

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
Minutes of May 22, 2025

The meeting was held in the Community Room of the Brown Public Library and was also streamed via the Town Zoom account for the benefit of those unable to attend in person.

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 pm by Chair Bill Smith.

Roll Call: Present for the meeting were DRB members Bill Smith, Joel DeLary, Kevin Pecor, Elroy Hill, and Brian Massey. Clerk Mitch Osiecki was also present. Others in attendance: Evan Detrick (appellant), and several property owners interested in the Bailey Road property subject to the Detrick appeal (Topper Morris; Kathleen Osgood; Paul Dunkel; and Adam King.

A few others participated via Zoom: Kelly Detrick (appellant); Sheri Knox (owner of 486 Bailey Road); and Bill Cecil.

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Elroy Hill moved to approve minutes of Apr 24. Joel DeLary seconded.

Vote to approve: 5-0.

Permit #2025-13 – Appeal of Issuance of Permit #2025-08 (Controlled burn/fire training exercise to raze an old dwelling at 486 Bailey Road). Review tabled from Mar 27.

Clerk & ZA Mitch Osiecki briefly summarized status of this hearing.

Comment from Kelly Detrick: Expressed concern about environmental impact of burning this structure.

Comment from Paul Dunkel: Raised four objections to razing of structure:

1. Removal of an historic structure.
2. Loss of tax revenue.
3. Safe disposal of remnants of structure.
4. Believes demolition, rather than burning, to be a better method of razing structure.

Comment from Kathleen Osgood: Noted that only six homes built in the 19th century remain in the Bailey Road area. Prefers that old structures be preserved to the extent practical.

Comment from Topper Morris: Would like the Northfield Fire Department to invest in a windspeed monitor to ensure conditions are safe for a controlled burn. Believes use of such technology could save town from potential liability if a controlled burn were to get out of control.

Comments from Adam King (on behalf of Preservation Trust of Vermont).

Shared some written correspondence in advance of tonight's meeting (shared with DRB members and attached to final minutes).

Comments from Sheri Knox, property owner, in response to concerns raised by area residents:

- Noted that this meeting is not about nostalgia. It is about acting on the issuance of a zoning permit.
- Stated that she attempted to find someone to demolish the home, but found no takers.
- Stated that the only response she received was from the Northfield Fire Department, offering to work with her to burn the structure as a fire-training exercise.
- Noted that this project costs the town nothing. Stated also that she has spent roughly \$10,000 to prepare this structure for demolition.

No further questions or comments.

Chair Bill Smith polled DRB members for their preliminary thoughts on the matter.

Kevin Pecor: Offered several comments.

- He noted that controlled burn exercises are a rare opportunity for firefighters to gain valuable experience to learn how structures burn.
- Knowledge gained is not just how structures burn. It's also an opportunity for mutual aid fire departments to train on communication and coordination. Departments learn from each other.
- Exercises like these not only teach firefighters how structures burn, but also how structures can be saved.
- Firefighters also train on dealing with the aftermath of a fire.

Comments from Elroy Hill: Property owner has the right to use this option if proper preparations have been made.

Brian Massey – No comments at this time.

Joel DeLary: Noted that some elements of the Asbestos Abatement Application do not appear to have been filled out completely.

Also expressed concern about the risk, however unlikely, that Fire Dept might be called out on another emergency during the burn exercise.

Kevin Pecor responded, explaining that many precautions are taken and protocols are followed to ensure that this exercise will pose no danger to the exercise site and will not be left understaffed.

Bill Smith commented that he agrees that fire training is a valuable exercise and that these opportunities are relatively rare. Wants to ensure that remnants of the burn are removed promptly and disposed of properly.

Joel DeLary asked Sheri Knox if provisions have been made for removal of debris.

In response, Sheri stated that she has already arranged for speedy and proper removal of debris upon conclusion of the exercise.

Evan Detrick reiterated his concern that state regulations require removal of all hazardous material “to the greatest extent possible.” and believes that standard has not been met. Mentioned both painted wood surfaces and asphalt shingles.

Kevin Pecor responded that he has years of experience as a firefighter and has been involved with many controlled burn exercises. Kevin’s experience is that not all potentially hazardous material needs to be removed.

No further questions or comments were offered.

Motion: Kevin Pecor moved that the controlled burn should be allowed to take place. Brian Massey seconded.

Discussion: Topper Morris asked that property owner demonstrate that debris will be removed from site promptly.

Bill Smith called for a vote on the motion, which was approved, 5-0.

Bill Smith noted that a decision of the DRB may be appealed to the Vermont Environmental Court.

Mitch invited anyone interested in learning more about the appeal process to contact him directly.

Other Business

Mitch provided the DRB with updates on several ongoing projects.

1. Norwich University has begun site work in preparation for construction of the Cyber Fusion Center on Park Ave.
2. Northfield Village Development LLC has received zoning approval for construction of a 32-unit apartment building adjacent to the Dollar General lot. Construction is likely to begin this spring.
3. Removal of Cross Brothers Dam should commence sometime after July 1 this summer.

Adjournment

Motion: Kevin moved to adjourn. Elroy seconded.

Vote to approve: 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.

A recording of this meeting can be viewed at this link: (Coming Soon)