

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of June 10, 2025**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Charles Morse, Board members K. David Maxwell, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Lorna Doney, Richard Wobby, Susan Stillinger, Pam Ricker, Gerard LaVarnway, and Elroy C. Hill.

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

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

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. Scott Kerner, Good Measure Pub & Brewery: East Street Closure Request: Saturday, June 21, 2025. (7:01 p.m.)** Chair Morse noted Mr. Kerner was not present at this time. Should he arrive later, the meeting agenda will be re-adjusted.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. May 27, 2025 (Regular Meeting). (7:02 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. June 5, 2025 (Special Meeting). (7:02 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

V. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Approval of Warrant #23-25 & #23-25B-D. (7:03 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve Warrant #23-25 & #23-25B-D in the amount of \$1,562,713.16. Of the total warrant amount, \$1,371,725.54 represented property taxes collected by the municipality and then forwarded to the Paine Mountain School District. Board member Maxwell has heard rumors that the municipality had a \$70,000 contract with Hallstrom Excavating to perform winter road maintenance while the Town Highway crew was shorthanded. He asked if this was correct. Manager Schulz said it was not. The municipality did pay Hallstrom Excavating to perform some snow clearing in the downtown area after heavy snowstorms but there was no contract and the amount paid was much lower. The \$1,500 invoice on the current warrant is for work done a couple of months ago and will be the last such payment for this fiscal year. Board member Maxwell then asked about a \$3,615 payment for "Evidence Software..." Manager Schulz said this is for new software for the Northfield Police Department (NPD) that will allow them to better inventory their evidence room. Board member Petty asked about a \$679.50 payment for a "Solar Pedestrian Xwalk." Manager Schulz said the pedestrian crossing sign on Depot Square was damaged earlier this year. Parts that had been earlier purchased for the future crosswalk sign in Northfield Falls were used at that time and this payment is for their replacement. Board member Stevens asked about a \$1,432.70 fuel tax payment by the Northfield Electric Department (NED). Manager Schulz said this was the state's sales tax on NED customer payments. Chair Morse noted that unlike the municipality itself, the NED is not tax exempt. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. Approval of Warrant #24-25A. (7:08 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve Warrant #24-25A in the amount of \$20,118.62. This is the fourth of five (5) annual bank note payments for Fire Tanker truck. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. Approval of Warrant #24-25B. (7:09 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve Warrant #24-25B in the amount of \$29,217.49. This is the fourth of six (6) annual bank note payments for Fire Pumper truck. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- d. **Receipt of Biweekly Payroll through May 25, 2025. (7:10 p.m.).** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Shernock, to receive the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$102,072.66. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VI. SELECT BOARD

- a. **East Street Closure Request (Good Measure). (7:11 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve the request from Good Measure to close East Street to traffic on Saturday, June 21, 2025. Mr. Kerner was still not present but Richard Wobby asked to address this request at this time. He has spoken to the Select Board members before about the downtown scarce parking situation, which he feels is especially bad on weeknights and weekends. Mr. Wobby feels closing off twelve (12) East Street parking spaces to benefit one business would create an unacceptable hardship for the other businesses in the area. He feels Good Measure already exceeds the amount of public space that the Select Board members originally allocated to them for outside operations. The current situation already creates hazards for pedestrians and vehicular traffic along East Street and Mr. Wobby felt granting the current request would only make the situation worse. Elroy Hill agrees with Mr. Wobby's views on this subject. Board member Maxwell personally does not favor closing public streets and diverting traffic onto private property (i.e. the Northfield Savings Bank parking lot). Chair Morse said in his request letter, Mr. Kerner claims that he has heard no objections from the NPD, Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS), Northfield Fire Department (NFD), or any of the other East Street businesses regarding his request. Board member Petty usually supports allowing outside events that benefit local businesses but she also feels that there is a real downtown parking problem that needs to be further researched. She would have liked to have seen additional information in the request letter that included a description of the event, information about the duration of the road closure, etc. Board member Stevens also would have liked to have seen more specific information about Mr. Kerner's request. Without objection, the motion was tabled. Board member Maxwell suggested that a special meeting could be held before the planned event date at which Mr. Kerner could provide additional information to the Select Board members so they can perform due diligence when considering the street closure request. .
- b. **Approval of Downtown Designation Boundaries. (7:21 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve the revised Downtown Designation Boundaries as recommended by Economic Development Director Thomas Davis. Mr. Davis had provided a written explanation of the revised boundaries for the Select Board packets and would like to provide additional information and answer any questions at this time. Mr. Davis has worked with state consultants on the municipality's application for Downtown Designation status and the person he worked with originally recommended that the northern border of the Downtown Designation conclude at the former Bean Chevrolet dealership. However, he is now working with a new consultant who felt the northern boundary should be expanded northward to Doyon Road in order to include King Street, the Bean Business Park, etc. This area already has municipal utilities and would be a good location for constructing new housing units, new businesses, etc. Mr. Davis said this area also could host a pedestrian/bicycle path that could ultimately link Memorial Park and the Northfield Falls Park. He now is working on a community block grant that could provide funding for infrastructure improvements in this area. In addition, the group that recently submitted the "Northfield Vision Plan" to the Select Board members would be willing to help the municipality with revising local zoning bylaws to encourage smart growth in the new Downtown Designation area. Mr. Davis said the State of Vermont's Community Investment Board will rule on Northfield's Downtown Designation application in October 2025 and he is fairly confident it will be approved. Board member Maxwell asked if Freight Yard Way is included in the expanded boundary lines. Mr. Davis said this area was already included before the revisions. Board member Petty felt the expanded Downtown Designation boundary is a big improvement as it includes the walkable part of the Northfield downtown area. Mr. Davis believes that the state favors Downtown Designation boundaries with a ten (10) minute walking radius. He noted that many of the sidewalks in this area do require significant improvements. Manager Schulz asked if this was the final approval the Select Board members needed to provide for the approval process. Mr. Davis confirmed that it was. Further expansion of the boundary lines is very unlikely.

Board member Stevens asked if North Main Auto is included in the expanded boundary. Mr. Davis said at least part of this business is included in the current map but the boundary line could be further clarified to include all of the business. Board member Stevens asked if the Planning Commission members approved the new boundary lines. Mr. Davis confirmed that they did at their last meeting (06/03/25). Board member Shernock asked if Memorial Park and the Municipal Pool are now included in the Downtown Designation area. Mr. Davis confirmed they were. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- c. **Approval of Northfield VT Local Emergency Management Plan 2025. (7:37 p.m.)** Approval of this revised plan had been tabled at the last meeting (05/27/25) as further revisions had been requested by the Select Board members. Those changes have been made and the motion is being reintroduced at this time. Board member Shernock asked that information about the Central Vermont Disaster Animal Response Team (CVDART) be added to the document at a later time as an appendix. It was noted that one local emergency shelter (Northfield Middle & High School) currently will allow evacuees to bring their pets with them but the other main shelter (Norwich University's Plumley Armory) will not. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Municipal Condemnation Hearing (7:40 p.m.)** Manager Schulz noted that at the beginning of the next meeting (06/24/25), a condemnation hearing will be held regarding a portion of 73 North Main Street. This action has become necessary to obtain needed easements for the Main Street Bridge Replacement project. Negotiations between the property owner (Wesco Realty LLC) and Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) have stalled and it is important for the project timeline that this matter be resolved as soon as possible. This hearing will be preceded by a Site Visit at that location starting at 6:00 p.m. Manager Schulz said VTrans representative(s) and the Town Attorney and will be present at the hearing to provide any necessary information and/or recommendations.
- b. **Main Street Water Line Replacement and Cheney Field Water Tank Replacement Projects. (7:41 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said that despite a slight delay due to the discovery of unexpected, buried concrete near the Main Street Bridge, both of these projects remain on schedule.
- c. **Cross Brothers Dam Removal Project. (7:42 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said there have been some delays in this project due to FEMA understaffing. In addition, the dam removal originally had been scheduled for July when it was thought the river depth would be sufficiently low. There now are indications that the dam removal might have to be further delayed until at least August because of concerns that construction noise might disturb endangered bats nesting in the area. In addition, FEMA funds were to pay for all the dam removal expenses but there now is some uncertainty about when/if the federal funds will be released for this project. If FEMA funds ultimately become unavailable, alternate funding sources could be located but this could result in more time delays for the dam removal.
- d. **Northfield Covered Bridges. (7:43 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the surveillance cameras on the Cox Brook Road Covered Bridges will be removed due to high maintenance costs. Also, the funds that the State of Vermont designated for rehabilitation of "Historic Bridges," including the Cox Brook Road Covered Bridges, has been delayed.
- e. **Municipal Pool. (7:44 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the pool is scheduled to open on Saturday, June 21, 2025. There have been advertisements on local social media about pool hours, pool fees, free swimming lessons, etc. He also will work with Pool Director Shannon Palone on the scheduling of special events at the pool this summer. Those events also will be well advertised in advance.
- f. **Credit Card Payments (7:44 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said a credit card reader along with the necessary software has been ordered so the system will be in place soon that will allow residents to pay their utility bills, current tax payments, and delinquent tax payments by credit card. Currently, only cash and checks are accepted for payment.

- g. Highway Department update (7:46 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the Highway crew members are now working on the gravel resurfacing of Turkey Hill Road. The work should be completed within the next couple of days. Board member Maxwell asked if the cost of road materials will rise significantly in the next fiscal year. Manager Schulz doesn't anticipate any major cost increases.

VIII. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. Laurie Baroffio Retirement Party. (7:47 p.m.)** Board member Maxwell noted all five (5) Select Board members attended this afternoon's retirement party for Finance Director Laurie Baroffio. The party was well attended with current and former municipal employees as well as her family members. Ms. Baroffio is retiring this week after more than thirty-three (33) years of service to Northfield. Board member Maxwell said she would be sorely missed and he thanked her again for her many years of excellent work.
- b. Cross Brothers Dam Removal Bat Situation (7:48 p.m.)** Board member Petty asked when the concern about endangered bats first arose. Manager Schulz said Michele Braun from the Friends of the Winooski first reported this at the Riverwalk Project Working Group meeting last week (06/18/25). It is the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife that is raising concerns about the bats. Manager Schulz has spoken to the dam removal project manager (Karina Dailey) about this and has learned that this concern has been brought up during similar past dam removal projects. They were able to provide some pushback then so the project timeline won't necessarily be too much delayed. He added that any work in the river stream needs to be completed before October 1, 2025 so the dam removal timeline is rather tight in any case. Lorna Doney asked if it has been confirmed that the bats are really present in the area. Chair Morse said the bats can be seen hunting at nighttime.
- c. Rabbit Hollow Bridge status. (7:55 p.m.)** Board member Stevens asked about planned upgrades to Rabbit Hollow Bridge. Manager Schulz said this was another bridge included in the state's historic bridge grant program. The funds to address its deficiencies also have been delayed. It is now likely the municipality will have to pay a five percent (5%) local match to get the project completed. The exact cost of the project will not be known until the scoping study has been completed.
- d. Engine Brake Signs. (7:56 p.m.)** Board member Stevens asked if the new signs requesting that truck drivers not to use their engine brakes (aka "jake brakes") in Northfield have been delivered. Manager Schulz said the signs are now in the Town Garage and will be installed later this week. In addition, the new signs for Stony Brook Road that advise truck drivers to detour onto Smith Hill Road to avoid the Stony Brook Covered Bridge also will be installed this week. Board member Maxwell noted that proposed state legislation (S.66) that would have significantly limited the use of engine brakes in downtown areas passed in the State Senate but did not advance in the State House. The bill could be resurrected at next year's legislative session.
- e. Community Room upgrades (7:58 p.m.)** Board member Stevens asked about the status of proposed upgrades in the Community Room. Manager Schulz said he is now getting quotes for the electrical and other professional work required. It was noted that the mural being painted by local students at the back of the room is progressing well.
- f. Northfield Falls Pedestrian Improvements (7:58 p.m.)** Board member Shernock asked about the status of this project. Manager Schulz said the project contractor is now in town with the needed equipment so construction work should be starting by the end of this week. He added that if there are any further delays with this contractor, he has a replacement contractor on deck. Manager Schulz noted that a good part of the past project delays was due to the fact this is a state highway and VTrans changed the original project designs at least twice. Chair Morse said if the Northfield Falls work doesn't start this week, we should definitely go with another contractor.

- g. Pool House Redesign (8:02 p.m.)** Board member Shernock noted the last Town Buildings & Energy Subcommittee discussion about this project was held a couple months ago. She asked if there had been any progress in the interim. Manager Schulz said the project architects are working on the plan revisions based on the suggestions provided at that meeting. The attendees at that meeting wanted Pool Director Shannon Palone to be present at the next subcommittee meeting to provide her own recommendations for the project. Unfortunately, Ms. Palone has been tied up with other matters but will be able to attend a subcommittee meeting early next month.
- h. Covered Bridge Solar Lights (8:03 p.m.)** Board member Shernock recommended installing solar lights on the covered bridges. They cost about \$150 each and this would be much less expensive over time than the current setup.
- i. Free State Park Admission (8:04 p.m.)** Board member Shernock noted Vermonters can visit state parks and state historical sites for free this upcoming weekend (i.e., Vermont Days Weekend). She added that the Brown Public Library also has free park passes for other times of the year that are available to Northfield residents with library cards. Board member Maxwell noted Vermonters who are military veterans and/or are at least sixty-two (62) years of age can apply for a Green Mountain Passport, which provides free day-use access for life to Vermont State Parks and historic sites. The application form is available at Town Clerks' offices and there is a one-time \$2.00 fee.
- j. Kiosk/Bus Station update. (8:06 p.m.)** Board member Shernock suggested that the kiosk could be re-sited on the property on North Main Street that the Dollar General recently donated to the municipality for public access to the proposed Riverwalk path.
- k. Public Health Complaint. (8:08 p.m.)** Chair Morse has heard complaints about a house at the intersection of Central Street and Washington Avenue with an excessive amount of trash that has attracted a significant rodent population. Board member Maxwell also noted the pile of pallets in the front yard is so close to the road to create a driving hazard for drivers trying to make a turn. Manager Schulz said he has sent letters to the property owner about the pallets in the past and he now will work with Health Officer Mitch Osiecki on addressing the garbage and rodent infestation problem.

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. Elroy C. Hill: Flag Vandalism. (8:14 p.m.)** Mr. Hill asked what was wrong with some people in this town. On more than one occasion, someone has broken the US flag staff in front of his house and dropped the flag on the ground. If those responsible are children, Mr. Hill feels their parents bear a large share of the responsibility for not teaching them to properly respect the US flag as well as the property of others.

- X. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Board member Petty, 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 a contract negotiation with Manager Schulz present for some but not all of the discussion. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:18 p.m.

Manager Schulz left the executive session at 8:26 p.m.

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

The Board came out of executive session at 8:48 p.m. No action was taken.

- XI. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Shernock, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

A video recording of this meeting is available at: <https://youtu.be/AaUOFIYlpq8>

These minutes were approved at the Select Board regular meeting of June 24, 2025.