

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of January 13, 2026

I. ROLL CALL. Chair Charles Morse, Board members K. David Maxwell, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Manager Steven Mackenzie, Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), Megan McCusker (Chief, Northfield Ambulance Service [NAS]), Danielle Farnum (NAS), Brian Massey Jr., Kristin Pollard, Tim Davis, Jeffrey Elrick, Gerard LaVarnway, Matthew Romei, Susan Stillinger, Carolyn Stevens, Don Doyon, Lorna Doney, Mary Nadon Scott, Thomas Scott, Karen Trombly, and Elroy C. Hill.

Chair Morse called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED): None.

III. DISCUSSION

a. Proposed FY 2026/2027 Town Budget

1. Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Budgets.

i. **Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS).** In the current draft budget, NAS Personnel Services will increase by 10.2% in the next fiscal year. Chief McCusker has submitted a request that the hourly wages paid NAS part-time employees be increased to better reflect what neighboring communities pay their first responders. She has requested that VEFR (Vermont Emergency First Responder) employees have an increase from \$17.25 to \$18.00, the EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians) from \$18.00 to \$20.00, the AEMTs (Advanced Emergency Medical Technicians) from \$21.00 to \$23.00, and the Medics from \$23.00 to \$25.00. If this request is approved, it would increase the part-time employee line item from \$144,240 to \$146,432. Ms. Baroffio said the previous manager had increased these stipends by eighty cents (80¢) per hour. Board member Petty would like to see a chart that compares current NAS compensation to that in other Vermont communities. Chief McCusker said she could provide this but noted that there are significant differences between regional ambulance services that could make a direct comparison difficult. As for non-emergency transports, Chief McCusker said those usually involve Northfield residents being transferred between medical facilities or being transported home. She noted that the UVM Transfer Center network has a new system for contacting ambulance services for non-emergency transports that favors ambulance services staffed by stand-by professionals. Since NAS is staffed by volunteers, Chief McCusker often has to make calls to arrange coverage and that means she cannot give an immediate response when a request is made. Therefore, due to the new system, NAS is losing some of the non-emergency transports it used to make. Board member Shernock is not sure whether the new policy of having a non-emergency transfer crew on hand is working out. Chief McCusker said that at the worst the new policy is revenue neutral and we are not losing any money. Chair Morse said that the Run Pay budget will increase from \$39,000 to \$44,950 in the next fiscal year, which would be a better match for recent actuals. The same is true for Training pay, which will increase from \$6,000 to \$14,690. The NAS overtime budget will stay at \$16,2000 and the Non-Emergency Transfer budget will increase from \$7,560 to \$14,400 to better match recent actuals. The other lines items in the NAS Personnel Services budget will either be level-funded or see slight increases.

The NAS Contract Services budget will see a 19.2% increase in the next fiscal year and the major reason for this is the amount budgeted for Ambulance Bylining Services will increase from \$39,000 to \$55,000. Ms. Baroffio said that the contracted billing company charges based on a percentage of the NAS services that they bill. Since NAS revenue has increased significantly in recent years, the billing cost will rise accordingly. In the NAS Administrative budget, most line items are level funded or have a slight increase.

In the Materials/Supply NAS budget, Chief McCusker would like a one-time increase in the Equipment Purchase budget to cover the cost of purchasing IV pumps that used to be provided free of charge. She is asking that this budget be increased from \$5,000 to \$15,000 in the next fiscal year. Ms. Baroffio would prefer that this purchase be put in the NAS Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget and not in O&M. This issue will be discussed again at a later time.

The meeting went into recess at 6:17 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 6:29 p.m.

Town Manager. The manager's total salary is split between Town (56.5%) and Utilities (43.5%). The Town O&M portion in the next fiscal year is now set at \$73,450, which results in a total salary of \$130,000. This final amount probably will be negotiated during the permanent town manager search. The Advertising/ Legal Notices budget will increase from \$1,700 to \$3,500 in order to better match recent actuals.

Town Clerk/Treasurer. This O&M budget will increase 5.2% in the next fiscal year and this is mainly due to salary increases for the Town Clerk/Treasurer and the Assistant Town Clerk.

Board of Civil Authority. This O&M budget will decrease by 21.8% (\$7,610 to \$5,950) to better reflect recent actuals for contract services, etc.

Accounting. Chair Morse noted that this O&M budget will increase by 13.4% in the next fiscal year mainly due to an increase in personnel expenses.

Listers. This O&M budget will increase by only 1.5% in the next fiscal year as most line items are level funded. Lister Assistant Charlene Lathrop will be retiring soon and there is some uncertainty whether a replacement will be hired or whether a Lister will perform her duties in future. Ms. Baroffio asked Listers Chair Thomas Alshimer recently whether the upcoming town-wide reappraisal would require an increase in Lister work hours. Mr. Alshimer did not believe this would happen in the next fiscal year but possibility in the following one.

Northfield Fire Department (NFD). Ms. Baroffio said the part-time employee line item, which compensates NFD volunteers who respond to emergencies, will increase from \$29,000 to \$34,730 in the next fiscal year. There will be corresponding increases in the line items for Workers Compensation, etc. Other line items in this O&M budget are mostly level funded.

Northfield Police Department (NPD). The Personnel Services budget will increase by 12.9% to reflect scheduled pay rises in the police union contract. Other budget line items are mostly level funded.

Town Highway. The Personnel Services budget will increase by 3.6% mainly due to annual pay increases in the employees' union contract. Overtime expenses will be increased from \$45,000 to \$52,000 to reflect recent actuals. The line marking budget will remain at \$15,000. Board member Petty hopes that the work will be done in a more timely manner this year. The Crack Sealing budget remains at \$8,000. Chair Morse felt this work does a great job on the backroads. In the Administrative O&M budget, the CDL License budget will increase from \$2,750 to \$5,000. Highway Foreman Karl Bailey would like to initiate a policy in which the municipality would split the cost of obtaining a new CDL license with a Highway employee. The overall cost is \$4,500 and the employee would have their half of the cost reimbursed if they remain employed by the Highway Department for five (5) years. This is both a hiring and retention incentive.

In the Materials/Supply O&M budget, most of the line items are either level funded or see slight increases. The Sign & Post budget has been moved from the CIP budget to O&M so this \$4,000 has been added. Chair Morse would like to increase the Road Sand budget by \$18,000 to \$81,000. The Vehicle & Equipment Maintenance O&M budget will remain at \$75,000 in the next fiscal despite much higher recent actuals. Chair Morse said the new highway trucks arriving this fall should reduce these costs in the next year. After some discussion, as a precaution this line item was increased to \$120,000.

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

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

The Board adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

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

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