

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of April 26, 2022**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Julie H. Goodrich, Charles Morse, Lydia Petty, and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, John Helfant (Chief, Northfield Police Department), Brian Gosselin (Northfield Police Department), Lawton Rutter (Chief, Northfield Ambulance Service), Ryan McKee (Norwich University), Nick Tantillo (Norwich University), James Dixon (Norwich University), Ryan Dinneen (Casella Waste Systems), Aimee Poisson, Sally Davidson, Bethany Drum, Steve Davis, Ann Jennings, David Black, Carol Aseltine, Shawna Foran, Lorna Doney, Will Eberle, Britta Eberle, Chris Bradley, Scott Neun, Sara Nevin, Chris Pinkham, Carl Pinkham, Bonnie Chouinard, Patrick DeMasi, Cassie Morse, Merry Shernock, Mark Fournier, Susan Stillinger, Richard Smith, Jason Endres, Catherine Johnston, Kim Caldwell, Simon P. Pearish, Jeanne Bright, Colin Bright, Matthew Caldwell, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Participants had the option of attending the meeting either in person or remotely through Go-to-Meeting.

- 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.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. Norwich University Engineering Students: Northfield Common Fountain Water Recirculation Project Presentation.** Chair Maxwell said as a senior class project, three Norwich University (NU) civil engineering students (Ryan McKee, Nick Tantillo, and James Dixon) will present options for a redesign of the water fountain located on the Northfield Common. Chair Maxwell said there has long been some concern that the current fountain doesn't recirculate the water flowing through it, resulting in considerable wastage. In addition, last fall Northfield resident Bonnie Chouinard offered to fund the entire cost of any fountain renovations that would include a splash pad, which is sometimes referred to as a children's fountain. Board member Stevens is a retired Professor of Civil Engineering at Norwich University and he thought this would be a good senior project. Associate Professor of Civil Engineering Adam Sevi subsequently agreed to serve as the faculty advisor on this project. Chair Maxwell wanted to emphasize that tonight's presentation is for informational purposes and the Select Board members have made no decisions to date regarding this matter. In fact, public views on this matter will be sought and will be an important part of any decision-making process. Board member Stevens said when the project began, the focus was on developing a system that would allow water circulation and reduced water waste. The students added the possibility of a splash pad after Ms. Chouinard made her offer to the Select Board members. Board member Stevens noted these students are graduating in four days and have no personal agendas regarding the options that they will present. Again, public input will be sought before any decision is made.

Mr. Tantillo then started a PowerPoint Slide Presentation that showed first a recent picture of the current fountain, which showed cracks in its water basin and other obvious signs of deterioration. The report's "Problem Statement" said that the "fountain is in need of renovation. A splash pad is considered to replace the circular pond section..." Mr. Tantillo also noted the poor condition of the fountain's water fixture, which he said was only kept in place due to the attached waterline. Mr. McKee then listed the three options they reviewed. The first would install a splash pad with a center drain. It would have the same footprint as the current basin so none of the surrounding brickwork would be affected. The second option would be a splash pad that would be surrounded by a curtain drain where the water would exit prior to recirculation. The third option would be to install a new traditional fountain in the center of a splash pad with curtain drain. All three of these designs would permit the option of installing LED lights in the splash pad so there could be multi-color "Dancing Waters®" nighttime displays. The splash pads could have one or more water streams going upward.

Mr. Dixon said the fountain's pipe layout would have a recirculation system installed so that the display water is reused rather than being piped directly into the sewer system (which is the current situation). This would be accomplished with the installation of a three-hundred-and-fifty-gallon underground storage collection tank that would be accessible through a manhole cover. The fountain water would be pumped into this storage device before being returned to the fountain. The water would be drained at the end of the display season to prevent freezing. Mr. Dixon added that the splash pad could be controlled by a timer so that it doesn't operate all the time. The ground surface could be padded or just be simple concrete depending on whether or not the splash pad is designed to be interactive. The NU students also developed cost estimates for the three options that were broken down into the costs of pumps, piping, couplings, activation timers, the underground holding tank, etc. The cost estimate for the first option is \$24,639.98; the second is \$24,612.55; and the third \$27,736.62. These estimates do not include the cost of additional engineering, installation costs, etc. The NU students then asked if there were any questions.

Board member Morse asked if the activation switch with timer would work even with a traditional fountain display without a splash pad. Mr. McKee said that was possible. Board member Morse asked how it would be possible to clear the pipes to and from the storage tank of water so that they don't freeze and crack over the winter. Mr. McKee said a sewer line outlet would be attached so the water can be pumped out before winter. The pump itself is self-draining. Board member Morse then thanked Mr. McKee, Mr. Tantillo, and Mr. Dixon for their very informative presentation. Board member Petty also thanked the NU students and their faculty advisors for this contribution to the Northfield community. Board member Stevens also thanked the NU students for this valuable service. He then asked if the water would be chlorinated. Mr. Dixon said it would in order to prevent the buildup of bacteria. Chlorine tablets would be used rather than liquid chlorine. Board member Goodrich also thanked the NU students for their efforts. Chair Maxwell also was impressed with the presentation. He then asked if any members of the public would like to ask questions at this time.

Bonnie Chouinard will be in Florida until next month but she was able to attend the meeting remotely by telephone. She felt the splash pad designs the NU students presented would be both very attractive as well as great for our youth. Chair Maxwell noted that the recirculation system the NU students discussed would be possible with the existing fountain design or with splash pads. He felt the Common fountain is a community asset so there would be the need for resident input before any decision regarding its future is made. He thanked Ms. Chouinard for offering to fund the installation of a splash pad but noted this is only the beginning of the process.

Steve Davis has been following this issue online and through the minutes of past meetings. He had thought the three options to be presented tonight would be the rehabilitation of the current fountain, the installation of a new one, or the installation of splash pad. Instead, it seems all we heard tonight were three splash pad options. From what he has seen on local social media, Mr. Davis estimates that about eighty percent of online posters don't want a splash pad frequented by children in the center of the Common. He felt a splash pad might be a good idea but he also believed a better location for it would be Memorial Park. He thinks with the vehicular traffic surrounding the Common, this would be an unsafe place for a youth attraction. Ms. Chouinard said she would be willing to pay for a safety fence to surround the splash pad if there are concerns about children running into the street.

Board member Morse asked if the NU students looked at cost estimates for rehabilitating the current fountain. Mr. Dixon said such a project would have so many design options that it would be difficult to develop a meaningful cost estimate. He also confirmed that the water recirculation system the NU students proposed also would work with a traditional fountain setup as well as all three options presented tonight.

David Black has been following this matter for some time and he thanked all those attending tonight's meeting either in person or remotely. He believes the initial impetus for this study was to find an economical way to recirculate the fountain water. Mr. Black likes the idea of water recirculation but not the splash pad concept. Mr. McKee said he and the other students discussed various options with Ms. Chouinard as her willingness to finance the project was a major factor in the study. That led to the current focus on splash pads but there are other possible design concepts that do not include them. Mr. Black noted that Mr. Davis' Northfield Community Facebook website has about 2,700 followers and he also believes that the vast majority of them do not favor the idea of a children's fountain on the Common. He would have preferred to have seen cost estimates for rehabilitating the current fountain fixture or purchasing a new one of a similar design.

Kelly Smith believes having an interactive splash pad on the Common is an accident waiting to happen. She likes the idea of recirculating the fountain water but would like to keep the current fountain design. Ms. Smith agrees with Mr. Davis that a splash pad might not be a bad idea elsewhere such as the public parks. Carolyn Stevens feels residents with small children should have options for family fun on the Common. She noted children already play in the fountain basin when it's filled with water and there haven't been any accidents so far.

Shawna Foran is Bonnie Chouinard's daughter and she agrees with her mother that the current fountain is in poor condition after being allowed to deteriorate over the years. From what she has seen, the fountain area is not only dirty but the fixture itself looks ready to fall over at any time. The proposed splash pad is not a kiddie pool but rather a sensory water display that residents of all ages would enjoy. Mr. Foran said there was one located in Burlington VT that has become very popular. This project would be of no cost to taxpayers provided the design included a splash pad.

Mark Fournier appreciates all the work the NU students put into this presentation. However, he also favors rehabilitation or replacement of the current fountain structure. He certainly doesn't think a fenced-in splash pad would be attractive on the Common. Robin Donahue agrees that the area should be improved as the original intention for installing the fountain there was to beautify the downtown area. She believes the current fountain should be rehabilitated.

Will Eberle has spent much time restoring historic buildings so he understands the desire to preserve historic structures as well as recognize the achievements of our forebears. However, he also believes in using new technology to improve our lives and our communities. Mr. Eberle has researched old photographs of the Northfield Common taken over the years and found that its configuration has not remained static but has evolved over time. For example, some photographs show a Common bandstand, fencing surrounding the whole Common and/or the fountain basin, etc. Therefore, there is no reason to believe change is inherently incorrect. He also doesn't see this as a black-or-white issue as various compromises are possible, such as including a traditional fountain structure as the centerpiece of a new splash pad. Mr. Eberle feels any safety concerns can be addressed during the project engineering process and that the community should take advantage of the generous offer to provide this Common upgrade at no expense to the taxpayer. He doesn't believe this should be a polarizing issue but rather something that could bring Northfield residents of all ages together.

Lorna Doney fully agrees that the current fountain structure needs to be rehabilitated or replaced. However, she doesn't feel the Common is an appropriate location for a splash pad. Some people enjoy the relative quiet there during the day in order to eat their lunches outside, converse with others, etc. If there is a concern about using tax dollars for the improvements, it might be possible to fundraise to secure the funding. Scott Neun believes the current fountain configuration is part of our local heritage and should be preserved. He has no problems with upgrading the site, including a water recirculation system, but doesn't think a splash pad is a good idea. There being no other comments or questions, Chair Maxwell thanked all those who attended tonight's meeting as well as the NU students for their very informative proposals. He restated that tonight's presentation was only the beginning of a long process and there will be many venues for public discussion before any decision is made.

b. Ryan Dinneen, Casella Waste Systems: Transfer Station Operations Agreement.

Manager Schulz said Casella Waste Systems has been operating the transfer station for the community since the beginning of March after there had been an inability to negotiate an extension with the previous operators (All Clean Waste Systems). He added Casella is interested in negotiating a five-year agreement as this would allow them to make various long-term upgrades to the site. Mr. Dinneen is the Supervisor of Depot Operations for Casella, which operates fifteen similar drop-off facilities located around the state. He said one of the upgrades considered is the installation of a trash compactor located on a concrete pad. This would allow for more efficient removal of trash from the site. Mr. Dinneen said under the proposed agreement, Casella would be responsible for paying for the site's utility usage, would maintain the cleanliness of the facility, and would keep the current hours of operation (Wednesdays and Saturdays, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.). Mr. Dinneen said the proposed agreement includes a fee structure that would cover the length of the agreement. There would be no fee increases the first two years of the agreement and then nominal increases for trash disposal in subsequent years. For example, dropping off a thirty-gallon trash bag, which currently costs \$5.00, would increase to \$5.50 in the third year and \$6.00 in the fifth year. The cost of dropping off larger items, such as beds, furniture, tires, etc. would remain the same for the length of the agreement. Possible new features at the Northfield facility might include accepting e-waste. He then asked if there were any questions.

Board member Morse said the proposed agreement states that the facility will accept construction/demolition debris but not lumber. He did not understand the distinction. Mr. Dineen said the facility would accept used/damaged wood products but not undamaged lumber planks. Board member Stevens asked about the acceptance of yard waste. Mr. Dinneen said clean yard waste would be accepted during summer months either in bulk or in compostable bags. Board member Stevens found some incorrect language in the agreement such as a reference to a non-existent "Schedule B" but had no major concerns. Chair Maxwell thanked Mr. Dinneen for tonight's presentation and for Casella's willingness to operate the facility on an interim basis on short notice. He then asked if any members of the public had questions.

Shauna Foran asked if there was a reason the facility staff were unwilling to assist customers off-loading materials from their vehicles. Mr. Dinneen said the staff would assist customers but they always wait for permission first. They have found some people resent unsolicited assistance and it creates less stress for the staff if permission is granted first. Board member Goodrich asked if handicapped and/or senior customers would be assisted in trash disposal, etc. Mr. Dinneen said they would be helped provided that they ask for assistance. Mr. Black believes this policy could be a safety measure to protect staff from moving traffic. Chair Maxwell then thanked Mr. Dinneen again and noted possible agreement approval is on the agenda as an action item.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. April 12, 2022 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the minutes. Some incorrect statements regarding the approval of the water and sewer rates were corrected. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Approval of Warrant #20-22.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve Warrant #20-22 in the amount of \$477,572.61. Board member Morse was curious about some payments related to last year's Labor Day Weekend Festivities. Manager Schulz said the invoices for these items only were received recently. Board member Stevens noted the purchase of weed killer for the sidewalks. He asked if this is permitted by the state. Manager Schulz confirmed the municipality only uses chemicals on the state's approval list. Board member Stevens noted a payment for legal services related to an eviction notice. Manager Schulz said this was for the mobile home that the municipality purchased at last year's tax sale.

Chair Maxwell asked if the purchase of PowerLoad systems for the Ambulance Service was budgeted in its Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget. Manager Schulz said it was. Chair Maxwell noted the warrant includes the payment for the new Town Grader, which is already operating on the backroads. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through April 17, 2022.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$102,316.20. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Casella Waste Systems: Transfer Station Operations Agreement.** Chair Maxwell asked if approval of this agreement should be postponed until the inconsistent language Board member Stevens indicated has been fixed. Manager Schulz said only minor edits in the document were needed so there is no reason for postponement. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve and authorize Manager Schulz to sign the five-year agreement with Casella Waste Systems to operate the Northfield Transfer Station. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Purchase of Northfield Police Department (NPD) Cruiser.** Manager Schulz said in the NPD budget for the next fiscal year are funds for the replacement of the 2014 NPD cruiser. NPD Chief John Helfant was able to secure a quote from a dealership in Marlborough, Massachusetts (MHQ) that supplies public safety and public works vehicles to municipalities. He also tried to obtain quotes from Vermont providers but was unable to receive any due to supply chain problems. The cost of a 2022 Ford Utility Police Interceptor would be \$45,964, which includes a \$1,700 credit for the trade-in of the 2014 vehicle. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Morse, to approve this purchase in the amount of \$45,964. NPD Officer Brian Gosselin was present to answer any questions. Chair Maxwell asked if this particular vehicle would fully suit Northfield's need for a new police cruiser. Officer Gosselin confirmed it would serve the community very well. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Remount of Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) Vehicle.** Manager Schulz said the Select Board members are being asked to authorize the remount of the 2014 ambulance unit's box on a new chassis at the cost of \$144,400, which is \$8,400 above the amount currently budgeted for this purpose. NAS Chief Lawton Rutter said this is the scheduled first remount of this particular unit. He solicited bids from five regional ambulance unit suppliers. Three of them contacted Chief Rutter for more information and indicated they might be willing to submit a proposal. However, in the end only one bid was received by the deadline. This came from Osage Industries, which is from whom the vehicle was originally purchased. Their proposal meets all of the bid specifications and Chief Rutter would like the Select Board's authorization to proceed by accepting this proposal. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Morse, to authorize the remount of the 2014 NAS unit at the cost of \$144,400. Board member Stevens noted the proposal stated the remount process would begin in twelve to fifteen months. He asked if this was correct. Chief Rutter confirmed the earliest time they can start is in the summer of 2023. This is due to supply chain issues that also are affecting the purchase of new ambulance units. All ambulance supply companies are having the same problem. The bid amount is based on the purchase of a 2023 chassis. Chief Rutter noted the unit would be out of Northfield for about ninety days during the remount process but a loaner vehicle would be provided during this timeframe. Chair Maxwell asked about the budget shortfall of \$8,400. Manager Schulz said it might be possible to transfer funds from other NAS CEP accounts or just have a budget overage in this particular account. The Select Board members have much time to make this decision. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Municipal Building Basement Repairs.** Manager Schulz met recently with DuBois & King engineers to best determine how to fix structural problems in the building's basement. The most urgent repairs will be made first.

- b. **Stony Brook Road Bridge Repair Project.** Manager Schulz said individual letters were sent to property owners on Stony Brook Road, Smith Hill Road, etc. to inform them this project is going forward and work already is being done on the bridge abutments. It is expected that the bridge itself will be closed to traffic for about four weeks starting the week of May 15, 2022. This information also was posted on Front Porch Forum for the whole community.
- c. **Central Street Sidewalk Project RFP.** Manager Schulz included in the board packets the RFP for the paving work to be done on the lower end of Central Street. This work entails about 488 feet of new sidewalk on the eastside of the street that will connect with the existing sidewalk on Wall Street. Bid proposals are due by Monday, May 23, 2022. This is part of a larger project that will include removal of deteriorating sidewalk on other sections of the eastside, street paving, etc. Chair Maxwell noted the Highway Planning & Project Oversight Subcommittee held a meeting yesterday morning that included a site visit of Central Street.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Highway Department Appreciation.** Board member Morse wanted to commend the Highway crew from removing road gravel that had been accumulating on our bridges and other locations over the past few weeks.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Northfield Falls Pedestrian Concerns.** Richard Smith felt vehicular traffic in the Northfield Falls area is too fast and this is creating problems for walkers along the road. He would like to have a flashing pedestrian sign installed at the crosswalk located by the Falls General Store. This would be similar to the ones installed at Depot Square and by Norwich University. Chair Maxwell noted Vermont Route 12 is a state highway and Manager Schulz has been reaching out to the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) about possible pedestrian safety enhancements. Manager Schulz added that as a result of grant funds, the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) will be conducting a study of the area in order to determine the best steps to be taken to enhance pedestrian safety. The study is supposed to begin the middle of next month and when completed it will be shared with VTrans in hope that any recommendations made in the final report will be followed by action. Manager Schulz said he made a previous request that the speed limit be lowered in this area from 35 to 25 miles per hour. VTrans reviewed this matter and eventually concluded that the current speed limit is appropriate. In addition, NPD Chief Helfant conducted a traffic study and found most drivers followed the speed limit. Elroy Hill remembers that former NPD Chief Williams Jennings did a similar study a few years ago and found the average speed limit along Vermont Route 12 in the Falls area was 37.5 MPH.

- XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a contract negotiation with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:45 p.m.

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

The Board came out of executive session at 9:15 p.m. No action was taken.

- XII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:16 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 May 10, 2022.