

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING  
Minutes of September 9, 2025**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Charles Morse, Board members K. David Maxwell, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens (absent). Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Pierre Gomez (Northfield Police Chief), Thomas Davis (Economic Development Director), Michael J. Leddy (McNeil, Leddy & Sheahan PC), John J. Broadmeadow (President, Norwich University), Bizhan Yahyazadeh (Vice-President, Norwich University), Niki Sabado (Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission), Brian Voigt (Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission), Debbie Zuaro (Northfield Conservation Commission), Mary Naden Scott (Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety [AWPS] Task Force), Delane McIlvene (AWPS Task Force), Tim Swartz (AWPS Task Force), Lorna Doney, Chris Bradley, Ken Johnson, Jeremy Whalen, Louisa Reilly, Gerard LaVarnway, Pam Ricker, Janan Hamm, Russ Barrett, Nancy Peck, and Elroy C. Hill.

Chair Morse called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

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

**III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):**

- a. Norwich University President John J. Broadmeadow and Vice-President (Facilities Operations) Bizhan Yahyazadeh: NU Campus Planning. (7:01 p.m.)** President Broadmeadow first wanted to thank the Select Board members for letting him address this matter tonight. He has met some of them before but for others this is the first time. President Broadmeadow said the university has a preliminary plan for campus redevelopment that might include a land swap with the municipality. The construction project for the Cyber Fusion Center is now underway and this has created an unsafe environment for pedestrians and vehicles entering the campus. The proposed land swap would provide improved safety at this location and also would provide the municipality with additional land located near the wellfield. Mr. Yahyazadeh then displayed maps that show the current campus entrance from Vermont Route 12 and how egress could be improved by straightening University Drive and eliminating the double intersection with Park Avenue. This would create a much safer and welcoming campus entrance. Board member Petty asked if a traffic engineer reviewed the plans for this. Mr. Yahyazadeh said that has not happened yet but would occur later in the process. Board member Petty also would like to see more background information about Center Park, which is now municipal property and hosts the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument, before there is a discussion of it becoming NU property. Mr. Yahyazadeh said if the property does become NU property through the proposed land swap, they would continue to maintain it as in the past. Board member Petty asked if straightening University Drive would improve the traffic situation during the springtime commencement ceremonies. Mr. Yahyazadeh said it would and also would help with other high volume traffic events such as the incoming student drop-off at the beginning of the school year, for NU hockey games, etc. Chair Morse said this will probably become an involved process with land records research, public input, etc. He also believes that a traffic engineer will need to be hired at some point. President Broadmeadow said this now is a preliminary discussion as there are some aspects of the proposal, such as the land swap, that haven't yet been brought to his own board. He is open to suggestions about alternate ways to reach NU goals for improved campus safety, etc. Chair Morse then thanked President Broadmeadow and Mr. Yahyazadeh for addressing the Select Board members tonight and looks forward to these becoming regular interactions as the proposal proceeds.
- b. Niki Sabado, CVRPC Land Use & Community Planner & Brian Voigt, CVRPC Program Manager: Future Land Use Map Development. (7:18 p.m.)** Ms. Sabado said future land maps developed by CVRPC will be part of the implementation of Act 181, which is new legislation aimed at updating Vermont's land use permitting process. A tiered framework established by Act 181 that categorizes land use into three (3) tiers, shifting the focus from size to location for land use jurisdiction. Tier 1 areas, which are designated for growth, offer municipalities more flexibility in managing development.

Specifically, Tier 1A allows for full exemption from Act 250 regulations, while Tier 1B permits up to fifty (50) housing units to be exempt from state review, streamlining the approval process at the municipal level. Ms. Sabado said the tier system with its Act 250 exemptions is intended to encourage “smart growth” in areas adjacent to current planned growth areas. Future land use area maps will differentiate between High-Density Growth Areas (i.e., Downtown & Village Centers, Planned Growth Areas, and Village Areas); Low- to Moderate-Density Growth Areas (i.e., Enterprise Areas, Transition & Infill Areas, Resource-based Recreation Areas, and Hamlets); and Rural Areas (i.e., Agriculture and Forestry, Conservation, and Rural General). Downtown Centers would require a municipal request for Tier 1B status; an approved municipal plan; permanent zoning & subdivision bylaws; water supply, wastewater infrastructure or appropriate soils; and municipal staff & officials to support development review and zoning administration. Mr. Voigt said this process would not create new zoning maps and would not supersede any local maps developed by its member municipalities. Whether or not municipalities seek Tier 1 or Tier 2 status, their own zoning regulations will stay in place. Chair Morse asked who would be leading this effort for Northfield. Manager Schulz said it would be him and Economic Development Director Thomas Davis. Mr. Voigt said the default status is Tier 1A and it is possible for different parts of a community to have different tier statuses. Board member Maxwell said there are water supply sources in Northfield that are undergoing major renovations, i.e. Cheney Field. He asked what “rural conservation” status would do for them. Mr. Voigt said it would specify that this area is not targeted for future development. Also, once a property has been established as rural conservation, it is very difficult to redesignate that area for future growth. Board member Petty noted the Town of Northfield is now applying for Downtown Designation and asked if this tier system would impact that. Mr. Davis said the application is due next month and it focuses on those areas of the community that are suitable for smart growth located along the Vermont Route 12 corridor. Board member Petty then asked if Mr. Davis favors Tier 1A or Tier 1B for Northfield. Mr. Davis said he favored Tier 1A status at this time. Mr. Voigt said this would not be a binding decision and, as indicated earlier, different parts of the community could have different tier status. Board member Petty noted that Northfield has applied for municipal planning grant funds and asked if these funds could be used for decision-making regarding proper tier status, etc. Mr. Voigt said it was possible since this would be a zoning-related matter. He would be happy to meet with the Northfield Planning Commission on this possibility. Chair Morse then thanked Ms. Sabado and Mr. Voigt for the valuable information presented tonight. Mr. Davis said Ms. Sabado and Mr. Voigt and their considerable expertise will become very helpful to Northfield as the process continues.

- c. **Debbie Zuaro, Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC): Cheney Field Access Questions. (7:40 p.m.)** Ms. Zuaro said NCC members have been meeting with members of the Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety [AWPS] Task Force regarding the feasibility of establishing a small parking area on Cheney Field after the conclusion of the water tank replacement project. As part of the discussion process, some specific questions have arisen and Ms. Zuaro hopes that Manager Schulz will be willing to answer them before the next public conversation about this matter. This will be during the NCC regular meeting on Wednesday, September 24, 2025. Manager Schulz had answered these questions as part of his written Manager’s Report to the Select Board members but is willing to provide them again at this time. Chair Morse will read the questions and Manager Schulz will respond.

1. **What local or state permits are required? Act 250, storm water etc.** Manager Schulz said that no state permits would be required based on the size and location of the project. Neither would a local zoning permit be required.
2. **Is an engineering review or plan required?** Manager Schulz said this would not be required.
3. **Would the road crew or other town employees have capacity to maintain a parking area? Plowing and trash removal needs.** Manager Schulz said the Water Department has the capacity to plow the access road and parking area but this would not be the department’s top priority.
4. **What type of access road is necessary for water tank maintenance?** Manager Schulz said the current road is adequate for access and maintenance of the water tank.

5. **Are security features required for the water tank area? Fencing, signage etc.** Manager Schulz said no security features would be required as the water tank is fully enclosed. No signage would be required.
6. **Can Byam Hill Road handle two-way traffic? Can the road beyond to parking area?** Manager Schulz said Byam Road can accommodate two-way traffic. The road to Cheney Field is single lane.
7. **Are special features necessary to assure pedestrian safety to walk the above route?** Manager Schulz said no special features were required based on the current road conditions.
8. **Can neighborhood concerns of vandalism, loitering, safety & security be handled by our police department?** Manager Schulz said that based on the current level of Northfield Police Department (NPD) staffing, there is no guarantee the NPD can handle these concerns.
9. **When do the contractors plan to be done with the project? And, how long before that do we need to submit recommendations to the Select Board?** Manager Schulz said the contractor anticipates that the tank installation will be completed this fall. However, the site restoration will not be completed until Spring 2026.

Ms. Zuaro then thanked Manager Schulz for answering these questions. She also felt it was good that there is some time available to fully discuss this matter before the final decision needs to be made.

- d. **Chris Bradley: Highway Maintenance Oversight Concerns. (7:49 p.m.)**  
Mr. Bradley, a former Select Board member, first thanked the current ones for their dedicated service to the community. He also wanted to make it understood that none of his criticism tonight is directed at Highway Foreman Karl Bailey or his work crew, who are kept very busy trying to maintain over eighty (80) miles of town road, which includes about fifty (50) miles of unpaved backroads. Mr. Bradley does have specific concerns about the Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge, which has undergone a series of repairs in recent years. In 2022, Daniels Construction was paid \$73,725 in non-budgeted highway funds after the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) lowered the bridge's maximum weight limit from 16,000 lbs. to 6,000 lbs. New wooden beams were installed on the bridge at that time as an emergency measure with the understanding that steel beams could be installed in the future. Earlier this year, new repair quotes were requested from Daniels Construction and from Vermont Heavy Timber due to concerns about water running over the bridge, which further undermined its structural integrity. As a result of a VTrans inspection, the bridge's maximum weight limit was again lowered to 6,000 lbs. A Highway Planning & Project Oversight Subcommittee meeting was held on Friday, August 1, 2025 at which time a quorum of Select Board members authorized an agreement with Vermont Heavy Timber to make emergency repairs on Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge for \$142,000. Mr. Bradley would like to know why the work done by Daniels Construction in 2022 did not prevent bridge weight limit problems from becoming an issue again three (3) years later. There also had been a recommendation to install a "box" to prevent water drainage issues on the bridge and Mr. Bradley wanted to know why that recommendation was not followed. Mr. Bradley also would like to know who exactly has been making the recommendations for maintaining the backroads in recent years. He noted that the Highway subcommittee has met only infrequently over the past few years and Mr. Bradley feels this subcommittee either should be provided with more authority on these matters or should be disbanded so that all the Select Board members can be involved in important highway decisions from the beginning. Mr. Bradley believes a number of significant highway concerns, such as updating the RSMS program, effective protection of our covered bridges from truck damage, kiosk relocation, etc., do need to be resolved in a timely manner rather than constantly being put off to another time. Board member Petty said there has a lot of focus over the past two budget cycles on municipal bridges that require significant repairs according to the biennial VTrans inspections. A lot more needs to be done and this will be an important topic of discussion when the FY 2026-2027 Highway budget is presented in a few months.

#### IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **August 26, 2025 (Regular Meeting). (8:09 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve the minutes. Board member Petty noted a recurrent typo: "Vermont Heavy Lumber" should be "Vermont Heavy Timber." In addition, the vote to ratify the Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge repairs agreement with Vermont Heavy Timber was not 3-0-2 but rather 3-1-1, with Board member Petty voting in opposition and Board member Maxwell abstaining. **Motion to approve the revised minutes passed 4-0-0.**

#### V. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Approval of Warrant #05-26 & #05-26A. (8:11 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve Warrant #05-26 & #05-26A in the amount of \$1,144,322.64. Board member Shernock noted the \$2,400 cost of recertification for the Northfield Fire Department (NFD) equipment and wondered whether the cost of this was inflated by the contractor. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Receipt of Biweekly Payroll through August 31, 2025. (8:13 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to receive the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$117,250.59. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

#### VI. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Change Orders (Main Street Waterline Replacement, Water Storage Tank Replacement, and Vine Street Sidewalk Project). (8:14 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said whenever there is a large construction project, there inevitably will be change orders that are deviations from the original engineering plans. These could include scheduling delays caused by new issues discovered once the construction groundbreaking has happened. For example, during the waterline replacement project, some underground concrete was discovered that had to be removed from the site. Manager Schulz noted that all change orders for projects involving state funds must be approved by him as well as by the State of Vermont, which is the final arbitrator. Chair Morse asked if the Select Board members would prefer to receive copies of the change orders as they are approved. Manager Schulz said he could provide this information in future along with a summary of the reasons for the change order. Board member Maxwell felt the Select Board members having this information would be good in the interest of government transparency. He also would like to know how much remains in the voter-approved bond amount after a change order has been approved. Board member Maxwell also feels it would be good to renegotiate project expense with the contractor should major changes be contemplated. In the current situation, that might mean the added cost of repaving Main Street at the conclusion of the waterline replacement project. Board member Maxwell understands the original project contract calls for spot patching but he felt such temporary fixes don't last long. He would prefer curb-to-curb repaving of Main Street from the bridge southward to the Central Street intersection. Chair Morse was pleased to receive the change orders for this meeting and looks forward to receiving them on a regular basis for future municipal projects.
- b. **Proposed Formation of Inclusion Committee. (8:30 p.m.)** Board member Shernock has been interacting with Katie Whitney, who is the Director of Organizational Development for the Vermont Agency of Human Services, to determine the best way to establish an Inclusion Committee to implement the municipal-approved Declaration of Inclusion. Based on conversations with Ms. Whitney and other individuals, Board member Shernock now has a number of recommendations regarding the formation of an inclusion committee, its operations, etc. that can be seen below:

##### 1. Purpose & Charge of the Taskforce

- **Mission:** Ensure Northfield becomes a welcoming, safe, and equitable community for all residents, visitors, and employees.
- **Scope:**
  - Review and recommend updates to town policies and practices to eliminate bias and barriers.
  - Provide guidance and training to town departments
  - Partner with schools and community organizations, including out faith communities, to reinforce inclusive practices.

- Promote ongoing community education and engagement about equity, belonging, and respect.

## 2. Membership & Representation

### • Composition:

- 1 Selectboard member (to maintain direct governance connection).
- 1 representative from First Responders.
- 3 community residents (with preference for underrepresented voices).
- 1 youth/student voice (through the school district or recreation programs).
- 1 adult representative from our school community

- **Expectations:** Members serve staggered 2-year terms; meet monthly; serve as ambassadors for inclusive practices in their departments/constituencies.

## 3. Roles & Responsibilities

- **Taskforce Chair/Co-Chairs:** Facilitate meetings, track progress, and report to the Selectboard 3X/yr.
- **Members:** Participate actively, review policies, bring input from their communities/organizations or departments.
- **Selectboard:** Adopt recommendations and provide resources for implementation.

## 4. Strategic Priorities (2025–2027)

Based on the taskforce's completed actions, these can be framed as **phase two**:

### 1. Policy Review & Reform

- Continue systematic review of town policies, ordinances, hiring practices, and services for implicit bias.
- Ensure equity considerations are integrated into budgeting and planning.

### 2. Department Engagement

- Formalize DEI liaisons in Fire, Police, and other departments.
- Annual DEI training (basic + role-specific scenarios).
- Set measurable goals for inclusive practices (e.g., recruitment, community outreach).

### 3. Community Engagement & Education

- Host 2–3 annual community conversations, forums, or events.
- Partner with the school board, library, and community groups to embed inclusion across civic life.

### 4. Accountability & Transparency

- Develop annual DEI progress report (posted publicly).
- Create feedback channels (anonymous form, town website portal, etc.).
- Track and share key metrics (e.g., training completion, community participation, policy changes).

### 5. Timeline & Reporting

- **Year 1 (2025-26):** Establish membership, draft bylaws/charter, set goals, complete first round of policy reviews.
- **Year 2 (2026-27):** Expand training across departments, launch community forums, publish first DEI report card.
- **Ongoing:** Update the Selectboard 3X/year + annual community presentation and/or report for Town Meeting.

### 6. Sustainability

- Tie DEI work into **existing town structures** (e.g., annual budget cycle, department strategic planning) so it isn't "add-on" work.
- Build a pipeline of new members to keep voices fresh and representative.
- Apply for state/federal or foundation grants with assistance from the Economic Development Director to fund training and community programming.

Chair Morse then used his authority as Select Board Chair to establish this committee and to appoint Board member Shernock to serve as its Select Board representative. This will be an advisory committee only and we will advertise for the community members willing to serve on it.

- c. **Approval of Norwich Commons Agreement. (8:47 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to authorize Manager Schulz to sign the agreement with Norwich Commons. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

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

- a. **Main Street Waterline Replacement Project. (8:48 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the work on South Main Street is nearly complete. The primary project worksite then will shift to the area north of the Main Street Bridge. There now remain questions regarding the timeline for completing the whole project this year.
- b. **Water Tank Replacement Project. (8:49 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the concrete for this project should start pouring in the next week or so.
- c. **310 Water Street FEMA Buyout Property. (8:49 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the asbestos inspection has been concluded and all the found asbestos has been removed. The actual razing of the structure should be completed before the end of the month.
- d. **Lovers Lane. (8:50 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the old guardrails have been removed and replaced with new ones purchased with state grant funds. In addition, a section of Lovers Lane will be rebuilt within the next three (3) to four (4) weeks.
- e. **King Street Battery Storage Facility. (8:50 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said all the documentation for this project has been completed. The project developer will be on site starting in mid-October to remove an old oil tank, etc. Manager Schulz will contact the adjacent property owners before this work begins.
- f. **Pool House Redesign Project. (8:52 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the task force that has been meeting on this matter has made much progress with the project architects to finalize the redesign plans. The plans will be presented to the Select Board members at a November 2025 meeting before the FY 2026/2027 budget meetings begin. The current estimated cost of the building redesign is between \$150,000 and \$170,000.

#### **VIII. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS**

- a. **Pearl Street Retaining Wall Status (8:52 p.m.)** Board member Maxwell inquired about this retaining wall at the last meeting and asked if Manager Schulz has an update. Manager Schulz has contacted the Dufresne Group and they are working on engineering plans to rebuild the wall. The estimated cost should be well below the \$150,000 now in the Highway CIP account for repairing retaining walls.
- b. **Labor Day Weekend Festivities (8:55 p.m.)** Board member Maxwell was very grateful to the committee (i.e. Northfield Observances) that did a such a good job overseeing the celebrations this year.
- c. **Sunny Brook Retaining Wall Public Information Meeting. (8:55 p.m.)** Board member Petty noted that at the beginning of the next regular meeting (09/23/25), VTrans will provide information regarding needed repairs to the Sunny Brook retaining wall, which is located south of Lovers Lane. According to the VTrans press release, "There will be a review of the existing site conditions, proposed work, and overall schedule followed by a question and answer period."
- d. **Northfield Common Project (8:58 p.m.)** Board member Shernock said funding for the next phase of this project needs to be included in the FY 2026/2027 budget. It might also be a good idea to re-form a public committee to provide recommendations for the next phases of the project.
- e. **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) and Northfield. (8:58 p.m.)** Board member Shernock noted many local and state law enforcement agencies are having staffing difficulties due to ICE poaching their employees. She thought it might be useful for the community to approve a non-cooperation agreement regarding ICE and its recruitment activities.

- f. **Jarvis Lane Renumbering Proposal. (9:00 p.m.)** At the last meeting, E-911 Coordinator Mitch Osiecki noted that the numbering scheme for Jarvis Lane doesn't follow established VTrans practice. The street is bisected by Washington Avenue so the standard practice would be to split it into North Jarvis Lane and South Jarvis Lane. At the current time, the street numbering starts at the southernmost structure and end at the northernmost one. Chair Morse has been contacted by some Jarvis Lane residents and they believe it would be too much of a burden on them to change the addresses on all of their documentation. Board member Maxwell thought it possible that the current numbering scheme is sufficient. There was a suggestion to put up a temporary traffic sign that would show the current numbering scheme north and south of the Washington Street intersection. Perhaps that could be the permanent solution for this problem. Manager Schulz will order this traffic sign and also will discuss with Mr. Osiecki whether the full renumbering scheme is really necessary.

**IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED). (9:06 p.m.)** There was none.

- X. **EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)], in order to discuss a personnel issue and a contract negotiation with Manager Schulz and Town Attorney Michael Leddy present for some but not all of the discussion. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:10 p.m.

Manager Schulz left the executive session at 9:30 p.m.

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

The Board came out of executive session at 10:26 p.m.

Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Shernock, to find that based on the factual findings of an independent investigation into the matter, the April 16, 2025, employee complaint of discrimination and retaliation based on race is unsubstantiated. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to authorize the Select Board Chair to provide the complainant with a letter of the Board's decision in this matter. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

As a separate matter, there was a motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Petty, to instruct the Town Manager to meet with the Police Chief no less than weekly and to report the results of those meetings with the Select Board members. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- XI. **ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 10:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

A video recording of this meeting is available at: [https://youtu.be/5wTV\\_70q7i0](https://youtu.be/5wTV_70q7i0)

These minutes were approved at the Select Board regular meeting of September 23, 2025.