

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of December 23, 2025

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Charles Morse, Board members K. David Maxwell, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Bill Frasier (Vermont League of Cities & Towns), Eric W. Nordenson (Chief, Montpelier Police Department), James Pontbriand (Chief, Berlin Police Department), Marc Poulin (Washington County Sheriffs' Department), Brian Gosselin (Sergeant, Northfield Police Department), Steve Mackenzie, Lynn Doney, Kristen Pollard, Bill Clements, Carolyn Stevens, Matthew Romei, Shawn Bryan, Helen Bryan, Ryan Barr, Bill Clements, Mary Nadon Scott, Gary Circosta, Stephen Coley, Tom Scott, Meggan McCusker, Brian Massey, Willie Hartman, Janan Hamm, Mike Langley, Cristie Arguin, Gordon Bock, George Fitch, and Elroy C. Hill.

Chair Morse called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

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

III. DISCUSSION

- a. Northfield Police Department (possible executive session).** Bill Frasier is the former long-term City Manager for Montpelier who now works as a consultant for the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT). He recently contracted with the Town of Northfield to assist with the search for an interim town manager, interim police chief, and permanent town manager. Mr. Frasier said there is not a large applicant pool for the interim police chief position so he spoke to the leaders of the Montpelier Police Department, Berlin Police Department, and the Washington County Sheriffs' Department about which of their officers might be a suitable candidate who would be able to fill the position in the near future. Chair Morse said Sergeant Brian Gosselin has been serving as the only full-time member of the Northfield Police Department (NPD) in recent weeks. Unfortunately, he just learned that Sergeant Gosselin will need to go on medical leave over the next couple of weeks. This situation will only increase the NPD need for outside assistance and Chair Morse is grateful that Montpelier PD Chief Nordenson, Berlin PD Chief Pontbriand, and Washington County Sheriff Poulin are present at this meeting and expressing their willingness to have their respective department provide some assistance. Chief Pontbriand has expressed interest in a written agreement which, if approved by the Berlin and Northfield Select Boards, would establish a reimbursement policy for when Berlin PD officers assist the NPD with emergency coverage and/or with criminal investigations.

Chair Morse asked if the other Select Board members had any questions at this time. He personally favors a written agreement with the Berlin PD as Chief Pontbriand has suggested. Board member Petty also believes a written agreement is a good idea but feels it should have an escape clause should NPD staffing problems be resolved. Board member Stevens also favors having a written agreement that has been approved by the two (2) Select Boards. Board member Shernock believes the current situation requires having a written agreement in place as soon as possible. Chair Morse asked Chief Nordenson if there was an officer in his department who might be able to serve as interim chief in Northfield. Chief Nordenson said there was but he would like some assurances that he would be properly supported here in Northfield before giving his permission. He added that it is difficult to rebuild a police department and a proper plan has to be put in place before the process begins. You also have to start with the right people. Chief Pontbriand said a Northfield-Berlin agreement would be a Band-Aid solution while Chief Nordenson is suggesting a more sustainable solution.

Chair Morse said it has been shown repeatedly that the Northfield community would like to have 24/7 law enforcement coverage. It is the Select Board's goal to bring this back. This will have to be a group effort that will require the assistance of neighboring law enforcement agencies. Steve Mackenzie, the prospective interim town manager for Northfield, thought that the best path forward would be for him as interim manager to work with the law enforcement representatives present today regarding possible solutions for the NPD's immediate and long-term staffing problems. He feels this shouldn't be an insurmountable problem if they all work together. Board member Shernock asked when Sergeant Gosselin will be out of the office. Sergeant Gosselin said he would be working through the end of December 2025 and then be out for two (2) to three (3) weeks.

Sheriff Poulin said his department has not been included in most the past conversations regarding NPD staffing problems and how to resolve them. He felt that was a mistake since in Vermont, county sheriff departments pretty much serve as law enforcement agencies for hire. They receive limited funds from the state but make much of their income by hiring themselves out for traffic control and providing emergency services for communities that don't have their own police departments. They also can conduct criminal investigations provide that they aren't too complicated (those are handled by the state police). They do not have a death investigator so all cases involving fatalities also have to be turned over to the state police. Mr. Mackenzie said the most immediate concerns are to find and hire an interim police chief and to draft and approve a coverage plan. Chief Nordenson said he would work with Mr. Mackenzie to determine whether a current Montpelier PD officer would make a good interim police chief for Northfield. Sergeant Gosselin said it has been a difficult period recently for the NPD but all should improve should an interim town manager be hired today, which would establish a proper chain of command. He has been unable to pursue certain matters recently due to the inability to get a letter of support from the town manager. Mr. Mackenzie said should he be appointed interim town manager, he would first meet with Sergeant Gosselin to find out what are the NPD immediate concerns and then he would meet with Montpelier PD Chief Nordenson, Berlin PD Chief Pontbriand, and Washington County Sheriff Poulin. Sergeant Gosselin said it is difficult to recruit law enforcement officers when there is departmental uncertainty and no clear chain of command. He feels that once this is resolved, the NPD could be rebuilt rather quickly and he agrees that as a college town, Northfield should have overnight police coverage. Kristen Pollard said Northfield has earned a poor reputation for law enforcement and she felt it would be best in future that all established police procedures should be strictly obeyed in future. She also has concerns about the proposed agreement with the Berlin PD and possible nepotism concerns should a certain Montpelier PD officer be hired as interim police chief. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)], in order to discuss a personnel issue with Steve Mackenzie, Bill Frasier, Montpelier PD Chief Nordenson, Berlin PD Chief Pontbriand, and Washington County Sheriff Poulin present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:33 p.m.

Motion by Board member Petty, seconded by Board member Shernock, to leave executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 10:08 a.m. No action was taken.

- b. Appointment of Interim Town Manager (possible executive session).** Chair Morse said the Town of Northfield contacted with Bill Frasier and VLCT to identify viable candidates to interview for the position of interim town manager. The recommended candidate is Steve Mackenzie who is a former Vice-President of the engineering firm DuBois & King who served as Manager of Barre City for twelve (12) years until he retired three (3) years ago. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to appoint Steve Mackenzie as Northfield's interim town manager. Mr. Mackenzie would officially begin his tenure on Monday, January 5, 2026 but he is willing to attend municipal meetings that might take place before then. Board member Petty would like it understood by the public that Mr. Mackenzie will be a part-time employee, working twenty (20) hours per week. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).

- a. Lynn Doney: Improper Disclosure of Personal File.** Mr. Doney said an unknown person distributed a critical letter from his personnel file to members of the general public. He has suspicions about who was responsible and warned them to cease this behavior. Mr. Doney also is displeased that his numerous complaints about former police chief Pierre Gomez were never properly addressed prior to Mr. Gomez's resignation. Chair Morse said the letter in question was received unsolicited in the mail a couple of weeks ago and the source remains unknown.
- b. Bill Clements: FY 2026-2027 Northfield Town Budget.** Mr. Clements asked if the interim manager would be able put enough input into the drafting of the proposed budget given that he is a half-time employee. Mr. Mackenzie said he would do his best to contribute his budget expertise to the process.
- V. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Petty, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)], in order to discuss a legal matter and a contract negotiation with Steve Mackenzie and Bill Frasier present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 10:30 p.m. Board member Stevens chose not to attend.

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

The Board came out of executive session at 10:45 p.m.

Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Shernock, to authorize Chair Morse to sign an employment contract with the new interim manager. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

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

The Board adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

A video recording of this meeting is available at: <https://youtu.be/rfYxQiepRvk> (Part 1)
<https://youtu.be/nrj3klR1Au0> (Part 2)

These minutes were revised and approved at the Select Board regular meeting of January 13, 2026.