestrian crossing over the Wall street railroad tracks. The grant application would be a short-term goal and the project itself would be a medium-term project.

Board member Petty would like updated Northfield zoning regulations approved by the Select Board members as soon as possible. Afterwards, she would like the municipality to apply for planning grant funds in order to hire a professional consultant to review and perhaps revise the zoning district classifications in order to encourage the building of additional housing units while also providing protections for forested areas. Board member Petty would like to use the completed sidewalk survey to create a complete list sidewalk work needed and to consider seeking bonding to pursue a complete overhaul of the sidewalk system. This list would be in addition to the priority list for urgent repairs. Chair Maxwell noted that former Select Board member Nathaniel Miller helped to create a similar comprehensive plan for regular maintenance of the backroads and that program has proved very successful at the cost of about \$90,000 annually. Board member Petty said the Select Board members should know exactly how much they need to budget each year for proper sidewalk maintenance. Chair Maxwell felt it might be necessary to create a new subcommittee dedicated to sidewalk matters as the Highway subcommittee has enough on its plate with road matters.

Board member Petty would like to have an inventory completed of all Northfield bridges so that proper funding can be allocated for future bridge repair or replacement projects. Chair Maxwell asked if that should be a short-term or medium-term goal. Board member Petty thought creation of the bridge inventory should be a short-term goal that can result in long-term planning. She doesn't want any more surprises from VTTrans regarding any unexpected but required bridge work. Board member Petty also would like the municipality to work with NU administrators to develop a long-term agreement regarding PILOT payments. She also would like improved public river access to result from the Cross Brother Dam removal project. Board member Petty would like the municipality to better market our public parks, municipal pool, and forest trail system as well as develop special outdoor events. She also would like to see our outdoor recreation facilities better maintained on a regular basis. Board member Petty would like the Select Board subcommittees reviewed and have their respective responsibilities better defined. The subcommittee members should be made clearly aware of what municipal matters they should be focused upon.

Board member Petty would like the municipality to better address local housing issues, which might include revitalization of the Housing Committee or establishing a better working relationship with the aforementioned Housing Task Force. She also would like to see the Select Board work with the other task forces that formed after the VCRD Community Visit. The Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety Task Force members have attended several Select Board meetings to express their concerns but interaction with the other task forces have been minimal. We should be getting updates from them on a regular basis. Board member Shernock noted that the task force dedicated to the development of a community center is holding a popup demonstration on Saturday, May 18, 2024 but there doesn't seem to be much public notification of this so far.

Board member Morse was unable to attend today but did email his thoughts regarding community goals to Chair Maxwell. Board member Morse hopes that the Town Common Rehab outreach project will provide recommendations that will be acceptable to the Northfield residents who use the common on a regular basis. He also would like the municipality to have better oversight of the numerous infrastructure projects scheduled for the next few years. His suggestion is to hire a Project Manager who would assist Manager Schulz throughout the process. Board member Morse felt having someone fully dedicated to overseeing these projects would result in better relationships with the project contractors, etc. He also would like the planning for expansion of the public sewer lines along Vermont Route 12A pursued as a community priority.

Chair Maxwell then turned to his own list of short-term goal suggestions. He said many of the items he had planned to propose had already been brought up today in one form or another. Chair Maxwell would like the Road Surface Management System (RSMS) program updated as soon as possible. He has not seen an update for the past three (3) years. He felt having up to date RSMS information was a very important planning tool. Chair Maxwell also would like to see more detail on our capital fund budgeting for sidewalk maintenance. He also would like to revive the old policy of holding joint meetings with other municipal or regional bodies, which could include the Utility Commissions, the Paine Mountain School Board, etc. This could be very helpful for long-term planning and shouldn't be too difficult to schedule. He also would like to see our elected state representatives invited to attend Select Board meetings to provide updates on legislative activities. This also would be an opportunity for the Select Board members to express their concerns, goals, etc. to the state representatives to gain whatever advice and/or assistance they can provide.

The Select Board members took a brief recess at this time.

Chair Maxwell then turned to the discussion of medium-term community goals, beginning with a review of the current listing.

Update the Community Room. Manager Schulz said this is a work in progress. Chair Maxwell said there have been suggestions of replacing some of the furniture, especially the chairs. There are also some damaged ceiling tiles that need to be replaced. Chair Maxwell then asked the other Select Board members what they would like to have done with the room. Board member Petty would like to see the chairs replaced as a number of them are broken. She felt that repainting the walls is needed as there are a number of places where the paint has been damaged. Board member Shernock said perhaps the Brown Public Library (BPL) staff could provide their views regarding a priority list for needed work. Board member Petty said the Community Room is used more by members of the public and the committees that meet there rather than being a regular part of BPL operations. She would like a review of the technology in the room. Chair Maxwell said the current setup for hybrid meetings seems very unprofessional as there is the use of extension cords, etc. Board member Petty felt hybrid meetings are here to stay so we probably should be looking at some technological upgrades to better facilitate them. Chair Maxwell would like to start first with basic upgrades to the Community Room, such as the purchase of new chairs, etc. as a short-term goal with technological improvements as a medium-term goal. Board member Petty noted that internet reception in the room can be slow at times. Chair Maxwell suggested that an internet router could be installed in the room to improve reception.

Removal of Cross Brothers Dam. Chair Maxwell said this project is scheduled for 2025 so we can keep that as a medium-term goal.

Comprehensive Study of all Covered Bridges. Chair Maxwell felt this should be considered a short-term goal as VTrans is performing their scoping study of the Cox Brook Road covered bridges at this time. Manager Schulz will engage an outside consult to perform a study of the Stony Brook Road Covered Bridge.

Develop Vacant Lands on and near School Property for Affordable Housing. Chair Maxwell asked Mr. Davis about these vacant lands and learned that they are owned by the school district, which does not seem to have much interest in developing these properties. Perhaps this item should be reworded to “Look for Opportunities for Housing Development.”

Install Additional Structural Improvements to Slaughterhouse Covered Bridge. Chair Maxwell noted that the need repairs on this bridge were done a couple of years ago so this item can be removed from the list.

Begin Engineering and Planning for Upgrade to Municipal Sewer Plant. Manager Schulz said the outside evaluation of the Northfield Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) is taking place right now and should be completed by this September. At that time we will know what major upgrades (if any) will be required by the State of Vermont. Chair Maxwell is concerned that this could become a very expensive undertaking if real problems were found. Board member Shernock suggested changing “Begin” to “Continue.”

Consider Hiring a Part-time Recreation Coordinator. Board member Shernock noted she brought up the possibility of establishing a full-time position for this as a short-term goal. Chair Maxwell felt adding a new full-time position is a major concern particularly when there is no budget in place for this. Chair Maxwell believes a number of questions needed to be answered before he would approve going forward with this. There also needs to be some resolution regarding the previous proposal to establish a regional recreational commission that would replace the disbanded Northfield Recreation Board. Chair Maxwell said it would be very helpful to if someone would step forward to help with this, preferably someone who would work well with other local and regional groups. Board member Petty thought it would be very beneficial to the community if there was some organization that could organize and oversee recreational programs that would engage residents of all ages. Chair Maxwell thought it would be helpful in the short run to develop a “Recreation Vision” over the next five (5) years. We then would know whether there would be the need for paid staff to oversee recreational opportunities or whether volunteers would be willing to work on this. Board member Shernock would like the creation of this vision as a short-term goal. We should contact the various existing groups that are already involved with local recreational matters to see if they would like to get involved with this.

Explore and Seek Opportunities for Public Private Development Opportunities. Chair Maxwell believes that this should be an ongoing matter as Economic Development Director Tom Davis has made such outreach part of his regular responsibilities. He added that we are fortunate to have someone of Mr. Davis’s abilities in this position.

Chair Maxwell then asked the other Select Board members for their suggestions for new medium-term goals. Board member Shernock would like to regulate short-term rentals in the community. She felt we need to know how many there are and perhaps tax them to benefit our schools. Chair Maxwell said based on what has been occurring in Stowe VT regarding short-term rentals, he believes putting a special tax on them might be illegal. As an alternative, the Town of Stowe has been exploring the option of creating a clearing house for short-term rental units and establishing a fee to be paid to the municipality that would regulate and inspect these rental properties. Chair Maxwell felt much more research should be done before starting any such action here as he doesn’t feel Northfield has a short-term rental problem at this time. Board member Petty thought some local research regarding the short-term rental situation here might be very useful. We also could look to see what other Vermont communities have done about this. Board member Shernock would like to redefine the Select Board subcommittees that handle negotiations with the labor unions and NU administrators as working groups. This might alleviate any concerns about possible violations of the Open Meeting Law. Chair Maxwell said this matter needs to be explored further as there are some uncertainties regarding whether this is really permissible under state law. Board member Petty noted that there already is a short-term goal to reclassify and refine the duties of the various Select Board subcommittees. Board member Shernock would like to improve river access in Northfield Falls. She also would like to follow up on the ARPA funds application from the Northfield Senior Center. Manager Schulz will be sending them a letter requesting additional information regarding this request for ARPA funds.

Board member Shernock would like the improvements at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) completed as soon as possible. Chair Maxwell said that should be a short-term goal, i.e. "EOC Improvements." Board member Shernock said the Select Board needs to assist with NPD officer recruitment. NPD Chief Gomez said housing issues remain a deterrent to attracting officers from other communities and he thought setting up temporary housing would be helpful. Board member Shernock also would like to explore the possibility of having some community oversight of local law enforcement. Northfield resident Jeff Hatch made this suggestion at a recent Select Board meeting (04/09/24). Board member Shernock doesn't feel that the Select Board members should commit themselves to this possibility but she felt the topic should be investigated.

Board member Shernock believes that speeding is a real problem in Northfield Falls and would like the speed limit reduced. The current speed limit on Vermont Route 12 North is thirty-five miles per hour (35 MPH). Manager Schulz said he did petition VTrans about lowering the speed limit about four (4) years ago so they would have to conduct a speed study in Northfield Falls. The matter then went to the State Transportation Board which, after reviewing the results of the speed study, decided not to lower the speed limit. Since it has been a few years, Manager Schulz said he could make another request. Board member Shernock would like that done as she feels that vehicles do travel at excessive speeds during rush hours. Chair Maxwell believes speed monitoring was done in Northfield Falls a few years ago when John Helfant was NPD Chief. He later reported that it was found that sixty percent (60%) of motorists were traveling at or below the posted speed limit. Board member Petty thought some new signage might be helpful. Chair Maxwell perhaps we could have a medium-term goal of reducing speeding in Northfield Falls. That doesn't necessarily require lowering the speed limit. Manager Schulz said in the short-term, we could have the speed monitoring devices placed in Northfield Falls for a while and also have a NPD cruiser parked there. Board member Petty thought the speed monitoring signs that display the motorist speed are effective in lowering travelling speeds.

Board member Stevens would like a skateboard park located behind the NPD Station. There had been one at Memorial park several years ago but it was made out of cheap plywood and fell apart rather quickly. Board member Shernock has heard that due to Vermont's climate, skateboard parks here need to be made out of concrete.

Board member Petty would like the recommendations arising from the Town Common Rehab Project implemented in the near future. Chair Maxwell said if there are plans to use ARPA funds to do this, this probably should be a short-term goal. Board member Petty would like to determine the funding means for a comprehensive program for sidewalk improvements and whether that would include bond funds. She also would like the new sidewalk to Tops market as a medium-term goal. Board member Petty would like some exploration of the possibility of creating a pedestrian/bicycle path/trail that would connect Memorial Park to Northfield Falls. Board member Shernock thought that the major stumbling block for this was that the intervening property is in private hands. Board member Petty thought that part of the process could include outreach to the property owners to see if they would be willing to provide public access. Board member Petty would like the sewer extension along Vermont Route 12A as either a medium- or long-term goal based on available outside funding. Chair Maxwell will put this under medium-term goals for now. Board member Petty also would like an engineering study for extending sewer lines to Northfield Falls.

Chair Maxwell said his major medium-term goal is to improve the technology in the Community Room to facilitate public meetings. Board member Petty suggested that the Select Board members also could look into reducing paper waste by sharing meeting documents on iPads. Chair Maxwell said the Select Board should either start setting aside funds for these technological improvements or consider using ARPA funds to get it done sooner.

Chair Maxwell said that completed the listing for medium-term goals so he asked the Select Board members to consider the current list of long-term plans. This much shorter list consisted of projects already brought up in this meeting, including extending the municipal sewer to Northfield Falls, extending sidewalks along Route 12 North to Northfield Falls, and extending sidewalks southward along Vermont Routes 12 and 12A. The other long-term goal was to find a new location for the Municipal Building. Board member Petty doesn't feel relocation is needed if the current building is being renovated with energy use reduction measures, etc. She feels instead of relocation the focus should be on renovating the building. This could include putting in a real wall that would separate the Conference Room from the Listers Office. Chair Maxwell will put Municipal Building Improvements/Renovations in the list of long-term goals. He noted that there is \$80,000 in the CIP account for such projects. Board member Stevens thought at one time that municipal operations could be moved to the Gray Building but that is no longer an option. Chair Maxwell said moving to that building would have created some obstacles such as limited parking, handicapped accessibility, etc. Chair Maxwell then asked if there were any additional suggestions for long-term goals. Board member Petty suggested the relocation of the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) from its current location at the Town Garage, which is located in a flood plain. She noted that whenever there is a flooding rainstorm, EMS services need to relocate elsewhere. Chair Maxwell noted that there were plans at one time to either construct a new structure on Wall Street to house the NAS or expand the Fire Station to make room for EMS. However, the cost estimates for this were over \$2,000,000 and those plans were abandoned. Board member Petty thought that this could remain a long-term goal and flood mitigation measures could be taken in the interim. Chair Maxwell thought that kind of planning could be included under medium-term goals. Board member Shernock thought the improvements to the EOC located in the Police Station might lessen concerns about the NAS facility. Chair Maxwell thought that perhaps elevated parking spaces that would reduce the possibility of vehicle flooding could be installed in the area. That could be a topic for future discussion. Board member Shernock thought asking NAS Chief Megan McCusker about what happened during the July 2023 flooding rainstorm might provide some useful options.

Now that the Select Board members had gone through the lists of suggestions for community goals, Chair Maxwell suggested that the list of short-term goals be reevaluated and prioritized. After some discussion, the resulting short-term goal priority list was as follows:

1. Honor Volunteers Annually
2. Street Turnaround at Slaughterhouse Bridge
3. Add Zoning Categories – Engage Professional Advisor
4. Paint/Clean Bridges – Develop Maintenance Plan
5. Covered Bridge Signage (Aseltine)
6. Grant Funding Wall Street Sidewalk Construction
7. Refine Costs for Sidewalk Needs (possible bonding)
8. Bridge Inventory/Repairs (Develop Capital Plan)
9. Work with NU on Long-Term PILOT Agreement
10. Marketing of Town Parks, Pool, Trails (Events)
11. Address Housing Issues (Task Force)
12. Support Working Groups (update) Reach out
13. Update RSMS Program
14. Recreation Vision 1-3-5 Year Combined Effort by Various Groups
15. Finish Covered Bridges Assessment

Additional items will be left on the Short-Term Goal List as ongoing concerns including:

- Create Social Infrastructure/Park Rec. F.T.
- Pool & Sitework ADA Compliance
- Open Meeting Law Training (Annually)
- DEI Training (Annually)
- Subcommittee Reclassification & Refine Duties
- Joint Meetings
- State Representative Updates

- EOC Improvements
- Review and Update Municipal Policies and Ordinances
- Northfield Representation on the CVRPC TAC
- Employee Succession Plan
- Electronic Tickler File
- Rehabilitation of Town Common and Fountain
- Address Municipal Building Deferred Maintenance Issues
- Refine Town Policy for Road Discontinuance Process
- Purchase Emergency Generators for Municipal Facilities
- Municipal Park Policy and Maintenance Plan
- Explore Options for Screening Junk Vehicles
- Complete Engineering for Sewer Line Extension on Vermont Route 12A

The Select Board members then went through the list of medium-term goals. The list of these items is as follows:

- Bonding/Funding Sidewalks Repair/Maintenance
- Install New Sidewalk to Tops Market
- Complete Phase I of Riverwalk (Cross Bros. Dam)
- Learn about Short Term Rentals in our Community
- Redefine/Make Clearer Working Groups/Committees
- Develop River Access in Falls
- Help with Police Department Recruitment
- Community Oversight of Law Enforcement
- Reduce Speed in Falls, Signage/Other
- Skateboard Park/Police Station
- Connector Trails - Memorial Park to Falls
- Construction of 12-12A Sewer Extension
- Conduct Study – Sewer to Falls
- Emergency Services Location Flooding Mitigation Steps
- Pool House Renovation
- Develop Opportunities for Housing Developments
- Continue Engineering/Planning for Upgrades to Northfield Wastewater Treatment Facility
- Explore Possibilities for Public-Private Development Opportunities

The list of long-term goals is as follows:

- Municipal Building Improvements/Renovations
- Extend Municipal Sewer to Northfield Falls
- Extend Sidewalk along Route 12 to Northfield Falls
- Extend Sidewalk Southward along Vermont Routes 12 and 12A

A draft list of the updated short-, medium-, and long-term community goals soon will be provided to the Select Board members for finalization. Once the list has been finalized, it will be posted on the municipal website.

Chair Maxwell would like to make sure that the next Board Retreat is held in Spring 2025 as this list of community goals should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

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

V. ADJOURNMENT. Without objection, the Board Retreat adjourned at 1:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were revised and approved at the Select Board regular meeting of May 14, 2024.