

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
TOWN BUILDINGS & ENERGY SUBCOMMITTEE
Minutes of July 13, 2026

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board member Merry Shernock, Select Board member John Stevens, Economic Development Director Thomas Davis, and Scott A. Sabol PE (Vermont State University Randolph).

The meeting started at 6:00 p.m.

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

III. DISCUSSION

- a. Municipal Energy Revolving Fund (MERF).** Mr. Davis said MERF is a federally-funded energy resilience program that can be accessed either through the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) or the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC). There now is \$1,370,000 available that can be loaned out to municipalities with \$100,000 being the minimum request amount and \$250,000 the maximum. This would be a no-interest loan that would be repaid over a ten (10) year period. The funds can be used for a number of purposes, such as conducting energy resilience building assessments. Mr. Davis said both the Municipal Building and Brown Public Library (BPL) have had such assessments done fairly recently so for these buildings the funds could be used for structural improvements, solar panel installation, equipment replacement, etc. He noted that using these funds for weatherization projects would require a town vote but the Select Board members could authorize other uses. As these are federal funds, all new equipment purchased must be manufactured in the USA. This round of loan applications is now open and will not close until the funds have been depleted.

Board member Shernock asked if there were any obvious projects at this time that would qualify for and benefit from these funds. Mr. Davis said there is nothing that immediately comes to mind. Board member Stevens could not think of any BPL projects. Mr. Davis said the Town Garage and the emergency services facilities are possible building renovation sites. Board member Stevens thought the Police Station boiler could be replaced with a more energy efficient heat pump. Board member Shernock felt solar panels installed at the Municipal Pool would cut down on energy usage while also allowing for updating the power supply.

Scott Sabol is a Northfield resident and the head of VTSU Randolph's architectural engineering program. He suggested that installing battery storage would be another possibility for building renovations. This could provide backup power during power outages. Board member Shernock noted that some municipal facilities had traditional generators installed last year but other buildings could benefit from battery storage. This could be done in conjunction with the installation of new solar panels.

Mr. Davis said he could obtain some additional suggestions at the next department head meeting. Board member Stevens would like to see some energy use improvements at the Pool House. He added that the new slate roof planned for the BPL would not accommodate solar panel installation. Board member Shernock said the power system at the wastewater treatment facility (WWTF) needs to be updated in the near future so that might be another option.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled).

- a. **Scott A. Sabol: Student Spring Project Availability.** Mr. Sabol said he looks each year for a spring project for his students that involve either the construction of a new building or major renovations and repurposing of an existing one. This would include all facets of the building's power system and other considerations. This would be a preliminary engineering study that could be reviewed before a professional engineering firm is engaged for the actual work. Over the past three (3) years, they have done projects for the Stowe Electric Department (repurposing a building for mixed use), the VTSU Randolph campus (repurposing a traditional student dormitory for apartment-style living), and the former Goddard College campus (reconfiguring a former library for high-end residential housing). Mr. Sabol said they are now looking for projects for Spring 2027 and beyond. He asked that this municipality should keep them in mind should any similar local projects be considered in coming years. Board member Shernock said the municipality now has long-term goals of resituating the Municipal Building and the EMS facility into new or repurposed buildings. Mr. Sabol said his students would be able to provide ballpark figures of actual project costs. It was noted that the municipality owns property on Wall Street where new building(s) could be constructed. Mr. Sabol said the students would not charge anything for their services but would require full access to the potential work sites, etc. He would need to be contacted with some advanced warning in order to get on their Future project schedule. Board member Shernock was very grateful to Mr. Sabol to reaching out to the municipality with this information and this possibility definitely will be kept in consideration when the Select Board members look into future building construction/rehabilitation.

V. ADJOURNMENT. Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk