

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BUDGET & FINANCIAL REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Minutes of December 22, 2025

Full meeting recording is available at:

<https://youtu.be/I9n5ufk6nZE>

I. ROLL CALL. Subcommittee members K. David Maxwell and Charles Morse. Also present were Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), Chris Bradley, Brian Massey Jr., Kristin Pollard, Matthew Romei, Gary Circosta, and Elroy C. Hill.

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled): None.

III. DISCUSSION

a. Proposed FY 2026/2027 Municipal Budget. Mr. Morse noted that Finance Director Laurie Baroffio had provided supplemental notes for the proposed budget that included the anticipated wage increases for union and non-union municipal employees. By contract, IBEW members will receive a 4.57% compensation increase and police union employees will get a 4.5% wage increase along with step increases. Non-union employees are now budgeted for 5% wage increases but Ms. Baroffio said that unlike the union wage and step increases, these increases are not in writing and can be changed at a later time. Other issues that Ms. Baroffio highlighted include whether the Highway Department's road salt budget should be increased, whether more should be budgeted for legal expenses in light of lawsuits recently filed against the municipality, budgeting for the upcoming town-wide reappraisal, addressing the deficit in the ambulance building maintenance account, budgeting additional funds for improvements to the Town Clerk's vault, increasing the amount of local matching funds for the Main Street Bridge Replacement Project (given the construction delays), and the need to increase the budgets for the Northfield Police Department (NPD) computers and for the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) auto pulse units. Before turning to a discussion of the FY 2026/2027 municipal budget, Mr. Maxwell would like the final numbers for the FY 2024/2025 budget surpluses. Ms. Baroffio said she has not yet received the final outside audit numbers but the most accurate numbers she now has is \$660,079 in undesignated Town General funds and \$81,066 in undesignated Town Highway funds.

Mr. Morse then turned to the budget pages for anticipated FY 2026-2027 Town Revenue. He went through the various items and noted where he felt the anticipated revenue amount should be increased or decreased due to past actuals. For example, NAS revenue is expected to increase from \$907,000 to \$1,200,000 in the next fiscal year. Also, the per capita rate charged the towns of West Berlin and Roxbury for NAS coverage will increase from \$38 to \$40. The annual gist from Norwich University (NU) to the municipality will stay budgeted at \$242,000. Mr. Maxwell said a new five-year agreement is now being negotiated so this figure might change slightly.

Mr. Maxwell would like more information about municipal pool revenue as it has seemed to considerably exceed projections in recent years. Mr. Morse said the actual amount of the municipality's interest on investments also has exceeded the budgeted amount in recent years and he would like the anticipated revenue figure increased from \$40,000 to \$60,000.

Ms. Baroffio noted that as the Select Board members requested, the PILOT fund amount will annually increase based on COLA until the town-wide reappraisal has been completed. The PILOT amount will increase 2.8% in the next fiscal year. Ms. Baroffio said that budget surplus funds, including former ARPA funds, will be allocated by the Select Board members during their budget discussions. This also will be the case with Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) interest income.

Mr. Morse then turned to a department-by-department discussion of the operations and maintenance (O&M) budgets. Starting with the Town Manager budget, Mr. Morse noted that the manager salary is split between the Town General budget and the utility budgets (electric, water, and sewer). Ms. Baroffio confirmed this and said the total salary for this position is now set at \$115,230. Mr. Morse said he understands that the average salary for a manager in a town the size of Northfield is about \$130,000. Mr. Maxwell said the salary amount often depends on how much responsibility is assigned to the town manager by the Select Board. The job description for the next Northfield permanent manager has not been finalized. There was no objection to raising the salary to \$130,000 at this time. Ms. Baroffio said the current Town Manager budget is based upon the new manager having two-person health insurance coverage. That might have to be adjusted if the new person has minor children that need to be covered.

In the Town Clerk/Treasurer budget, Ms. Baroffio said this budget would increase by 5.2% mainly due to employee salary increases. Other departmental expenses are mostly level-funded. The Board of Civil Authority budget will see a \$1,660 budget decrease in the next fiscal year. Regarding the Accounting Department budget, Ms. Baroffio is unsure about the status of the job search for her replacement. She believes some candidates have been interviewed but that there has been no action taken to date. Ms. Baroffio said it is difficult to budget for the new finance director given all the unknowns regarding qualifications, etc. There have been some wage adjustments for the current department employees.

Mr. Morse said the Board of Listers budget is mostly level-funded with only a 1.5% budget increase. Ms. Baroffio said the Select Board members will need to have a conversation with the Listers regarding the timeline for the next town-wide reappraisal. She added that there already is \$214,983 in the Listers CIP budget to cover the reappraisal cost.

The Fire Department O&M budget is mostly level-funded except for additional funds for dispatching services. Ms. Baroffio said there was a departmental request to increase the personal protection equipment budget from \$14,000 to \$16,000 but that request is not included in the proposed budget. Instead, this line item has been reduced to \$10,000.

As there is neither a permanent nor interim chief for the Northfield Police Department (NPD) at this time, Mr. Morse would prefer to level fund this department's budget with the exception of pay rises required by the current union contract. Ms. Baroffio said the department now have three (3) full-time officer vacancies and she based the personnel budget on those positions being filled by officers at step levels 9, 10, and 13. The budget is based on one police chief, five (5) full-time officers, and a dispatcher. Chris Bradley feels if Northfield is to have 24/7 law enforcement coverage, hiring a sixth officer is necessary. Mr. Maxwell said this issue can be revisited when the NPD budget is reviewed by the full Select Board.

As for the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS), Mr. Maxwell noted that there had been a successful vote earlier this year to unionize its part-time members. This change will result in a number of unknown factors as there have been no meetings yet between the municipality and the new collective bargaining unit. He asked how the municipality can effectively budget for this department given the current uncertainty. Ms. Baroffio said a lot will depend on how the Northfield voters envision the role of NAS in this community, i.e. as a profit-maker through expanded non-emergency transfers, as a regional ambulance service with full-time employees, etc. She suggested that the future role of NAS could be part of the initial conversations with the new union representatives. Mr. Morse said he and Mr. Maxwell should discuss these concerns with the new interim manager. A major issue will be whether certain NAS employees will need to be provided with health insurance if they become full-time employees.

In the Town Highway budget, Ms. Baroffio said salaries are set by union contract. However, the Select Board members will need to decide how much to budget for overtime expenses. This now is budgeted at \$52,000 for the next fiscal year. The current budget for vehicle & equipment maintenance is now set at \$75,000, which is less than recent actuals. Mr. Morse noted that the cost of road salt has risen by eleven percent (11%) so this line item should be adjusted accordingly.

The Cemetery budget is largely level-funded with only a 1.6% increase in the next fiscal year. As for the town garage budget, Mr. Morse recently spoke with Highway Foreman Karl Bailey who would like the building maintenance/supplies line item increased from \$6,000 to \$7,000 in order to make needed building repairs. The budget for the Brown Public Library/Northfield Historical Society building is fairly level funded with only minor line item increases. Mr. Morse would like additional funds provided in the Municipal Building CIP account in order to address deficiencies with the Town Clerk's vault. Ms. Baroffio confirmed those funds have already been budgeted.

In the Human Services budget, the Brown Public Library (BPL) Trustees have submitted their request for \$113,000, which is \$1,000 more than last year. The BPL O&M proposed budget is broken down by category. The Senior Center also has made its annual \$25,000 request. In the Grounds/Parks/Facilities budget, the cost for the maintenance worker has decreased. Ms. Baroffio explained that this role is filled by a union employee who works halftime for the Highway Department and the other half for this department. The work is now being done by someone at a lower pay level than before.

In the Municipal Pool budget, Ms. Baroffio noted a new line item was created last year for special events/theme nights but she is unsure whether any of those funds were spent. She suggested that the Select Board members might want to consider whether they want to keep budgeting for this expense in future. Ms. Baroffio also noted that Vermont's minimum wage will increase next year and that might affect the salaries of the less experienced lifeguards. In the Support Services budget, Ms. Baroffio said it is often a contentious matter when the amount budgeted for legal services is discussed. The current line item amount for the next fiscal year is \$31,000 even though the actuals for FY 2024-2025 were over \$50,000. Mr. Maxwell felt this figure needs to be revisited. He feels a discussion with current counsel would be helpful in obtaining a more accurate estimate. Mr. Maxwell would be comfortable setting the amount at \$40,000 for the time being. There was no discussion of the Planning/Zoning or the Economic Development budgets.

Mr. Morse had a recent conversation with Highway Foreman Bailey and thus had some updates regarding the Town Highway CIP budget. He noted that the 2008 dump truck has been sold, the 2005 dump truck can no longer pass inspection, the traffic light was supposed to be replaced this past year but was not, and Mr. Bailey would like to retain the 2014 Western Star tandem truck only for leaf collection and calcium chloride distribution. Brian Massey Jr. believes International trucks are quite unreliable and shouldn't be purchased for the Northfield highway fleet in future. Ms. Baroffio said a used International truck was purchased recently to fill the gap before the trucks to be bought in the next fiscal year are delivered next fall. Elroy Hill said some town do purchase only International trucks and don't have any problems.

Ms. Maxwell would like to hold an additional subcommittee meeting before the proposed budget is presented to the full Select Board. After a short discussion, the meeting was scheduled for Monday, December 29, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

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

V. ADJOURNMENT. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 4:33 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk