

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of March 11, 2025**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board members K. David Maxwell, Charles Morse, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Joe Wantuch (Chair, Northfield Energy Committee [NEC]), Gail Hall (NEC), Patrick Meehan (NEC), Sheila Bannister (NEC), Chandler Murch (NEC), Matthew Goslant (The Stick, LLC), Kenneth Goslant, Brian Massey Jr., Lois Melander, Susan Stillinger, Donald Doyon, Gerard LaVarnway, and Elroy C. Hill.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Those present were asked to join the Select Board members in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD

- a. Election of Chair.** Motion by Board member Petty, seconded by Board member Stevens, to appoint Charles Morse as Chair. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. Election of Vice-Chair.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Petty, to appoint Merry Shernock as Vice-Chair. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. Select Board Subcommittee Assignments.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Petty, to set the subcommittee assignments as follows: **Budget and Financial Review** (Board members Maxwell and Morse); **Town Buildings & Energy** (Board members Shernock and Stevens); **Economic Development** (Board members Petty and Morse); **Norwich University** (Board members Maxwell and Stevens); **Highway Planning & Project Oversight** (Board members Morse and Stevens); **Public Safety Oversight & Planning** (Board members Petty and Shernock); **Labor Agreement & Bargaining** (Board members Petty and Shernock); and **Policy Review** (Board members Shernock and Stevens). In addition, Board member Petty and Manager Schulz would continue to serve as Northfield's representatives to the Mountain Alliance. Stephen Fitzhugh will serve as Northfield's representative to Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) and Manager Schulz as the alternate representative. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. Regular Meeting Schedule (Dates, Time, and Location).** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Petty, that the Select Board will continue to hold its regular meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room located downstairs in the Brown Public Library. The exception will be that the Select Board will meet on Monday, November 10, 2025 due to the normal meeting date falling on a municipal holiday (Veterans Day). **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- e. Designation of Official Newspapers, Websites, etc.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Petty, to designate the *Northfield News* and the *Times Argus* as the official newspapers for official notices, advertisements, etc. In addition, the Northfield Municipal website and the Front Porch Forum were designated as the official websites for internet postings. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- IV. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. Joe Wantuch, Northfield Energy Committee (NEC): Thermal Energy Networks (TENs).** Mr. Wantuch is a Pleasant Street resident who works for a Montpelier engineering firm. He stated the NEC has been working over the past year on a TENs project and now would like to share information about TENs and some future recommendations with the Select Board members. Mr. Wantuch said this technology would assist Northfield achieve such community goals as increasing the amount of affordable housing, providing greater energy efficiency, and stimulating local economic development without increasing property tax rates.

Another benefit is to bring clean energy into local homes and businesses. He noted TENS circulates heated water connected to heat pumps through enclosed underground pipes that connect to homes and businesses. They provide heat in the winter and cooling in the summer. Mr. Wantuch said TENS systems are very safe and leaks are very uncommon. He also noted that some existing businesses, such as bakeries, restaurants, etc., produce excess heating that could be captured and repurposed in the underground pipe system. The more excess heating released into a TENS system, the more efficient the system will become. The overall effect would be to reduce the amount of electricity needed to warm and cool structures, which would lessen the strain on local power grids. Mr. Wantuch said TENS systems could be built gradually over time as more homes and businesses are attached to the system(s). Northfield has some dense housing areas that would be conducive to establishing TENS systems in and near the downtown area. Mr. Wantuch noted some new housing units are expected to be built this year that could become part of a TENS system. It also is possible to capture heat from public water and sewer lines. Mr. Wantuch noted the Northfield Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) is due for significant upgrades in the next decade and it is possible part of the facility upgrade would be to install a TENS system that would recapture heat by attaching heat pumps to the sewer lines and thus reduce building energy usage. A new TENS system also could be created during a building construction or renovation and then expanded to include neighboring businesses or residential structures. Mr. Wantuch said it is very possible to start small with a TENS system and then grow it over time.

Mr. Wantuch said the NEC members believe establishing TENS should become part of the Town Plan goals and be included in the requirements for all future development projects. The NEC members are willing to work with the Select Board on this, including helping to educate the public about TENS, locate grant funding, etc. He noted the upcoming water main replacement project would have been a great opportunity to install a TENS system along Main Street. Unfortunately, the engineering plans for this project were too far developed to add the possibility of a TENS installation. However, similar projects are very likely in the near future and installation of TENS systems should become part of the initial planning process. As indicated earlier, Mr. Wantuch said TENS installations would not result in local property tax increases as the initial startup costs should be covered by a combination of utility user fees and grant funds. The utility customer costs should decrease over time as the TENS will result in energy savings for those attached to a system. Mr. Wantuch noted the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (CVEDC) has already provided valuable information to the NEC members regarding installing TENS system(s) in Northfield. NEC member Gail Hall said the NEC could become an important advisory group on how best to incorporate TENS into all future local development projects. Mr. Wantuch said this presentation is intended to start their engagement with the Select Board members regarding this possibility and help envision what can be done locally in the future with TENS.

Board member Shernock liked the idea of using the opportunity of the upcoming WWTF upgrade to create a TENS system there. She asked about the timing of this project. Manager Schulz said the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) is likely to require major facility improvement over the next few years based on the recently completed WWTF ten-year evaluation. The exact timing depends on what ANR decides over the next couple of years is necessary. Manager Schulz thought it would be good for NEC members to attend a future Northfield Utility Commissions meeting to discuss the possibility of integrating a new TENS system into the WWTF improvements. Mr. Wantuch was willing to attend himself to provide and explain his TENS proposals. He also would be interesting in knowing how much sewage is pumped through the facility on a regular basis to help determine the amount of excess heat that could be captured and repurposed at the WWTF.

NEC member Patrick Meehan noted that it is a Northfield community goal to reduce local reliance on fossil fuels. TENS systems could help achieve this through clean and efficient energy usage and also would reduce the strain on a local power grid increasingly burdened by expanded usage of electric vehicles, heat pumps, etc. Board member Stevens asked how large were the underground pipes that would constitute the TENS system. Mr. Wantuch said they would be eight to ten inches (8"-10") in diameter with narrower pipes accessing connected structures. This would be a dual piping system to allow for input and output lines. Board member Petty thanked the NEC members for tonight's presentation along with their previous workshop on this topic. Board member Maxwell thought the Utility Commissions definitely should be the next contact group for TENS proposals. He also thought the NEC members should work with Economic Development Director (EDD) Tom Davis regarding possible grant funding and other local development opportunities. Chair Morse thought should TENS systems be installed locally and prove successful in realizing their target goals, these achievements should be well-documented in order to encourage further creation and expansion of local TENS systems. He also would like to see reductions in the local use of fossil fuels and agrees the upcoming WWTF renovations would be a good chance for initiating or expanding the process. Another opportunity would be if a new facility for the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) is built on Wall Street in proximity to the Fire Station and Police Station. He then thanked Mr. Wantuch and the other NEC members for the valuable information provided tonight.

VI. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

- a. Liquor License Application: The Stick LLC (Rustic Restaurant).** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve this liquor license application. Chair Morse asked when the restaurant would be reopening. Matthew Goslant from The Stick LLC said it should be within the next sixty (60) to ninety (90) days. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. Liquor License Renewals: Champlain Farms, Depot Square Pizzeria, Dollar General, and Tops Market.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve these liquor license renewals. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. Outside Consumption Permit: The Stick LLC (Rustic Restaurant).** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the outside consumption permit. Board member Stevens asked where the outside seating would be located. Matthew Goslant said it would be near the front of the building. As there would be alcohol consumption there, the area would be fenced off but would still be visible from the street. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. February 25, 2025 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Approval of Warrant #17-25 & #17-25A-D.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #17-25 & #17-25A-D in the amount of \$2,184,634.75. Chair Morse noted that of the total warrant amount, \$1,384,820 represented property taxes collected by the municipality and then forwarded to the Paine Mountain School District. In addition, \$325,385 was spent purchasing power for the Northfield Electric Department (NED) and \$227,183 represented pass-through FEMA grant funds for the purchase of the buyout property at 310 Water Street. Board member Stevens noted an unusually high number of "vehicle maintenance" payments on this warrant. Manager Schulz said a few Highway vehicles required special attention due to their recent heavy usage but all were put back in service relatively quickly. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. **Receipt of Biweekly Payroll through March 2, 2025.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Stevens, to receive the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$122,120.70. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

IX. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Tax Stabilization Policy and Application Form.** Manager Schulz said both the policy and application form were revised after the previous Select Board meeting (02/25/25) to include Select Board member suggestions provided at that time. As was then requested, Manager Schulz added a purpose statement to the policy along with the clarification that the Select Board members have the final authority to approve or deny a tax stabilization request. The Economic Development subcommittee members could provide recommendations but could not approve an application themselves. In addition, Manager Schulz provided a definition for “construction” in order to better specify whether an ongoing project is eligible for a tax stabilization agreement. Motion by Board member Petty, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the Tax Stabilization Policy and Application Form as presented. Board member Shernock noted she previously asked the qualifier “when feasible” be removed from the requirement that energy efficiency measures must be used in new developments. She thought this might allow for too many exceptions based on dubious excuses. Manager Schulz said this phrase will be removed. There then was some discussion regarding when the construction phase of a project began. There was consensus afterwards that the application could be submitted after the Development Review Board (DRB) provided its approval for development plans but before the Zoning Administrator provided a building permit. There usually is a two (2) month interval between these actions. Chair Morse then suggested the motion be tabled until the requested changes have been made and the documents finalized for approval. There was no objection. The Select Board members also were asked to provide any additional revision requests to Manager Schulz as soon as possible so they could be incorporated into the final document.
- b. **Community Reinvestment Agreement.** Manager Schulz said the municipality has applied to the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) to have the Northfield downtown area, which now has Village Center designation, be upgraded to Designated Downtown status. This enhanced status would allow for improved grant opportunities, tax credits, and other economic development benefits. Approving this agreement is one requirement of the application process and Manager Schulz is asking that the Select Board members provide their approval tonight. Approving this document would confirm the municipality’s commitment to the “revitalization and enhancement of Northfield’s downtown district.” Chair Morse asked if the wording of the agreement has been reviewed to confirm whether it is consistent with Northfield’s Town Plan. Manager Schulz said the document language is the template the ACCD provides to all Designated Downtown applicants. Motion by Board member Petty, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the Community Reinvestment Agreement. Board member Stevens noted that the document has signature lines for the “Town of Northfield,” the “Northfield Downtown Organization,” “Business and Property Owners,” and “Community Groups and Residents.” Chair Morse said that Manager Schulz can sign on behalf of the Town of Northfield and the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN) has already agreed to serve as the required downtown organization. The remaining two “stakeholder” representatives can be determined by Manager Schulz in consultation with EDD Tom Davis. Board member Petty noted the boundaries of the new Designated Downtown would be expanded from those of the current designated Village Center. The boundary expansion northward along Vermont Route 12 will now include the Nantanna Mill area and the former Bean Chevrolet building. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

X. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

- a. 310 Water Street FEMA Buyout.** Manager Schulz said the buyout process has been completed and the parcel is now municipal property. The next step is to develop an RFP in order to hire a contractor to raze the building. Afterwards the site will be reseeded and left as a vacant grassy lot in future.
- b. Cross Brother Dam Removal.** Manager Schulz said Karina Dailey of the Vermont Natural Resource Council and engineer Roy Schiff plan to hold a public informational meeting regarding the Cross Brothers Dam removal project on Wednesday, March 12, 2025 from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Brown Public Library’s Community Room. Food and light snacks will be provided. This meeting will be an opportunity for the public to review the dam removal project plans and ask questions of the engineer. There also will be ZOOM access for those who want to attend remotely.
- c. Norwich University (NU) Cyber Fusion Center.** Manager Schulz said the construction phase for this project should be starting up within the next two (2) to three (3) weeks starting with the removal of the existing structures situated on the new building site.
- d. Community Room Defibrillator Purchase.** Manager Schulz said a new defibrillator for the Brown Public Library has been ordered and will be installed in the Community Room soon after its delivery.
- e. Depot Square Parking.** Manager Schulz has received a request from a Depot Square business to close two (2) parking spaces so that the space can be used by its customers for outside dining, etc. The situation would be similar to what occurs on East Street from late spring to early fall in front of Good Measure Pub & Brewery. As there is some time before the outside seating could be installed, there is an opportunity for the Select Board members to fully review whether the request should be granted and if this would set a precedent for similar requests in future. Board member Petty thought the Select Board should be able to find a “happy medium” between helping local businesses with such requests and the need to preserve the scarce parking spots now located around the Common.

XI. BOARD MEMBERS’ COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. Northfield Community Garden.** Board member Stevens asked about the status of the Community Garden to be located on FEMA buyout property on Water Street opposite the Dog River Park. Chair Morse said that the deadline for the state grant intended to enhance the site has been extended. Members of the Northfield Farmers Market have volunteered their time and energy to raise the garden beds and the other work needed to prepare the site for planting. Fencing will be installed and the site should be ready for spring planting by the Memorial Day weekend.
- b. Town Common Rehabilitation Project.** Board member Stevens would like a full Select Board discussion about this project, which would include a formal acceptance of the project proposal provided by the DuBois & King engineers. He would like this on the next regular meeting agenda (03/25/25).
- c. Municipal Building Emergency Generators, etc.** Board member Shernock asked about the status of the generators that were purchased to provide backup power for the Municipal Building, Police Station, Fire Station, and Ambulance Bay. Manager Schulz said the generators have all been installed but some final touches are needed before they are put into service. Board member Shernock also wanted it noted that the Town of Roxbury has installed solar panels of their Fire Station.
- d. Northfield Middle & High School (NMHS) Spring Musical.** Board member Petty wanted it noted that the NHMS will be providing a production of Disney’s “High School Musical” this spring with performances on Thursday, April 3, 2025 at 7:00 p.m., on Friday, April 4, 2025 at 7:00 p.m., and on Saturday, April 5, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. Board member Petty encouraged her fellow Select Board members to attend and hopes there will be good community attendance again this year.

- e. **Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) Select Board Training, etc.** Board member Petty said she will be attending next week's VLCT training session "Selectboard Essentials: Your Building Blocks for Success." This training can either be done in person or remotely and she encouraged her fellow Select Board members to attend either way as a refresher course. Board member Petty added that due to a grant award, VLCT now is waiving its training fees. She also suggested the Select Board members could hold a group viewing of the VLCT "Training on Demand" recording of "Open Meeting Law Basics for Municipal Boards." The recording is about one-half hour long and other municipal board members also could be encouraged to attend. Perhaps there could be a brief panel discussion afterwards.
- f. **Northfield Town Meeting 2025 Appreciation.** Board member Maxwell wanted to thank Town Clerk Kim Pedley and Assistant Town Clerk Janel Doney for running a very efficient Town Meeting Open Session and Australian Ballot election last week.
- g. **Missing Street Signs.** Board member Maxwell believes a good number of street signs have gone missing around the community recently. Manager Schulz confirmed street sign theft has become a real problem. Replacement signs will be ordered and we will look into what anti-theft measures can be taken. There are sufficient funds in the Highway Department Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget for the street sign replacements.
- h. **Town Common Flagpole Status.** Board member Maxwell asked when the damaged flagpole on the Common will be replaced. Manager Schulz said a new flagpole is on order and will be installed right after it arrives by setting it into the ground and encasing it in concrete.
- i. **Gopher Vermont.** Chair Morse recently saw a car decorated with a "Gopher VT" logo and asked what this was about. He learned that there is a new on-demand transportation service in Central Vermont that is under the aegis of Green Mountain Transit (GMT). This new service will be widely advertised online once all the initial bugs have been worked out. Their website is <http://gophervt.org>
- j. **Appreciation to Former Select Board Chair David Maxwell.** Chair Morse wanted to thank Board member Maxwell for his long service as Northfield Select Board Chair, which began in March 2019. His tenure included such weighty concerns as the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fund designation process, etc. Board member Maxwell then thanked Chair Morse for taking on the position at the beginning of tonight's meeting.

XII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Elroy C. Hill: Highway Department Appreciation.** Mr. Hill wanted to thank the Highway crew for the quick and efficient manner in which the sidewalks were cleared of snow and ice after the most recent snowstorm.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Stevens, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)], in order to discuss a personnel matter without Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:40 p.m.

Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Petty, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:05 p.m. No action was taken.

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

The Board adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

A video recording of this meeting is available at: <https://youtu.be/gPUOg3I9gJQ> (Part One)
<https://youtu.be/IGjGhlyESW0> (Part Two)

These minutes were approved at the Select Board regular meeting of March 25, 2025.