

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of August 23, 2022**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell (absent), Vice-Chair Julie H. Goodrich, Board members Charles Morse, Lydia Petty (absent), and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Eddie Habeck (Norwich University), Donald Doyon, Carolyn Stevens, and Elroy Hill.

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

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Those persons present were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The remote contingent also participated as much as possible.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** Highway Foreman Trent Tucker was to present a Department Head Report tonight but was unable to attend. His report will be rescheduled to a future meeting.

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

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. August 9, 2022 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. Board member Morse wanted it noted in the minutes that Carolyn Stevens from the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN) attended the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) meeting when the possible formation of the West Central Vermont Economic Development District was first discussed. Acting Chair Goodrich would like it included in the minutes that she asked Ray Pelletier, Northfield's delegate to CVFiber, how much CVFiber was planning to seek in bond funds to expand its broadband network. Mr. Pelletier said about \$23,000,000. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Approval of Warrant #04-23.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #04-23 in the amount of \$106,900.97. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- b. Approval of Biweekly Payroll through August 7, 2022.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$119,068.00. Manager Schulz noted the overtime expense for the Northfield Police Department (NPD) was \$3,656 for this pay period. This expense is expected to creep up in coming months due to NPD staffing problems. NPD Chief John Helfant is trying to mitigate this situation by hiring qualified part-time officers but police officer shortages are a statewide problem. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. Reappointment of Town Health Officer.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Lawton Rutter as Town Health Officer for an additional three-year term. Board member Morse asked how long Mr. Rutter has served in this position. Mr. Rutter has been Town Health Officer since 2016. He served as Deputy Health Officer the previous ten years. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

- b. Norwich University Homecoming 2022 Requests.** Eddie Habeck is Norwich University's Senior Director of Alumni and Family Engagement. He said NU Homecoming 2022 will start on Thursday, September 15, 2022 and conclude on Sunday, September 18, 2022. The bulk of events, including the football game against Castleton University, will be held on Saturday. Mr. Habeck expects the number of alumni and family members attending this year will far less than for the last two NU Homecoming events (2019 and 2021). Last year's festivities were held in conjunction with President Mark Anarumo's official inauguration and the 2019 event celebrated NU's bicentennial. There was a "virtual homecoming" in 2020 due to COVID-19. In order to accommodate elder and disabled alumni attending this year's festivities, Mr. Habeck is asking for the lower section of Central Street from South Main Street to Washington Street be closed to through traffic on Saturday, September 17, 2022 from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. This will allow dedicated parking areas to be reserved for older and/or disabled attendees. Manager Schulz spoke to NPD Chief Helfant about this temporary road closure and he has no issues. However, due to aforementioned staffing concerns, there might not be as many NPD officers on hand for traffic control, etc. as in past years. Acting Chair Goodrich asked if emergency vehicles would have full access to the area. Mr. Habeck confirmed he is working with the local emergency services to ensure this is not a problem. There also will be direct contact with the street's residents as well as notices published in local newspapers, posted on social media, etc. Unless there are objections, there also are plans to have a band perform on the vacant lot NU owns on lower Central Street on Saturday afternoon from 2:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. Manager Schulz said live music should not be a problem during the daytime. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the NU request for the temporary closure of lower Central Street. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- c. Heating Oil, Propane, Diesel Fuel, & No-Lead Gasoline Bid Results.** Manager Schulz said the fuel bid process was advertised and bid forms were sent to twelve (12) regional fuel suppliers. However, only one bid (Gillespie Fuels & Propane) was received by yesterday's deadline. Gillespie Fuels provided submissions for heating fuel (floating, fixed, and capped), propane (floating, fixed, and capped), and diesel fuel (floating only). Manager Schulz recommends awarding the bids to Gillespie Fuels for heating fuel at the fixed price of \$3.58 per gallon, propane at the fixed price of \$1.78 per gallon, and diesel fuel at the floating price of \$4.12 per gallon. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the bids in accordance with this recommendation. **Motion passed 5-0-0.** Board member Morse asked about no-lead gasoline, for which we received no bids. Manager Schulz said we have been purchasing gasoline from The Evans Group (Lebanon, NH) at the market price over the past year and will continue to do so.
- d. Select Board Retreat.** The Select Board members will hold a retreat in the Community Room on Thursday, September 1, 2022 starting at 10:00 a.m. The room has been reserved for three hours but the retreat probably won't last that long. Manager Schulz said the Select Board members are asked to bring their own individual lists of short- and long-term goals for the community in order to facilitate a free-ranging discussion. Among the likely topics will be the request from CVFiber for five percent (\$90,000) of Northfield's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in order to provide broadband internet access to the 550 underserved households in this community.

VIII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge Repairs.** As he indicated at the last meeting (08/09/22), Manager Schulz said the contractor (Daniels Construction) for the bridge repairs has found the problems with the bridge's support structure more serious than previously thought. The project originally called for replacing the bridge's timber decking. The contractor now is suggesting three additional options, which include (1) replacing three deteriorating timber stringers (\$21,000), (2) replacing the existing timber sills and bearing blocks with a concrete bridge seat and oak bearing blocks (\$49,000), and (3) constructing a new concrete buttress that would be dowelled into the river bedrock (\$40,000). Manager Schulz recommends going forward with the first option as that can be done quickly and within the current project budget. This also will return the bridge's maximum weight capacity back to 16,000 pounds, which was the amount before it recently was inspected by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTTrans) and found deficient. The other two options could be done at a later time (if needed) and budgeted properly. There was no objection from the Select Board members to Manager Schulz's recommendation so he will contact the contractor to go forward on the first option.
- b. **South Main Street Stormwater Project.** Manager Schulz said there has been a delay in the construction phase of this project. When the worksite was initially excavated, it was found that the existing water and sewer lines were not located where the project's engineering plans said they would be. Construction work was suspended while the engineering plans were redrawn so the new stormwater lines could be properly placed. Construction should restart within the next couple weeks. In addition, this afternoon's rainstorm washed some excavated material down the roadside. The contractor will send a couple workers tomorrow to clean up the mess. Acting Chair Goodrich asked why the water and sewer lines were incorrectly marked on the engineering plans. Manager Schulz said those utility lines were installed over a hundred years ago and work plans at that time weren't always the most accurate. Board member Stevens asked if there would be additional expense due to the work delay and plan redesign. Manager Schulz said there probably would be but we would not be paying it since the State of Vermont is funding the entire project.
- c. **CVFiber ARPA Funds Request.** There was an unanswered question from the last meeting's discussion regarding the CVFiber request for five percent (\$90,000) of Northfield's ARPA funds. The State of Vermont has committed to match any such donation to CVFiber made before September 15, 2022. However, the state offer was capped at \$1,500,000. Since some Central Vermont communities already have committed ARPA funds to CVFiber, there was uncertainty whether the state's limit had already been reached. Manager Schulz contacted Mr. Pelletier and was told that seven municipalities had committed \$553,000 to CVFiber, which means there is about \$960,000 in state matching funds still available.
- d. **NPD Staffing Problems.** Manager Schulz said there have been regional discussions held about how to resolve the current shortfall in police officers. One suggestion has been a greater reliance on Mutual Aid programs to share personnel resources between law enforcement departments. Another possibility is focusing efforts on recruiting and training part-time officers to a greater extent.

- e. **Outside Auditors.** Manager Schulz said the auditors are working in the Municipal Building this week on the municipality's financial accounts for the previous fiscal year. All appears to be proceeding well even though the process is a little more complicated due to all the grant money received over the past year. The final audit report should be completed within eight to ten weeks.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Stony Brook Road.** Board member Morse commended the recent work done on Stony Brook Road. However, he is concerned that the paving work done by VTrans along Vermont 12A has raised the road to the extent that there might be a serious dip when drivers turn off that road onto side roads such as Stony Brook Road. Manager Schulz will monitor the situation so there are no problems with sideroad aprons when the paving is completed.
- b. **ARPA Funds.** Board member Morse noted the group chaired by Merry Shernock that is conducting community outreach meetings to obtain local opinion on how these funds should be spent will be holding two meetings next month: Sunday, September 11, 2022 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the United Church and Wednesday, September 14, 2022 from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Senior Center. He hopes these meetings will be well attended and valuable feedback can be gathered regarding which local initiatives Northfield residents favor, i.e. water/sewer line expansion, improved broadband access, etc. As for providing ARPA funds to CVFiber, Board member Morse would like more information about the timeline of TDS telecom's planned local fiber optic expansion project before committing the \$90,000. Manager Schulz said this matter can be fully discussed at the upcoming retreat. Board member Morse would like some input from TDS Telecom regarding their future plans either then or at the next Select Board regular meeting (09/13/22).
- c. **"Tickler" Information.** Board member Morse would like a greater commitment from Manager Schulz in providing periodic updates on current and future municipal projects. Perhaps updates could be provided electronically so that Select Board member could click on a particular topic and receive a full and up-to-date report.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED). There was none.

XI. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to adjourn. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the Select Board regular meeting of September 13, 2022.