

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING  
Minutes of March 28, 2023**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Charles Morse, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Tom Davis (Economic Development Director), Simon Pearish (Dog River Park Committee), Bob Keeley (Northfield Energy Committee), Joe Wantuch (Northfield Energy Committee), Royal DeLegge (Planning Commission), Lorna Doney, Caleb Doney, Donald Doyon, Tim Swartz, Susan Stillinger, Carolyn Stevens, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell 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.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)**

- a. Simon Pearish, Dog River Park Committee: Knotweed Management Meeting.** Mr. Pearish wanted to invite the Select Board members and all other interested residents to an upcoming presentation on knotweed management by Curt Lindberg, Chair of the Waitsfield Conservation Commission (WCC). The meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 12, 2023 starting at 5:30 p.m. in the Community Room located in the Brown Public Library (93 South Main Street). Mr. Pearish said Mr. Lindberg and the WCC have been very aggressive in managing the spread of Japanese knotweed in the Mad River Valley. Mr. Lindberg will discuss their strategies and provide some recommendations on how to address the problem here in Northfield along the Dog River. Members of the Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC), the Town Forest Stewardship Committee (TFSC), and the Dog River Park Committee (DRPC) also have been specifically invited to attend. Mr. Pearish believes this should be a very informative and useful presentative given the recurrent problem with knotweed. Chair Maxwell asked if Mr. Pearish will be asking the Select Board members to take specific actions after this meeting. Mr. Pearish said at this point he is merely trying to bring Northfield residents together to discuss this concern. He is keeping an open mind on what should be done here. Board member Petty was grateful for the WCC Report in the packets regarding how that community was able to develop strategies to manage the spread of knotweed in Waitsfield while successfully engaging the public on this problem. Mr. Pearish confirmed the WCC was able to bring together a good number of volunteers to assist with knotweed removal. Board member Morse noted the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) is creating a new Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC). He asked if the spread of knotweed along riverbanks had an adverse effect on water quality. Mr. Pearish confirmed it did have an indirect impact by impeding proper river flow, eroding riverbanks, redirecting rainwater away from rivers, streams, etc. Board member Morse noted Mr. Pearish is an Associate Professor of Biology at Norwich University and it is good to have a Northfield resident with this professional background involved with this. Board member Shernock asked if the meeting would have remote access for those who cannot attend in person. Mr. Pearish said the meeting would and it also would be recorded for later viewing. The remote meeting access information will be distributed with the event notices. Chair Maxwell then thanked Mr. Pearish and the other DRPC members for taking the initiative in this matter.

**V. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION**

- a. Liquor License Renewals: Dollar General and South Village Mobil.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve these liquor license renewals. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

**VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. March 14, 2023 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve the minutes. There was a misattribution that will be corrected. **Motion to approve the revised minutes passed 5-0-0.**

## VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Approval of Warrant #18-23.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #18-23 in the amount of \$385,822.92. It was noted that of the total warrant amount, \$291,993 represented power purchases for the Northfield Electric Department (NED). Board member Morse was pleased to see new US and POW/MIA flags purchased for the Common. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through March 19, 2023.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$115,163.21. Board member Shernock saw that the current fiscal year budget for Northfield Police Department (NPD) overtime (\$40,000) is now up to \$62,522. She asked how much more would it be expected to rise. Manager Schulz said there have been NPD staffing problems over the past fiscal year that have resulted in considerably more overtime hours that had been anticipated when the budget was approved. This includes full-time officers absent for military service, family medical leave, etc. He noted the overall NPD budget remains in good shape as the line items for full- and part-time officer pay are underbudget. Manager Schulz added he and NPD Chief John Helfant having been making every effort to keep NPD overtime expenses down. Chair Maxwell noted NPD overtime expenses have come in underbudget the last three (3) fiscal years but agreed there were special circumstances this year that have resulted in the current overage. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

## VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Annual Financial Plan for Town Highways.** Manager Schulz said every year the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) requires municipalities to submit this form indicating how much municipal revenue was raised for highway maintenance expenses and how these funds were spent. If this form is not filed in time, VTrans would delay providing state funds for maintenance of local Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 roads. Another intention is to make sure that at least \$300 is spent each year on each mile of local highway. Board member Morse noted the Town of Northfield took in and is spending \$1,994.900 for local highway maintenance and that amount more than exceeds this threshold. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the Annual Financial Plan for Town Highways. Board member Shernock noted the amount spent includes \$58,440 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Manager Schulz said when the FY 2023/2024 budget was drafted, the Select Board members decided to use ARPA funds for sidewalk work. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Town Highway Reclassification and Discontinuance Policy.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the Town Highway Reclassification and Discontinuance Policy. Various versions of this policy have been discussed and debated by Select Board members during recent meetings and it is now thought this policy is ready for approval. Board members Morse and Stevens were pleased with the current draft. Board member Petty found a few typographical errors that will be corrected. She also asked why there were two (2) separate references to providing access to local creameries. Board member Morse said several of the current one- and two-house roads were publicly maintained originally in order to provide year-round access to dairy farms so milk could get to market in a timely manner. Since most (if not all) of these creameries no longer exist, neither does the original rationale for maintaining these roads at public expense. Board member Petty referenced the "Appeals" section and asked if there was a deadline for filing an appeal of a Select Board decision. Manager Schulz said according to state statute (19 V.S.A §740), the appeal "shall be filed within 30 days after the order of the Select Board members on the highway is recorded." **Motion to approve the policy with minor corrections passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Downtown Electric Vehicle (EV) Charger Stations.** Manager Schulz said over the past few months, the Select Board members have received information from the Northfield Energy Committee (NEC) and its Chair Sarah Wolfe regarding the logistics and expense of installing two (2) EV chargers on the Depot Square. The NEC members are asking that the Select Board members authorize the use of \$5,713 in ARPA funds to help cover the charger installation and other startup costs. It is anticipated future operating expenses would be covered by the fees EV drivers would pay to charge their vehicles. NEC members Bob Keeley and Joe Wantuch are here to answer any questions as Ms. Wolfe has left the NEC due to her recent move to another community.

Board member Morse noted the estimated cost of installation does not include the extra expense of putting in a curb cut where the EV chargers will be installed. Therefore, he thought it best to increase the amount of ARPA funds authorized to \$11,000. Board member Morse also felt the manner in which this request was presented to the Select Board members with extensive documentation with follow-ups regarding any questions that arose was a textbook example of how such requests for public funding should be done. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to authorize the use of no more than \$11,000 in local ARPA funds for the installation of two (2) EV chargers on Depot Square. Board member Morse asked if there was a way to limit the length of charging time for a single vehicle. Mr. Wantuch said the EV chargers could be configured with time limits. Board member Shernock asked what level chargers would be installed. Mr. Wantuch said they would be Level 2 chargers, which provide full charges in about five (5) hours. Level 3 chargers provide much quicker full charges but are much more expensive. Mr. Wantuch said public Level 2 chargers are not intended to provide EV drivers with full charges from zero but rather a “top off” so they can get their EVs back to their home chargers. Board member Shernock noted during the ARPA fund outreach meetings held last year (as well as the online surveys), the installation of EV chargers in the downtown area was one item often requested by residents. Chair Maxwell was grateful that the original plans were adjusted to provide for handicapped access to the charging stations. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- d. **Police Chief Search Committee Appointments.** As current NPD Chief Helfant will be retiring this May, Manager Schulz is putting together a search committee to assist in hiring his replacement. As specified in the advertisement seeking interested community members, “The Committee will consist of the Town Manager, a Select Board member; a member of law enforcement, four Northfield residents and two members from other Northfield interested groups or institutions. The ideal committee person will have a background in human resource recruitment or management, or law enforcement.” Manager Schulz said several letters of interest were received. He and Board member Petty (who serves with Board member Shernock on the Public Safety Oversight & Planning Subcommittee) assisted him in reviewing the letters of interest and developing a list of recommended committee members. Their recommendation is that the search committee consist of Northfield residents Melody Currier, Lucas Herring, Dennis Miles, and Sarah Path; School Superintendent (and Northfield resident) Matthew Fedders; Norwich University representative Danielle Pelczarski; and Berlin Police Chief James Pontbriand. Board member Shernock will serve as the Select Board representative on the search committee. There were no objections to this recommendation.
- e. **Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) Clean Water Advisory Committee Member Appointment.** Manager Schulz said CVRPC is forming this new committee to help provide input regarding “water quality issues important to the region.” Since it is vital to have local representation on this committee and because Northfield has a number of upcoming projects related to this, Manager Schulz is asking the Select Board members to nominate him for selection. The committee would meet Thursday evenings so there would be no conflict with Select Board regular meetings. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to nominate Manager Schulz for appointment to the CVRPC Clean Water Advisory Committee. Board member Petty thought the NCC members should be made aware of this new committee. Manager Schulz will inform them. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- f. **Appointments of Various Town Officials.** Manager Schulz said the terms of certain appointed municipal positions expire at the end of this month. These positions were advertised and the current office holders directly contacted to see whether they would like to be reappointed.
  - 1. **Conservation Commission.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Deborah Zuaro to the Conservation Commission. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
  - 2. **Development Review Board.** Current member Paul Brown has declined reappointment. This vacant position will be re-advertised.
  - 3. **Dog River Park Committee.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Bonnie Kirn Donahue and Simon Pearish to the Dog River Park Committee. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

4. **Energy Committee.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Gail Hall and Bob Keeley to the Energy Committee. The remaining vacant position will be re-advertised. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
5. **Town Forest Stewardship Committee.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Jeremy Whalen to the Town Forest Stewardship Committee. There are two (2) remaining vacant positions that will be re-advertised **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
6. **First Constable.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Richard Wobby as First Constable. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
7. **Grand Juror.** There were no applicants for this position.
8. **Tree Warden.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Russ Barrett as Tree Warden. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
9. **CVFiber Delegate.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Raymond Pelletier as the CVFiber Delegate. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
10. **CVRPC Representative.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to appoint Royal DeLegge as the CVRPC Representative and reappoint Jeff Schulz as the alternate representative. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
11. **CVRPC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Representative.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Tom Davis as the CVRPC TAC Representative and Jeff Schulz as the alternate representative. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

#### **IX. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

- a. **Historic Bridges Rehabilitation Program.** Manager Schulz said VTrans has federal funds available for the rehabilitation and/or replacement of historic bridges. Manager Schulz submitted a list of four (4) possible Northfield bridges for this program and VTrans approved the list. These are the Rabbit Hollow Road Bridge and the three (3) covered bridges on Cox Brook Road. VTrans engineers will start by scoping in the next week or so the Rabbit Hollow Bridge, which is in very poor condition and probably will be replaced. The covered bridges will be scoped this autumn and the amount of bridge rehabilitation required determined at that time. VTrans will pay for all the work done so this is good news for the community. Carolyn Stevens asked why the Stony Brook Road Covered Bridge wasn't included in this program. As he stated at a previous meeting (07/12/22), Manager Schulz said the program has certain criteria for inclusion such as whether the bridge's road connects to a state highway, with other communities, etc. The Stony Brook Road Covered Bridge did not meet these criteria. He is aware this bridge does need significant repairs and is looking to see if this work can be done internally or if a contractor must be hired. In any case, the repairs will be made.
- b. **Main Street Bridge Replacement Project.** Manager Schulz met again recently with VTrans engineers on this project. There was a discussion regarding whether it really was necessary to test for soil contamination on private property near the project site. The consensus was that this was not needed. There also was a discussion of the width of the new bridge as Board member Petty felt there might be safety concerns if the new sidewalk wasn't wide enough and if there was insufficient space for dedicated bike lanes. The VTrans engineers will take a closer look at this. Manager Schulz will submit a letter to VTrans including all remaining concerns before the end of the month.
- c. **Municipal Computer Server Replacement.** Manager Schulz said replacement of the computer server, which has been in service for six (6) years, is underway. There should not be any disruption to municipal operations.
- d. **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan update.** The current plan needs to be updated and a consultant has been hired using state grant funds. The consultant is Paul Luciano (OPH Consulting Services) and he will attend the next Select Board meeting (04/11/23).
- e. **Northfield Falls Pedestrian Safety Improvements.** Manager Schulz has spoken to VTrans about installing safety improvements on Vermont Route 12 in Northfield Falls. They have agreed to install some short-term fixes such as new signage but they are also considering long-term improvements like improved lighting, etc. A CVRPC representative will attend the next meeting to discuss the safety study they performed.

**X. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS**

- a. Northfield: Our Common Future.** Board member Morse noted the first of three (3) community forums to be hosted by the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) was held last week (03/21/23) and was both well-attended and much appreciated by Northfield residents. There was serious discussion on a number of potentially contentious issues but the conversations stayed civil throughout. There are two (2) additional meetings over the next couple months (04/18/23 and 05/16/23) and Board member Morse hopes when VCRD produces its final report, will serve as a blueprint for future civic improvements. He added that ARPA funds could be used to accomplish the most needed items. Board member Petty also was very impressed with the turnout, which was estimated at over two hundred (200) residents. She attended with her family and saw a number of both longtime Northfield residents as well as more recent community members. Suggestions brought up at the initial meeting will be short-listed at the second forum and action plans developed at the third. There also will be an online survey for those who cannot attend any or all of the meetings. Chair Maxwell agreed the first meeting was quite encouraging but a lot of work remains to be done.
- b. Special Paine Mountain School Board Meeting.** Board member Morse noted the local school board will be holding a special meeting tomorrow night (03/30/23) at 6:00 p.m. in the Williamstown Middle High School library to discuss possible workforce reductions, especially in the arts programs. He hopes parents and other interested residents will be able to attend the discussion either in person or remotely.
- c. DRAFT Northfield Town Personnel Policies and Procedures Revisions.** Board member Morse reviewed the suggested revisions to the personnel policies affecting the municipal employees. He has forwarded his own suggestions to Manager Schulz.
- d. Public Ice Rick.** As was discussed at the previous meeting, a local resident (Jeremy Drown) has purchased an ice rink for public use to be sited in Memorial Park. However, it wasn't installed this past winter due to problematic weather. Board member Shernock knows someone who has great experience in public ice rink installation who would be happy to assist in getting this ice rink installed next winter. Chair Maxwell encouraged Board member Shernock to have this person work with Mr. Drown on this.
- e. Slaughterhouse Covered Bridge.** Board member Stevens asked whether all the needed repairs to this bridge have been completed. Manager Schulz confirmed all the work needed to bring this bridge back to its normal maximum weight limit (16,000 lbs.) has been done. He will keep an eye out for any federal or state grant opportunities that would fund additional renovations to this bridge.
- f. FEMA Buyout Final Notice.** Board member Stevens saw this notice in the packets and wanted to confirm the location. Manager Schulz verified this is Matt Gadbois' parcel at 310 Water Street that hosts his laundromat and two (2) apartment units. The notice had to be printed in local newspapers, etc. with the exact wording provided by FEMA and the only location provided in the notice was "Water Street in Northfield, VT."
- g. Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection.** Chair Maxwell noted Mountain Alliance and Casella Waste Management will be holding the first of two (2) HHW collection events this year on Saturday, April 8, 2023 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Randolph Transfer Station (84 Landfill Lane). This free event is only for residents of Randolph, Braintree, Brookfield, Roxbury, and Northfield. The full list of materials that will and will not be accepted is available on the municipal website ([www.northfield-vt.gov](http://www.northfield-vt.gov)) and was posted on Front Porch Forum yesterday (03/27/23). The second collection event will be held here in Northfield behind the Fire Station (128 Wall Street) on Saturday, September 23, 2023.

**XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).** There was none.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:12 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 April 11, 2023.