

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of January 8, 2026

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Charles Morse, Board members K. David Maxwell (6:18 p.m.), Lydia Petty (absent), Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Steve Mackenzie (Interim Town Manager), Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), Meggan McCusker (Chief, Northfield Ambulance Service [NAS]), Brain Massey Jr., Sally Davidson, Bethany Drum, Scott Bragg (NAS), Danielle Farnum (NAS), Melissa Stark Rutter (NAS), Kaelee Bouleris (NAS), Matthew Romei (NAS), Bill Clements, Carolyn Stevens, Curtis Dudley, Don Doyon, Gary Circosta, Kristin Pollard, Tom Scott, and Elroy C. Hill.

Chair Morse called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

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

III. DISCUSSION

- a. Appointment of an Authorized Representative and Alternate for State Revolving Fund Loans.** Finance Director Baroffio said the municipality needs to authorize a representative and alternate to sign documents related to the state's All Clean Water and Drinking Water Revolving Loan fund program. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to appoint Steve Mackenzie as the representative and James Russo as the alternate. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

- b. Proposed FY 2026/2027 Town Budget**

- 1. Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS).** In the NAS Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget, the only account is for Building Improvements. That account has a \$5,391 deficit and \$7,500 will be added in the next fiscal year. NAS Chief Megghan McCusker said it was the purchase of new garage doors that resulted in the deficit spending. Rot was found in the old ones and they needed quick replacement. Chair Morse noted the NAS Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget will cover the ambulance units as well as the equipment stored in them. Chief McCusker said two (2) defibrillators were replaced last year and will not need to be replaced until FY 2030-2031. The expected replacement cost of each is \$47,000 and \$7,900 will be added annually to these CEP accounts to cover the eventual expense. The two (2) AutoPulse machines were both purchased in 2021 and are scheduled for replacement in FY 2029-2030. These are portable CPR units and the replacement cost for each is \$17,000. Each of the AutoPulse CEP accounts has a balance of about \$9,600 and \$2,000 will be added in each coming year to cover the shortfall. Chief McCusker would like to start budgeting for AutoPulse batteries, which last five (5) years and cost about \$1,170 each. She would like to purchase six (6) this year. Ms. Baroffio will budget \$7,000 for this new CEP account in the next fiscal year and following years will have \$1,500 budgeted. The 2017 Rescue unit is scheduled for replacement in FY 2041-2042 at an estimated cost of \$45,000. There now is a \$16,048 balance in this CEP account and \$1,800 will be added to this in future years. The 2022 Ambulance unit is scheduled for replacement in FY 2032-2033. There is a \$44,500 balance in the CEP account with \$22,500 to be added each future year. Ms. Baroffio said the current plan is to budget for about half of the replacement cost, which is now estimated at \$400,000, and then borrow the remaining balance. Chief McCusker said \$400,000 was probably a low estimate.

The 2017 Ambulance unit has a \$164,893 balance in its CEP account. The current plan is to remount the box on the 2006 Ambulance unit on a new chassis to replace this vehicle in FY 2027-2027. This will cost about \$200,000 and \$65,000 in new CEP funds will be added in the next fiscal year. Chief McCusker said the 2006 Ambulance unit will be sent to the Osage dealer in Wisconsin for the remount this spring and is expected back by mid-summer.

Board member Maxwell arrived at this time.

Ms. Baroffio thought it might be best to reduce the \$65,000 in new CEP funds to \$35,000 as that would cover the cost of the remount. NAS EMT Scott Bagg suggested that due to the increased volume of NAS run calls in recent years, it might be a good idea to decrease the expected life spans of NAS vehicles by a year or two. That would reduce vehicles maintenance costs as well as increasing their trade-in value. Chief McCusker also is looking at dealers other than Osage in order to cut costs. She will provide the Select Board members with this information. The CEP budgets for the replacement of stretchers; stair chairs; portable and in-vehicle radios; and pages are all on schedule.

The UTV is scheduled for replacement in FY 2028-2029 at an estimated cost of \$23,000. There is a \$18,102 balance in this CEP account with \$1,700 to be added in upcoming fiscal years. Chief McCusker will do some research to make sure the estimated replacement price is accurate. She suspects \$30,000 might be a more accurate figure. It might be possible to delay the replacement date for a couple of years as the machine is in good condition. Ms. Baroffio said that extending this vehicle's expected life span from ten (10) years to fifteen (15) is feasible. She will adjust the annual allocations for this CEP account accordingly and change the replacement date to FY 2033-2034. Chair Morse said these changes would be undone later if the machine is damaged, etc.

The Jaws of Life budget has a \$26,931 balance and the cost of a replacement is \$50,000. If it were just refurbished instead, the cost would be \$26,000. Chief McCusker said the Northfield Fire Department (NFD) carries the same equipment when they respond to car accidents so the NAS Jaws of Life doesn't get much use. The EMTs on scene focus more on treating patients rather than extrication. Chair Morse said this hydraulic piece of equipment requires regular usage to keep it in proper functioning condition. Mr. Bagg said today's passenger vehicles are constructed much safer than in the past so Jaws of Life are used much less frequently. Chair Morse said there needs to be a future conversation regarding whether the NAS Jaws of Life is a redundant piece of equipment and should be removed from the NAS inventory. Manager Mackenzie said it doesn't make much sense to budget for its replacement if the current one isn't being used. Ms. Baroffio suggested removing the \$2,560 budgeted for the next fiscal year pending the final decision regarding this particular piece of equipment.

The PowerLoad systems were both purchased in 2022 and are not scheduled for replacement until FY 2032-2033 and FY 2035-2036. Each CEP account has a balance of about \$10,000 and \$4,000 will be added in upcoming fiscal years. Ms. Baroffio said when the UTV was purchased, it was agreed that no funds would be budgeted for the replacements of the NAS trailer or boggin. The ATV is now inoperable and not considered part of the NAS fleet. It was noted that the TDS Telecom building on Wall Street will be vacant soon and this could be a viable future home for the NAS. This possibility will be explored further.

2. **Northfield Police Department (NPD).** The only NPD CIP account is for Building Improvements, which has a \$14,461 balance with \$2,500 to be added in the next fiscal year. Chair Morse knows that secure cages for records retention will need to be installed in the Police Station. He estimated the cost at about \$700. As there is no NPD representative here tonight, there is no departmental input on the building's actual condition. Board member Maxwell said from his general observations, the building appears to be in good shape. Chair Morse concurs that there don't seem to be any major issues. Board member Shernock would like the \$2,500 kept in the budget in case the new interim and/or permanent police chief find any problems once they start working. Chair Morse noted that the building's roof will need to be replaced eventually.

Ms. Baroffio, said that in the NPD CEP, we are now budgeting for the replacement of three (3) police cruisers. We do have a fourth vehicle (2019 Ford Explorer) on hand but we are not budgeting for its replacement. Board member Maxwell said the reason for reducing the NPD fleet from four (4) to three (3) was staffing problems. Ms. Baroffio said the 2010 Ford Explorer is scheduled for replacement in FY 2026-2027 but that could be delayed by a year or two due to limited usage. There is \$50,000 in this CEP account with \$10,000 to be added in the next fiscal year. \$6,850 will be added to the NPD Computers budget in the next fiscal year to cover the current \$5,850 deficit in this account.

3. **Administrative.** In the Administrative CIP budget, there is a \$8.01 balance in the Manager Search account. As the search for a permanent town manager should be completed during the current fiscal year, Ms. Baroffio said these related expenses could be taken out of the operations and maintenance (O&M) budget as professional services. The VOREC signage account now has a \$16,510 balance. Ms. Baroffio believes this project has been completed using ARPA funds. These are not reserved funds so they could be transferred to another CIP account, preferably one related to the Town Forest. Chair Morse felt a conversation with the Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC) chair might be useful to determining the best use of the remaining funds. Perhaps a fund for future signage repair and/or replacement should be considered.

4. **Miscellaneous**

- i. **Town Clerk CIP.** Ms. Baroffio said the CIP account for the vault located in the Town Clerk's office now has a \$22,768 balance with \$25,000 to be added in the next fiscal year. There is no formal quote for the vault renovation work that needs to be done. Chair Morse said the vault is really overcrowded with municipal records so some expansion of its capacity is needed. In addition, some sort of fire suppression system should be installed and this might raise the cost of the project considerably. Chair Morse said we are probably looking at total costs of over \$100,000. The current account balance will only cover the initial planning for this project. Board member Maxwell would like to be sure that the municipal government will remain located in the Municipal Building for the foreseeable future before sinking this much money into it. He would like to see some long-term plans for the building. Future annual additions to this CIP budget will increase from \$500 to \$12,000 starting FY in 2027-2028.
- ii. **Library/Historical Society Building CIP.** There now is a \$8,000 balance in the Community Room update account. Chair Morse said the previous manager was supposed to be using these funds to purchase new chairs, technology updates, etc. but he doesn't know if a written plan was ever developed. There are other building deficiencies that need to be addressed, including the Historical Society basement. Chair Morse said these problems will need to be discussed with a contractor.
- iii. **Listers CIP.** Ms. Baroffio spoke to Listers Chair Thomas Alsheimer recently and learned that the town-wide reappraisal process should start in July 2026. The estimated cost will be \$200,000 and there is a \$214,983 balance in the CIP account for this purpose. Mr. Alsheimer felt it would be good to have an additional \$1,000 on hand for this project so \$500 will be added to this account over the next two years. The Tax Map CIP account has a \$4,827 balance and Mr. Alsheimer would like an additional \$1,500 in the next fiscal year to cover the purchase.
- iv. **Cemetery CIP.** In the Stone/Monument Restoration CIP account, an additional \$1,000 will be added in the next fiscal year. This will be added to the current \$16,646 balance. The accounts for Mt. Hope Expansion, General Cemetery Restoration, and the Falls Cemetery Fence all have healthy balances so no funds will be added in the next fiscal year.

- v. **Municipal Building CIP.** The Building Improvement CIP account has a \$1,048 deficit so \$3,500 will be added in the next fiscal year. Ms. Baroffio felt the back door (i.e., employee) entry way was unsafe and should be fixed. The parking area drainage also needs to be improved at some time.
- vi. **Municipal Building CEP.** The CEP account for the new generator has a \$2,903 balance. The generator is not expected to require replacement until FY 2034-2035. \$500 will be set aside each year for this starting in FY 2027-2028.
- vii. **Highway CIP.** Ms. Baroffio contacted the Vermont League of Cities & Towns and they confirmed that the funds now set aside for the Main Street Bridge Replacement local match could be transferred to other town bridge CIP accounts. Once the starting date for the project has been confirmed (it has been delayed three times), it would be possible to bond the local match amount, which is five percent (5%) of the total project costs.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Sally Davidson: Budget Questions.** Ms. Davidson asked how much was being budgeted for Garden Supplies next year. Ms. Baroffio said this is in the Grounds, Parks, and Facilities O&M budget and is set at \$3,000 in the next fiscal year. This is a \$500 increase from the current fiscal year. Ms. Davidson asked if any funds will be budgeted for Town Common Revitalization. Chair Morse said a priority list for the work to be done has to be developed first. He felt problems with the fountain needs to be addressed first. Board member Maxwell said a full discussion needs to be held regarding a priority list and how to finance the work to be done.
- b. **Sally Davidson: Northfield Community Flag Project.** Ms. Davidson asked if funds could be put into the budget to pay for new US flags to be displayed in the community. Chair Morse said when this request was made earlier, it was suggested that the organization behind this project should petition to get an article on the Town Meeting warning to cover this expense. Board member Maxwell said this had been a private fundraising effort in the past and public funds were not used for these purchases. He added that Ms. Davidson could either circulate a petition to get on the ballot or ask the Select Board members to put this matter directly on the warning. Ms. Davidson made a request that this matter be put on the warning without a petition.

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

The Board adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

A video recording of this meeting is available at: <https://youtu.be/2wJIG9OI41k>

These minutes were revised and approved at the Select Board regular meeting of January 27, 2026.