

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of August 27, 2024**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Charles Morse, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Ron Lyon (Norwich University), Michael Krause (Norwich Commons), Allie Gratton, Ben Zarcher, Susan Stillinger, Gerard LaVarnway, Carolyn Stevens, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Those present were asked to join the Select Board members in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. Ron Lyon, Norwich University: Town Road Discontinuance Request.** Norwich University (NU) is requesting Class 3 Town Roads Park Avenue and University Drive, which are wholly located on the NU campus, be discontinued in order to facilitate its adjacent construction of a new building (Cyber Fission Center). Mr. Lyon is an engineering consultant for this project and he said these roads currently are almost exclusively used by NU personnel. The discontinuance of these roads would also facilitate future green space projects as well as creating an improved "visual presentation of the south approach" to the NU campus. Mr. Lyon noted there are municipal utilities located in the project area and NU would provide easements to the municipality for future access should the roads be privatized. In the long run, this project also will provide improved vehicular and pedestrian access to the campus interior. Board member Morse asked if this project would add more impervious paved surfaces to the NU campus. Mr. Lyon said there probably would be an eventual decrease in paved surfaces as more open green space is added in coming years. Board member Morse noted that should the property on which these roads are located is turned over to NU, they would become taxable parcels. Board member Stevens asked what would happen to these roads should they become NU property. Mr. Lyon said University Drive would be realigned as part of the construction process in order to further separate it from the new building's footprint. There also would be an eventual realignment of Park Avenue as part of NU's long-range master plan for campus redevelopment. Mr. Lyon said these road realignments probably would have the effect of improving the vehicular traffic flow through campus before and after special events. Board member Shernock is concerned that residents who walk through campus due to the lack of sidewalks along Vermont Route 12 will be impeded by the building project. Mr. Lyon said maintaining current pedestrian walking paths will be taken into consideration during the construction planning process. Board member Petty felt it might be better to delay the road discontinuance until the plans have been provided for the vehicular and pedestrian traffic redirection. Mr. Lyon did not see any benefit to the municipality by delaying the road discontinuance process and added it would be much better to have resolution on this matter as the project's site plans are being developed. Chair Maxwell asked if the municipality does not grant the road discontinuance, could a new location be found for the new building. Mr. Lyon thought this was unlikely as the proposed site has a number of advantages, such as a central location with great visibility, etc. He added that the road discontinuance is important but not vital to the construction of the new building. Mr. Lyon noted that NU is more than willing to work with the municipality on any and all of the issues raised tonight (or in future) After further discussion, it was the consensus of the Select Board members that the required site visit and public hearing that are part of the road discontinuance process will be scheduled with the understanding that NU will be prepared with additional information, visual aids, etc. in order to address any concerns brought up at that time by the Select Board members or the general public. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to authorize scheduling the site visit and public hearing as part of the process of discontinuing Park Avenue and University Drive as town roads. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. Michael Krause: Norwich Commons Stormwater Concerns.** Mr. Krause first thanked the municipality for removing a problem tree from the Norwich Commons area that many feared might come down and cause damage this winter after a snowstorm. He said that the Norwich Commons Condominium Association (NCCA) is asking for the municipality's assistance in addressing stormwater problems due to storm runoff that originates on the NU campus, travels southward towards the intersection of Vermont Routes 12 and 12A, and then enters the nearby Norwich Commons property. Mr. Krause said this seven-unit housing complex was built in 2006 and a disbursement ditch was built at the time to handle the stormwater flow that would emanate from its paved parking area. However, this ditch cannot handle the ever increasing stormwater flow that originates on the NU campus. Mr. Krause noted the NCCA recently had to install a new culvert at the cost of \$21,000, which was shared equally by the homeowners. With further building on the NU campus, Mr. Krause believes the stormwater problem will get even worse in future and he would like the expense of additional stormwater mitigation efforts to be split between the NCCA, NU, and the municipality. Such additional measures should include installing new riprap along the roadsides and better maintenance of the culvert located at the junction of Vermont Routes 12 and 12A. Mr. Krause also felt NU should be able to install additional stormwater mitigation features on its campus in order to lessen the stormwater overflow onto neighboring properties. Board member Morse believes the municipality installed the culvert in 1968 at this road junction in order to serve former businesses in the area, i.e. A&W Root Beer and Papa Johns. Those restaurants successively went out of business and the structure that hosted them was razed. In any case, this culvert was not designed to serve a housing complex. Board member Morse felt it might be good to review the 1968 deed for the culvert installation in order to determine the municipality's level of responsibility for this matter. Once that has been resolved, there could be a full discussion with Mr. Krause and the NCCA about possible cost sharing in future. Board member Shernock noted the Green Mountain Family Practice has its own stormwater filtration system on site. She asked if a similar approach could be tried for this stormwater problem. Mr. Lyon thought that might be a possibility. Chair Maxwell felt there was no doubt new developments on the NU campus have had the effect of increasing stormwater flow in the area. He then asked if Mr. Krause has reached out to NU officials about the proposed cost sharing scheme. Mr. Krause said he has not. He originally brought his concerns to the Utility Commissions but was told that a Select Board meeting was the proper venue for such a proposal. Mr. Krause wanted to gauge the attitudes of the Select Board members first before proceeding further and looks forward to additional discussion once the municipality has researched the matter further. He then thanked the Select Board members for considering his proposal and he hopes a three-prong approach to addressing his concerns will prove successful.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. August 13, 2024 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Approval of Warrant #04-25 & #04-25A-E.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #04-25 & #04-25A-E in the amount of \$178,098.96. Board member Stevens noted a \$72,000 payment to repair the leaf picker and asked if the problem was that severe. Manager Schulz confirmed that the machine was in bad condition and needed the repairs urgently in order to operate this autumn. Chair Maxwell noted a payment for "records restoration" and asked what this was. Manager Schulz said this actually was digitalization of municipal records so they could be accessed remotely. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. Receipt of Biweekly Payroll through August 18, 2024.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to receive the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$123,792.90. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Fund Requests.** Chair Maxwell noted that at the previous meeting, the Gray Building Coalition and American Legion Post 63 were asked for additional information regarding their recent requests for ARPA funds. The requested information has not yet been received and after some discussion, Manager Schulz was tasked to contact both applicants and ask that the additional information be provided in time for discussion at the next regular meeting (09/10/24). Chair Maxwell said the Greater Northfield Senior Center, which previously was awarded \$28,000 in ARPA funds for roof improvements, has submitted a new request letter. It seems that since the award, the Senior Center received a new quote for the roof replacement. The new quote, in the amount of \$49,000, would include such additional services as shingle removal, flashing, etc. In the letter, Senior Center President Marie Chilson requests an additional \$21,000 in ARPA funds to make up the project shortfall. Board member Shernock would like to see the new quote in writing before authorizing the release of additional ARPA funds. She added that the letter also includes a new request for \$4,000 for a “standalone hot water heater” and she would like additional information about that as well. For example, Board member Shernock would like to know if the Senior Center has been in contact with Efficiency Vermont about possible rebates, etc. Chair Maxwell also would like additional information about the roof replacement’s estimated cost before proceeding further with this request. Board member Petty said that this late in the ARPA funds designation process, there now are limited funds available for such projects so the Select Board members need to exercise due diligence in setting priorities for the remaining funds. She would prefer that the focus now shift towards infrastructure projects that have been identified by management, such as addressing deteriorating retaining walls, Town Common improvements, etc. rather than awarding funds to external groups in order to update their facilities. Board member Petty felt any additional ARPA funds provided to the Senior Center should be limited to the roof replacement, which had been cited as an urgent concern. In that light, she felt it would be best to formally deny the Senior Center’s additional requests for \$36,000 in ARPA funds to renovate the building’s heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system and their \$26,000 request to purchase new floors and carpeting. Motion by Board member Petty, seconded by Board member Stevens, to deny the Senior Center request for \$36,000 in ARPA funds for a new HVAC system as well as its request for \$26,000 for new flooring. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Board member Morse abstaining.** Chair Maxwell then went through the list of remaining ARPA potential projects. He asked that Manager Schulz provide additional information for the next meeting regarding the proposed replacement of the Memorial Park bleachers, retaining walls repairs, and an upgraded billing system for the Utility Office and the Town Clerk’s Office.
- b. **Public Hearing (Disorderly Conduct Ordinance Revision).** A public hearing will be held starting at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 10, 2024, in order to allow members of the public to express their views regarding proposed revisions of the municipality’s Disorderly Conduct Ordinance. The main revision for be to prohibit outdoor recreation discharge of firearms in the “high and medium density, industrial and downtown centers as identified in the current zoning ordinances.”

VIII. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

- a. **Northfield Falls Pedestrian Safety Improvement Project.** Manager Schulz reported that the first two sections of the new sidewalk in the area will be installed later this week. He said it was good to finally have this project moving forward.
- b. **Labor Day Weekend Festivities.** Manager Schulz noted that the Utility and Highway crews have been working hard to provide a general cleanup of the downtown area before the holiday weekend. He added that this year NU will provide the stage used for the entertainment on the Common.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS’ COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Norwich University Returning Students.** Board member Morse noted that with NU students returning to Northfield for the start of another academic year, there should be an increased number of pedestrians circulating in the downtown area. He asked that drivers exercise extra caution due to this additional foot traffic.

- b. Community Capital of Vermont (CCVT).** Board member Morse is a member of the Economic Development Subcommittee and noted that at their last meeting (08/23/24), Economic Development Director Tom Davis suggested having the municipality work with CCVT in order to develop a more viable local business loan program. In this new scenario, CCVT would manage a local revolving loan fund on behalf of the municipality. A CCVT representative will attend the Select Board regular meeting of September 24, 2024 to better explain this proposal.
 - c. Improved Election Publicization.** Board member Shernock noted that there was limited local participation in this month's Vermont primary election. She felt that part of that was due to the fact that many people did not know there was an election taking place. It was noted the municipality has a "Vote Today" banner and the Select Board members felt it would be a good idea to have this displayed on future election days.
 - d. Town Common Rehabilitation Project.** Board member Shernock noted Emily Lewis and Kait Campbell from DuBois & King, who are assisting the municipality in developing alternatives for the possible rehabilitation of the Town Common, have created three (3) "design concepts" that will be on display at a booth on the Common over the Labor Day Weekend. There also is an online survey for residents to express their preferences.
 - e. Northfield Police Department (NPD) Cruisers.** As noted in a recent NPD Facebook posting, NPD cruisers have been parked at various locations around town in order to encourage drivers to slow down. These cruisers may be occupied or empty and one was placed where the speed limit decreases from 40 miles per hour (MPH) to 30 MPH just south of the NU campus. Board member Stevens felt now that the NU student arrival period is over, that cruiser should be relocated elsewhere. Manager Schulz said that was the plan and these cruisers will be parked elsewhere over the holiday weekend.
 - f. Cheney Field Knotweed.** Board member Petty noted knotweed has spread on the grassy area of Cheney Field. She hopes that when the water storage tanks located there are replaced next year, knotweed eradication could be included as part of the project.
 - g. Norwich University Community Event.** Chair Maxwell wanted to thank NU for holding a community open house at Woodbury Hall last weekend (08/17/24) so Northfield residents could introduce themselves to new NU President John Broadmeadow and his wife Karen. Chair Maxwell was briefly at the event but had to leave early to attend the funeral of Jackamo "Jack" Baroffio, which also was held that morning.
- X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).** There was none.
- XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)], in order to discuss a legal matter and contract negotiations with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:10 p.m.

Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:40 p.m. No action was taken.

XII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

A video recording of this meeting is available at <https://youtu.be/cdHOugmizRU>

These minutes were approved at the Select Board regular meeting of September 10, 2024.