

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
NORTHFIELD HOUSING SUBCOMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes of August 25, 2023**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Members Erin Hicks-Tibbles, Tom Bright, Danielle Pelczarski, Michael Kraus, Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Zoning Administrator Mitch Oscieski and Economic Development Director Tom Davis,

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled): None

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the July 28, 2023, minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

IV. DISCUSSION:

- a. Megan Roush was scheduled is to talk about Community Partnership Group, but could not make the meeting, postponing this topic.

- b. Tax Sale Process: Town Manager Jeff Schulz attended the meeting to discuss how the tax sale process works when a property owner is delinquent on their taxes.

Mr. Schulz explained that the tax collector is responsible for collecting all taxes. First step is notification followed by trying to work with people who have back taxes to get them back in compliance. Ms. Pelczarski asked about the percentage of Northfield property taxes become delinquent. Mr. Schulz said it was quite low.

If, after two years of attempting to collect the overdue taxes, or the amount due is a sizeable amount, the town warns a tax sale for three weeks. Often residents come forward to pay during that 3 weeks or the bank will come forward and pay off the taxes.

Typically, each year there are 10-15 properties that go to tax sale. On tax sale day – about 4-5 properties actually go to a bidding. Starting amount is the amount of taxes and fees, following an auction process. The buyer has 24 hours to pay with bank check or cash. Buyer earns 1% on the payment.

The property owner gets one year to redeem the tax payment with penalty. If they do not, the town issues a quick claim deed to the buyer. The buyer has to then sometimes claim the property and move the owners if they have not moved.

Ms. Petty asked how Northfield compares to other municipalities Mr. Schulz said it's tax sales were a little higher than some, but more equivalent to cities like Barre.

c. Update on Zoning Regulations

Mr. Oscieski reported that the Planning Commission (PC) - has a revised document with most of the drafted changes. The PC need to append some zoning maps to the document. The next planning meeting, on September 6, includes a few minor items to discuss. Hope is to adopt a final draft version at the September meeting - then post for public hearings. Select Board also holds public meetings after PC holds their hearing. By mid to late October, the Select Board should hold their meeting and proceed to vote on approval of document. Mr. Oscieski said he will add this group to have access to the draft documents.

d. Vacancies in buildings

Mr. Oscieski said that no one is tracking that statistic in the state that he knows of. He said he knows of a few vacant buildings, but there is no hard data.

e. Other Matters

Commercial Property – Mr. Davis reported that more people want to sell their properties than lease them. Not a big appetite for retailers - except possibly Montpelier and Barre retailers who are currently displaced from the flood.

Habitat – Ms. Petty asked about a Habitat for Humanity site in Northfield. Mr. Davis reported that he is working with the group on a site on North Main Street.

Bylaws Research - no members had comments at this time.

Ms. Hicks-Tibbles reported on attending the EHT - VCRD – forum and collecting data and reports to share with the group. She noted potentially valuable resources, including the Vermont Community Foundation Community Fund and observed that the town of Woodstock has a fund to build houses.

V. ADJOURNMENT. The meeting was adjourned at 4:05.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas G. Davis

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Economic Development Director