

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
HIGHWAY PLANNING &
PROJECT OVERSIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE
Minutes of August 1 2025**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board members Charles Morse, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Karl Bailey (Highway Foreman), Miles Jenness (Vermont Heavy Timber), Dennis Donahue, Kristy Kenyon, Stephen Korrow, Austin Nava, and David Tomczyk.

The meeting started at 8:05 a.m.

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

III. DISCUSSION

a. Highway Projects.

- 1. Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge.** Manager Schulz said he contacted Daniels Construction in April 2025 in order to obtain cost estimates for needed repairs to all the covered bridges. They did provide some recommendations and cost estimates. More recently, he was meeting with Miles Jenness from Vermont Heavy Timber regarding another project and asked him to take a look at the Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge. At that time, Mr. Jenness found that the bridge had significant structural problems and recommended that its maximum weight limit be reduced from 16,000 lbs. to 6,000 lbs. Manager Schulz contacted the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), which quickly dispatched bridge inspectors who agreed with this recommendation. Manager Schulz then reviewed the Town Highway budget and found there were sufficient funds to address this matter on an emergency basis. Board member Morse agrees that this is an emergency situation that requires waiving certain provisions of the municipal purchasing policy, i.e. sealed bids, etc. Mr. Jenness said there is water now running across the bridge that is further undermining its structural stability. His plan is to install temporary steel beams into the river bedrock, which would immediately return the bridge's maximum weight limit to 16,000 lbs. This emergency work would be done right after a work contract has been signed. Later this autumn, longer term repairs would be done in replacing the current rotting wooden beam supports and the steel beams would be removed. Mr. Jenness estimated the total cost of this project at \$142,000. Board member Morse said the bridge's restored 16,000 lbs. weight limit could be further increased at a later time with additional measures but that would be a discussion for another time. He added that we now have about ten (10) days of dry weather so the emergency work should be done as soon as possible. Board member Morse then noted that Board member Stevens has suggested using a used conveyor belt to prevent more water from crossing the bridge. There are other possible options. Manager Schulz said there might be some funds available from the VTrans historic structures preservation program for a project of this nature. He has already made contact about this possibility. Dennis Donahue felt that even with the improved structural stability, the covered bridge entrances are still too low and narrow for complete access for emergency vehicles, etc. He would be reluctant to put too much money into expensive repairs. Steve Korrow agrees with this, stating that a new road from Aseltine Road and Dukette Road could be built to service the area west of the bridge.

Mr. Korrow believes this covered bridge was constructed to service a slaughterhouse and small farms and was neither designed nor intended to bear heavy loads. Mr. Donahue said another possible route for a new access road could be built on his parents' property with egress at Horse Lane. Kristy Kenyon believes the current Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge is a community asset that draws a lot of visitors to Northfield, especially during foliage season. She suggested that the current bridge could be preserved for historic purposes while a new, modern bridge could be built nearby that could accommodate heavy traffic loads. Manager Schulz said such a replacement bridge would have to be fully engineered and this process would take a several years. He felt the best immediate solution was to provide the emergency repairs Mr. Jenness has recommended. Board member Morse doesn't see any alternative to spending money on this bridge both in the short- and long-term. The residents who need this bridge to access their homes require immediate relief. Board member Stevens agrees with this necessity. Manager Schulz then noted that under the purchasing policy, the Town Manager does have the authority to authorize spending funds for emergency bridge repairs. Board member Morse felt this action does have broad support. Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Shernock, to authorize Manager Schulz to reach an agreement with Vermont Heavy Timber to perform emergency stabilization work on the Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge at an estimated cost of \$142,000. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

Mr. Jenness again indicated that the work on the bridge would start as soon as the project contract has been drafted and signed. Board member Morse believes that Mr. Jenness would be in a better position to make further recommendations for long-term repairs to the bridge once he has started on the emergency repairs and discovered all of the bridge's deficiencies. This could include raising the bridge's weight limit above 16,000 lbs. and making other upgrades that would allow for passage by emergency vehicles, delivery trucks, etc. Board member Morse said the Select Board would need to start budgeting over the next few years for these additional improvements. In the interim, making the recommended emergency repairs to this bridge is based on an important public safety concern and he hopes the work contract can be executed as soon as possible. Board member Morse also felt the municipality needs to do a better job in future in providing regular maintenance to all of its public bridges.

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

V. ADJOURNMENT. Without objection, the meeting ended at 8:53 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

A video recording of this meeting is available at: https://youtu.be/8n1C_y5CrJ4