

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING  
Minutes of July 11, 2023**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Charles Morse, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock (absent), and John Stevens. Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Matthew Romei, Stephen Demaio, Taylor Goodwin, Cody Morris, Carolyn Stevens, Susan Stillinger, Kaelee Bouleris, Gerard LaVarnway, Erin Hicks-Tibbles, 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.** Chair Maxwell would like to adjust the agenda so Manager Schulz can provide an update regarding the local impact of the recent torrential rainstorm that caused flooding, road damage, etc. throughout the state.

- IV. FLOODING RAINSTORM UPDATE:** Manager Schulz first reported that the federal government soon will be issuing a natural disaster declaration for the State of Vermont. This means FEMA will reimburse municipalities and residents for any storm-related damage. Municipal employees will be documenting the damage in coming weeks as well as undergoing some training in order to properly submit the municipality's reimbursement request. Manager Schulz said Northfield came out of the flooding rainstorm in fairly good shape given the amount of rain that fell in a relatively short amount of time. The situation was made worst by earlier recent rainstorms that already saturated the ground and swelled rivers and streams with stormwater runoff. Manager Schulz said the wellfield located on Vermont Route 12A did not become inundated during the rainstorm so the water system was never shut down. This meant there was no need for a "Boil Water" notification or other action. He noted the system does have a couple of days of drinking water in reserve should the wellfield ever need to be shut down. Manager Schulz said the Northfield Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF), which is located on the Dog River, was not adversely impacted by the rainstorm. The WWTF was flooded during Tropical Storm Irene, which had many bad results. The nearby Town Garage and Ambulance Bay also were not impacted by the storm. The Transfer Station did suffer some flooding but the water did not get into the trash receptacles. The Police Station and Fire Station on Wall Street also suffered no damage. The culverts behind the Municipal Building on Kent Street did get clogged with debris, resulting in the stream overflowing and depositing a good amount of mud and other debris into the Northfield Savings Bank parking lot as well as East Street and its parking area. None of the stream overflow reached the Municipal Building.

As for roadways, there was no major impact in the downtown area. A sinkhole did develop on Jarvis Lane but it was cordoned off rather quickly. Some residences along Water Street did have stormwater flow into their basements but this did not reach above-ground levels. Some of the gravel backroads did suffer damage. Lovers Lane now is closed with significant damage due to nearby Sunny Brook overflowing. Highway Foreman Trent Tucker believes the repair work needed is beyond the capability of his crew so he has been connecting with local contractors. Lovers Lane probably will be closed for at least the next couple of weeks. The eastern end of Aseltine Road was damaged by Cox Brook overflow and also is temporarily closed.

There was similar storm damage on Union Brook Road, Bower Road, Onion River Road, and Sanders Road. Turkey Hill Road, especially near its intersection with Forest Road, had a considerable washout that Mr. Tucker and his crew were addressing for much of today. Problems on Bull Run Road and Winch Hill Roads were fixed and these roads have been reopened. Most of the other backroads, such as West Hill Road, Hallstrom Road, and Stony Brook Road, had some flooding damage but now are in fairly good shape. Manager Schulz and Mr. Tucker will be surveying the damage in coming days so that Northfield will be able to receive all the FEMA reimbursement funds to which it is entitled. Chair Maxwell thought this investigation might uncover additional highway and other damage that was overlooked at first glance.

Board member Morse noted that despite their impressive vehicle fleet and equipment, in some cases the Highway crew used just shovels to divert stormwater away from trouble areas. He added that the Third Covered Bridge on Cox Brook Road seemed to be in bad shape. Manager Schulz believes much of that damage was due to a pre-storm vehicle collision. He will look closer to see if the storm has caused additional damage. Board member Morse then commended the local first responders for their great work during this crisis period. Board member Stevens noted that the bridge on Pleasant Street now is blocked off. Manager Schulz will check this out tomorrow. He also would look at the footbridge to see if it suffered any damage. Board member Stevens asked about the Fairgrounds Road trailer park and Dogwood Glen public housing, which both are in close proximity to the Dog River. Manager Schulz said the residents were asked to voluntarily evacuate in case the river overflowed but, in both cases, there was no significant storm-related damage. Board member Petty also wanted to thank all those who helped out with this crisis, including first responders, the Highway crew, the Utility crew, etc. She noted that in a number of instances, it was neighbors helping their neighbors in need that helped alleviate the situation by cleaning out flooded basements, etc. Chair Maxwell was very pleased with and proud of how well the municipal employees responded to this emergency situation. He also commended Manager Schulz's leadership during this crisis. Board member Petty thought this could be a valuable learning experience in order to determine what was done well this time and what could be done better the next time we face a similar situation. For example, perhaps the method of informing residents about the availability of nearby emergency shelters could be improved. Board member Petty noted the storm did some damage to our Town Forest trail system. She asked if FEMA would reimburse this damage. Manager Schulz is doubtful but he will look into this.

Chair Maxwell then asked if any members of the public would like to comment. Carolyn Stevens reported that the new pedestrian bridge designed and constructed by Norwich University (NU) students on the new pathway linking NU and Freight Yard Way was swept downstream during the storm. She and others will try to locate it in coming days. Elroy Hill agreed that all those involved in this emergency effort performed their duties very efficiently and in a professional manner.

**V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):** None

**VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **June 27, 2023 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. Chair Maxwell had a correction regarding a statement attributed to him regarding possible proposals for local American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. This will be fixed.  
**Motion to approve the amended minutes passed 4-0-0.**

## VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Approval of Warrant #01-24.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve Warrant #01-24 in the amount of \$410,653.06. Board member Stevens asked about payments to Tyler Technologies. Manager Schulz said this was for computer software licensing and support. He noted such costs seem to go up each year. Board member Petty noted the payment (\$1,085) for the new "Owl" audio-visual conferencing device is on this warrant. This device should provide improved audio and video for future hybrid public meetings. Manager Schulz said Economic Development Director Tom Davis reviewed a number of possible devices and suppliers and this was the best deal he could find. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Warrant #01-24B.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #01-24B in the amount of \$96,047.87. It was noted this is a payment on an old municipal water system improvement bond. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through June 25, 2023.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$108,815.17. Manager Schulz confirmed this was the final payroll period for the 2022/2023 fiscal year. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

## VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Approval of 2023-2024 Tax Rates (Homestead & Non-Homestead).** Manager Schulz said it was that time of year again for the Select Board members to approve local property tax rates (homestead and non-homestead) so property tax bills for the new fiscal year can be sent out. He noted that due to a 0.36% reduction in the state education tax rate for homestead properties, the local homestead tax rate will increase by only 2.92%. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to set the FY 2023/2024 homestead property tax rate at 2.6516. **Motion passed 4-0-0.** The state education tax rate for non-homestead properties is increasing by 3.57%, which will result in a 5.09% increase in the local non-homestead property tax rate. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to set the non-homestead property tax rate at 2.9162. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Northfield VT Encampment Policy.** As requested by the Select Board members, Manager Schulz drafted a local encampment policy that will specify how local government agencies will respond should anyone attempt to establish a campground on municipal property. This proposed policy was discussed at the previous meeting (06/27/23) and a couple suggested revisions have been incorporated in the policy. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the Northfield VT Encampment Policy as presented by management. Board member Petty found a couple typos on the first page that will be corrected. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. **Reappointment of Town Forest Fire Warden.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Brian Elwell as Town Forest Fire Warden. **Motion passed 4-0-0.** Board member Petty would like the burn permit requirement and contact numbers for the Forest Fire Warden and his assistant better promoted through Front Porch Forum postings, etc.

- IX. **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT.** Please see Manager Schulz's report on the recent storm event above.

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

- a. South Main Street Stormwater Mitigation Project.** Board member Petty noted that the completion of this project probably has been delayed by a few weeks due to the storm. The workmen over the past couple of weeks had been leveling out the road surface for repaving but much of their efforts were washed out by heavy rainfall. She asked if the contractor (Courtland Construction Corporation) would be responsible for repairing any recent damage to the relatively new sidewalk on the westside of South Main Street. Manager Schulz confirmed they would as that is part of the project contract. The repair work required will be evaluated over the next few days.
- b. Local Response to Storm Event.** In addition to his thanking municipal employees and first responders for their efforts during the recent crisis situation (see above), Chair Maxwell also would like to commend all those residents who contacted him asking how they could help out the community. Once the current situation has been fully evaluated and we know what most needs to be done, Northfield residents will be informed on social media, etc. on how best to assist with the local restoration process. Manager Schulz confirmed he also was contacted by several Northfield residents wanting to provide assistance to those in need. Chair Maxwell again thanked Northfield community members for their inspiring response during this crisis situation.

**XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)**

- a. Elroy Hill: Wall Damage near the Gray Building.** Mr. Hill noted that a large granite block fell off the top of the streetside wall in front of the Gray Building about three (3) years ago. It is still lying there. Mr. Hill promised his wife he would report this to the Select Board members so it can be reinstalled, etc. Chair Maxwell was very grateful for the information and this will be addressed.

**XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)], in order to discuss personnel matters, legal issues, and contract negotiations with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 7:45 p.m.

Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 8:20 p.m. No action was taken.

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

The Board adjourned at 8:20 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 July 25, 2023.