

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of November 10, 2025

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Charles Morse, Board members K. David Maxwell, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, James Pontbriand (Chief, Berlin Police Department), Brian Gosselin (Sergeant, Northfield Police Department), Thomas Davis (Economic Development Director), Tyler Demas, Jeremy Drown, Mary Nadon Scott (Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety [AWPS] Task Force), DeLane McIlvene (AWPS Task Force), Daniel Anderson (AWPS Task Force), Auditi Guha (VTDigger), Brian Massey Jr., William Kolb, Kristin Pollard, Roger Deleccio, Diane Vanecek, Anne Donahue, Theresa Elmer, Gail Edwards, Annie Dudley, Curtis Dudley, Pierre Gomez, Karen Trombly, Gary Circosta, Steven Tiersch, Gerard LaVarnway, Don Doyon, Matthew Romei, Elisabeth Atems, Carolyn Stevens, Logan Potskowski, Kristina Ward, Jensie Pliego, Richard Smith, Sherilyn Matthans, Cristie Arguin, Darcy Grenier, 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. Tyler Demas and Jeremy Drown: Memorial Park. (7:01 p.m.)** Mr. Drown first wanted to thank the municipality for installing the new waterline that would supply an ice rink. Mr. Drown has purchased the equipment and is willing to install the rink depending on the weather. The temperature has to be just right over a certain period of time to avoid a freezing and melting cycle for the rink surface. Mr. Drown also noted that funds have been donated for field maintenance and he would like to see the municipality establish a plan for preventative maintenance so that equipment is repaired/replaced before it breaks down. Mr. Demas said the baseball bleachers have been in poor condition for several years. He also would like to see the park's bathrooms reopened for use at the beginning of the organized recreation season in early spring. Manager Schulz said that Utility Superintendent James Russo has real concerns about the possibility of frozen waterlines should the bathrooms be opened too early in the year. In addition, portable metal bleachers have been purchased but were kept in storage this past summer. They can be put in place next year. Mr. Demas feels there should be a clear contact person when there is a problem with the sporting fields and/or other recreational facilities. He also noted that people bring their dogs to Memorial Park but don't pick up after them as there aren't dog waste bags available there. Mr. Demas noted that the Barry Chouinard Fund and Gillespie Fuels have been very helpful in recent years in providing the assistance needed to get the ballfields prepared for special events but he would like to see the municipality more involved with the process. Board member Maxwell noted that there are funds available in the municipal budgets for maintenance as well as upgrades of the recreation fields. However, the problem has been getting the right people in place to oversee the process. He suggested that Mr. Demas and Mr. Drown should prepare a priority list for the recreation fields and provide it to Manager Schulz so it can be part of the discussion when the recreation and park budgets are set for the next fiscal year. Mr. Demas said there also seems to be some disconnect between the Northfield schools and the municipality when it comes to field maintenance, etc. Mr. Drown suggested that the former Recreation Committee should be resurrected in order to help coordinate these matters. Board member Maxwell suggested Mr. Demas and Mr. Drown could help with the reestablishment of the committee, which would focus specifically on Northfield's outdoor recreation facilities including the municipal pool. Mr. Drown agreed that the municipal pool is an important resource for the community but he felt it also was important that our sporting fields be maintained during the summer months. He also understands that bathroom vandalism has become a real issue in Memorial Park and perhaps improved surveillance could help with reducing this threat. There also are a number of residents who would be willing to donate their time to help keep our recreational facilities in good shape.

Board member Petty thanked Mr. Drown and Mr. Demas for coming in tonight and offering their assistance. She had assumed that the new portable bleachers had been in use this past year. Manager Schulz said they arrived later than expected this past summer but definitely will be installed next spring. Board member Petty also feels it is important that the park bathrooms remain open despite the threat of vandalism. She also feels there needs to be better communication between the school and the municipality regarding field maintenance as there were times this past summer when the soccer field had not been properly mowed before scheduled events. Board member Petty said Manager Schulz should be the contact person whenever there were concerns about the condition of the fields, etc. Board member Shernock felt it would be good to bring in a cross-section of the community in order to get a full picture of what people want in regard to their recreational facilities, i.e. Memorial Park, municipal pool, etc. Chair Morse asked when the skating rink might be put in place. Mr. Drown said there is a short window of about a month each winter when the rink ice is properly frozen for usage. The exact timing depends on the weather. Chair Morse felt a good recreation committee would include all the major stakeholders involved with use of our recreational facilities and this would necessarily include someone who would represent the schools' interests.

IV. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

a. Liquor License Renewals (7:24 p.m.)

- 1. Folino's Pizza (Fig Hospitality LLC).** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. Manager Schulz is unaware of any concerns over the past year with this establishment's liquor license. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- 2. Norwich University (Sodexo Operations LLC).** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. Manager Schulz is unaware of any red flags regarding this application. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. October 24, 2025 (Special Meeting). (7:28 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Board member Maxwell abstaining.**
- b. October 28, 2025 (Regular Meeting). (7:29 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve the minutes. Board member Shernock wanted it reflected in the minutes that during the meeting, Kristin Pollard felt that Board member Shernock had made a "visible unprofessional reaction to Ms. Pollard's comments." Board member Shernock now concedes that she had acted improperly and has apologized to Ms. Pollard for her behavior. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Board member Maxwell abstaining.**
- c. November 3, 2025 (Special Meeting). (7:31 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Petty, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Approval of Warrant #09-26 & #09-26A-C. (7:33 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #09-26 & #09-26A-C in the amount of \$1,115,381.41. Board member Maxwell asked where funds were spent to advertise the Finance Director vacancy. Manager Schulz said there was a credit card payment to advertise in the trade publication "Indeed." The ad has run for several months and also has been sent to other trade magazines as well as the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) website. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. Receipt of Biweekly Payroll through October 26, 2025.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to receive the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$96,602.48. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **FY 2025-2026 Audit Inquiry. (7:39 p.m.)** Chair Morse said that as part of the current audit process, the auditing firm (Kittell, Branigan, & Sargent) has asked the municipality to fill out and have the Select Board Chair sign a form that affirms that the municipality does have proper procedures in place to prevent financial fraud, ensure ethical behavior on the part of its officials, etc. The same form is requested each year and Manager Schulz included last year's signed copy in the packets. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Stevens, to authorize Chair Morse to work with Manager Schulz to complete the form and for him to sign the finalized version. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Northfield-Berlin Police Services Agreement. (7:42 p.m.)** Chair Morse said in the board packets there was a draft agreement between the Town of Berlin and the Town of Northfield for the Berlin Police Department to "provide law enforcement response services to Northfield" for both emergency and non-emergency calls. Chair Morse said the cost of these services is specified in the draft agreement and there are funds in the current Northfield Police Department (NPD) budget to cover the expense. The Town Attorney has reviewed the document and made some changes. Manager Schulz said former NPD Chief Pierre Gomez did assist with drafting the document after reaching out to Berlin Police Department Chief James Pontbriand. Manager Schulz added that the Town Attorney did recommend that the Select Board members should pass a resolution that would authorize him to further negotiate the agreement. The agreement would be for one (1) year but there would be an opt-out clause. Chief Pontbriand said that the draft document in its current format is new to him. In the past, the Berlin PD has been providing police coverage to the Northfield community when the Vermont State Police are unable to respond. That would remain the situation with or without the agreement but he warned that the Berlin PD also has limited resources and cannot provide unlimited services. Chief Pontbriand noted that the Berlin Select Board members have not been provided with the draft document either. NPD Sergeant Brian Gosselin suggested that the draft document could be split into two (2) parts with one focusing on "emergent calls," which would be emergency callouts, and "non-emergent calls," which would be routine calls that probably would require some follow-up investigation afterwards. Due to understaffing in the NPD, Sergeant Gosselin said assistance with investigations that can take some time is probably is the more immediate need. Board member Shernock asked if Northfield residents should call 911 in case of an emergency. Sergeant Gosselin confirmed that was the case as the 911 responders know who would be on duty in Northfield should there be a law enforcement emergency and whether the Vermont State Police should be contacted. Manager Schulz noted that a number of Vermont local law enforcement agencies also are short-staffed like Northfield and rely on the state police for coverage when local officers are not available. Board member Shernock asked if hiring an interim police chief might help with the staffing shortage situation. Manager Schulz said he has begun looking at the possibility of hiring an interim chief as well as advertising for full-time police officers. Sergeant Gosselin said he has recommended that they should "headhunt" for an experienced law enforcement officer who would like to serve as Northfield police chief on an interim basis. This could be a local person with knowledge of the Northfield community. Board member Maxwell asked if there have been any conversations with Norwich University, which has its own public safety officers, about the current situation. Manager Schulz said he has not spoken with them yet. Board member Maxwell believes that Northfield needs an interim police chief as soon as possible and then the priority should be to fill the other vacant full-time positions. Manager Schulz confirmed that he has been working with Sergeant Gosselin on identifying a possible interim police chief. Board member Maxwell would like the draft agreement with Berlin brought back for Select Board approval should any additional revisions be made. Board member Petty agrees with this and also feels that hiring an interim police chief is important and urgent. Board member Stevens also feels having an interim chief in place is important and that the draft agreement needed some revision.

Board member Shernock feels having an interim chief in place would be the first step to successfully recruiting full-time officers for the department. Chair Morse said the NPD now has open cases that need to be investigated by certified police officers and we now need the Berlin PD to perform this service. He felt approval of this part of the agreement needs to be expedited so that these investigations can take place. Board member Maxwell understands the need for expediency but also feels that the Select Board members should be able to review and approve the finalized agreement. Sergeant Gosselin said there was an initial draft agreement that focused mainly on investigative work. He added that he believes that there are law enforcement officers in the area who would prefer to work in Northfield rather than Barre, Montpelier, etc. Chair Morse would like Manager Schulz to work with Chief Pontbriand to work on an agreement for the Berlin PD to provide investigative assistance. Other matters related to the draft agreement can be worked out at a later time. Chief Pontbriand is willing to assist with this provided that his department is adequately compensated for its time and that the work involved would not overly burden his officers.

Brian Massey Jr. stated that with the resignation of the former police chief, the NPD now has only two (2) full-time officers with one only able to serve limited hours due to military commitments. He doesn't like the idea of outsourcing local law enforcement to another town and felt the funds in the current NPD budget should be used to hire new police officers. Mr. Massey also would favor the creation of a local police advisory committee that could hold monthly meetings and provide effective oversight of departmental matters. Sherilyn Matthans asked when the interim police chief position would be advertised. Manager Schulz said the advertisements would be sent out soon. Ms. Matthans then asked what would be the overtime payment rate provided to Berlin PD officers if they handled emergency calls in Northfield. Chief Pontbriand said it would vary based on the base salary of the police officer involved. According to the current version draft agreement, it would be "time and a half of the responding officer's regular hourly rate." Board member Maxwell said the municipality performed a salary comparison when the most recent police department union contract was negotiated and it was found that Northfield pays a competitive rate. Kristin Pollard asked when Logan Potskowski, the NPD officer now on military leave, would return as a full-time officer. Manager Schulz cannot answer that question at this time. Ms. Pollard then noted that the NPD does have a full-time dispatcher (Sara Helfant) during the daytime hours. She felt that some of the problems with the way the NPD has been operated recently were directly attributable to the former police chief so many of these problems will disappear when his replacement comes on board. Manager Schulz said he is working closely with Sergeant Gosselin and Ms. Helfant to make sure the NPD runs as smoothly as possible during this transitional period and that any recurrent problems are resolved. He also is working with Sergeant Gosselin on locating an interim chief but when it comes time to advertise for a permanent chief, a search committee will be constituted to assist with the process, help review applicants, etc. Thersa Elmer felt the separate compensation rates for emergent and non-emergent calls needed more clarification. She also felt that there should be some fiscal accountability before any funds are transferred from Northfield to Berlin. Chair Morse thought the approved agreement should have sufficient provisions to ensure that no money would change hands without proper oversight. Board member Maxwell also has faith that the Northfield Accounting Department will not make any payments without full documentation. Ms. Elmer asked if there was a large backlog of NPD open investigations. Sergeant Gosselin said the current amount is manageable but there are a couple that require more urgent attention than he can provide himself. He estimated that there were three (3) to five (5) non-emergent calls each month. Ms. Elmer asked why this agreement is being negotiated with the Town of Berlin and not the City of Montpelier. Manager Schulz said former chief Gomez felt Berlin PD was a much better fit for such an agreement than Montpelier PD, which has its own staffing issues. Manager Schulz then emphasized that this is an emergency measure intended to address serious staffing problems in the NPD at this time.

Board member Petty said the Select Board will need to look closely into the proposed “Cost of Services” for this agreement as there are a number of factors involved. Pierre Gomez then joined the meeting remotely. He said he promoted Sergeant Gosselin to his current rank due to his exceptional service and felt he was capable of running the department himself. Unlike what others have said, Mr. Gomez said he tried to recruit new officers throughout his two (2) years of service here. He felt one factor in discouraging applicants was that there is a perception that law enforcement officers are not treated with proper respect in Northfield. Mr. Gomez felt Sergeant Gosselin was the most credible NPD officer and he commended Officer Potskowski for volunteering to fill shifts despite his military commitments. Although he no longer works here, Mr. Gomez said he still cares about the Northfield community but also felt there is the need for him to fact check when there are misstatements and distortions made about his employment here.

VIII. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

- a. Main Street Waterline and Cheney Farm Tank Replacement Projects (8:58 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the repaving of South Main Street is nearly complete although the end of some driveways still need to be fixed. North of the Main Street Bridge there will be patch paving this year and the road will be repaved next year. Manager Schulz said the waterline work on Byam Hill will need to be completed next spring. The tank replacement project also is nearly complete with the tank painting and site restoration to be done in the spring.
- b. Halloween Night Celebration. (9:00 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the temporary closure of Depot Square and Central Street to promote trick-or-treater safety worked very well. It was estimated that over eight hundred (800) children participated in the Trunk-or-Treat on the Common and he was very grateful to NPD officers Gosselin and Potskowski for their service that night.
- c. Vine Street Sidewalk Project. (9:01 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the sidewalk project has been completed and he has signed off on the work.
- d. Smart Meters. (9:02 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the smart meters probably will be installed next March and operational by early spring. There will be public notifications over the next couple of months in order to prepare utility customers for this.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS’ COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. South Main Street Paving. (9:02 p.m.)** Board member Maxwell is not entirely pleased with this paving work as there remain a number of sunken sewer caps, etc. He would like all remaining problems addressed before Manager Schulz signs off on the work.
- b. North Main Street Paving, etc. (9:03 p.m.)** Board member Stevens asked who paid for the new paving on North Main Street. Manager Schulz said the municipality paid for this because the pavement was in such poor condition he felt it couldn’t wait until next year. He added that the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) did some shim paving on Vermont Route 12 South recently from the intersection with Vermont Route 64 to the former Village line. Manager Schulz said we were not informed in advance that this work would be done.
- c. Tucker Sand Pit Site Visit. (9:05 p.m.)** Board member Shernock asked when this site visit would take place. Chair Morse thought there was consensus at the last meeting that the Highway Subcommittee would conduct the site visit during daytime hours and report back to the full Select Board at a later time.
- d. Northfield University (NU) Proposed Land Transfer. (9:07 p.m.)** Board member Shernock asked if the utility right-of-way on the land NU proposes to exchange for Center Park has been determined yet. Manager Schulz said he has been searching municipal records for the easement but has not found it yet.

- e. **Halloween Night Celebration (cont.) (9:10 p.m.)** Board member Shernock has heard that Central Street was not fully closed to through traffic by 5:00 p.m. Sergeant Gosselin said there were problems fully closing down the street that early as there was a sporting event on the NU campus that night and visiting fans had been advised to park on nearby Central Street.
 - f. **Situation Table Participation. (9:13 p.m.)** Board member Shernock asked whether Northfield could participate in one of the Situation Table working groups that have been forming in Vermont. Anne Donahue said this was a new concept in which law enforcement and social workers meet together on a regular basis to discuss how certain mental health situations could be better handled before they escalate into police responses, etc. She said this is a local, not regional process so Northfield would need to form its own working group. Board member Shernock would like this explored further.
 - g. **Vacant Position Advertising. (9:16 p.m.)** Chair Morse would like the status of vacant position advertising included on the project tracker document.
- X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)**
- a. **Mathew Romei: Situation Table. (9:17 p.m.)** Mr. Romei said there are state grants available to communities looking into starting their own Situation Tables. He felt this approach of bringing people together with different training and backgrounds could be very effective when dealing with mental health issues in the community.
 - b. **Pierre Gomez: NPD Recruitment Process. (9:20 p.m.)** Mr. Gomez felt it was important that there were full background checks for anyone seeking an NPD position. Manager Schulz said it would be part of the process.
- XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)], in order to discuss a personnel issue. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- The Board went into executive session at 9:30 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 9:35 p.m. No action was taken.
- XII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Shernock, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- The Board adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

A video recording of this meeting is available at: <https://youtu.be/wumE2f5tGa8>

These minutes are subject to approval at the next Select Board regular meeting.