TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of October 27, 2026

I. ROLL CALL. Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Tim Davis, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Mary Smith, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), Peter J. DeMasi (Northfield Fire Chief), Thomas Davis (Economic Development Director), Carolyn Stevens, Pam Ricker, Susan Stillinger, Lorna Doney, and Elroy C. Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. PUBLIC HEARING

a. Special Town Meeting Australian Ballot Article (Fire Pumper Truck). Chair Maxwell said this public hearing is held tonight so Northfield residents can provide their views or ask questions regarding the Special Meeting Article on the Vermont General Election ballot that will be voted on November 3, 2026. The articles reads as follows: "Shall the voters authorize the Select Board to borrow an amount not to exceed eight hundred and fifty-five thousand dollars ($855,000) for a period not to exceed ten (10) years for the purchase of a Fire Pumper Truck?" He then asked if there were any questions or comments regarding this article. Chair Maxwell noted that the Select Board members did put funds in the Northfield Fire Department (NFD) Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget to partially cover the cost of this new vehicle. This article asks for voter authorization to borrow the balance of the purchase amount. NFD Chief Peter J, DeMasi said this proposed purchase was discussed last year when the current fiscal year budget was being drafted but the funding article was not ready in time to put on the March 2026 Town Meeting Warning. He added that it is NFD practice to replace its pumper trucks every ten (10) years with the oldest current truck sold and the truck purchased more recently retained as a backup vehicle. Chief DeMasi said if Northfield voters authorize borrowing for a new pumper truck, it will be purchased at current prices but would not be delivered by the manufacturer for another three (3) years. Board member Petty said we are planning ahead in order to save money. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio said the municipality wouldn't borrow the purchase funds or make bond payments until the new pumper truck has been delivered and put into service. There being no additional comments or questions, Chair Maxwell closed the public hearing at 6:05 p.m.

III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA. There were no changes to the posted agenda.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED): None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (6:06 p.m.)

a. October 13, 2026 (Regular Meeting). Motion by Board member Shernock, Seconded by Board member Petty, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Board member Stevens abstaining.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS (6:07 p.m.)

a. Approval of Warrant #08-27 & #08-27A-C. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #08-27 & #08-27A-C in the amount of $223,335.68. Board member Petty is pleased to see that Starlink kits have been purchased in order to improve communication with our emergency vehicles when they are out on the road. Manager Smith concurred and said they are very helpful in maintaining contact in the parts of the community that have limited or no cell service.

Board member Stevens noted that about $8,000 was spent repairing a damaged Northfield Police Department (NPD) vehicle. He had not heard of any recent accidents involving the NPD fleet. Manager Smith said this particular vehicle had been damaged some time ago but neither the NPD chief nor the town manager at the time then authorized its repair. The vehicle was recently repaired in order to put in back into service and municipal insurance will cover the repairs costs (minus the deductible amount). **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

b. Approval of Warrant #08-27S. Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve Warrant #08-27S in the amount of $20,318.05. Chair Maxwell noted this is a payment on an old bond note covering the cost of Depot Square roadway repairs. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

c. Receipt of Biweekly Payroll through October 11, 2026: Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to receive the biweekly payroll in the amount of $123,991.42. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD (6:12 p.m.)

a. Tax Stabilization Policy Review. At the previous meeting, Economic Development Director Thomas Davis had asked the Select Board members to authorize a tax stabilization agreement in order to expedite the construction of six (6) new housing units on Freight Yard Way. The Select Board members did provide this authorization but at the time several did ask for more information about why this policy exists as well as its specific benefits to the community. Mr. Davis said that the primary rationale for tax stabilization policies is to promote the construction of additional affordable housing units as well as the creation or expansion of local businesses that provide additional employment in the community. The non-profit agency Downstreet, previously known as Central Vermont Community Land Trust (CVCLT), does provide investment funding for the construction of affordable housing units in Lamoille, Orange, and Washington Counties but, as Mr. Davis lamented, it doesn't seem to have much interest at this time in supporting any Northfield initiatives. As a result, he stated, the municipality should fill this void through the use of tax stabilization agreements to spur local development. Mr. Davis noted that housing construction costs have skyrocketed in recent years so potential developers quite often require some state and/or local assistance to pursue their projects. Mr. Davis has provided the Select Board members with a draft revision of the current tax stabilization policy that contains simplified language and removes some anachronisms from the 2014 document. The revisions would make the policy more attractive for both the municipality and for potential developers. Chair Maxwell said since the Select Board members only received this draft document today, he felt it best that they review it further on their own and discuss fully at a future regular meeting. Board member Petty would like to see tracked changes between the current policy and what Mr. Davis is proposing. Mr. Davis will provide a summary of the changes. He said one major change is that if a development project is sold to another individual or group during the tax stabilization period, the original agreement is voided. Chair Maxwell noted that it took three (3) separate Town Meeting Day votes before Northfield residents in 2018 authorized the Select Board to enter into tax stabilization agreements. By state law, this authorization required a two-thirds vote and the first two (2) votes had majority support but not a supermajority. Board member Petty would like some mechanism developed so that it can be determined whether or not a tax stabilization agreement has actually benefited the community. It is possible that some local projects could be pursued without the need for tax stabilization agreements.

Board member Shernock said the goal is to expand the opportunities available for potential developers. She then asked why Downstreet is not interested in Northfield. Mr. Davis has met with their representatives several times and has heard some vague interest in Northfield but he believes that other communities were more pro-active in the past in seeking funding and that put them higher on the current priority list. Board member Shernock asked if Northfield's legislative representatives could be more supportive of the process. Mr. Davis noted Northfield's representatives have both been Republicans in recent years and thus in the minority in the Vermont House of Representatives. This might have been an impediment in obtaining state funding for local housing projects, etc. Board member Petty thought it might be useful to better publicize the local community assets like good schools, expanded recreation opportunities, potential expansion of its wastewater system, etc. Mr. Davis said the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (CVEDC) has been reconstituted and this might help create new opportunities for Northfield development. Chair Maxwell believes we are in a much better place for future development than when he started serving first as a Village Trustee and then as a Town Selectman about sixteen (16) years ago. We have seen many successful business creations and expansions in this time, with Darn Tough the most notable example. The hiring of Mr. Davis as a full-time Economic Development Director also has been a major factor in the improvement of the local economic climate. Mr. Davis said he would look into the experience of other communities to see how they have been able to establish clear criteria for the success or failure of projects assisted by their own their tax stabilization policies. After some discussion, it was decided that the next discussion of the proposed tax stabilization policy revisions will be warned for the Tuesday, November 24, 2026 regular meeting. Chair Maxwell then thanked Mr. Davis for his efforts on behalf of the community and for the valuable information provided tonight.

VIII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT (6:38 p.m.) Manager Smith reported that she and the municipal employees have been kept very busy over the past couple of weeks. She noted that the FEMA-funded projects on Barrows Road and Kent Street have been completed. However, some paperwork still needs to be finalized and submitted before we can receive full reimbursement. In addition, the Highway Department installed new culverts on Garvey Road and Bailey Road. The new Town Mechanic is now in the process of preparing the municipal fleet for winter service. Manager Smith said the new smart meters are finally beginning to "talk to the system" so that remote meter reads can commence in the near future. The Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) was kept occupied with both emergency responses and standby service over the past couple of weeks, which corresponded with Norwich University (NU) Homecoming and Family weekends. The Starlink systems will be installed in emergency vehicles later this week and she commended NPD Chief Eric Nordenson for expediting the process. Manager Smith then noted Mr. Davis has been working on several grant applications recently (i.e. Better Connections, etc.) and is still pursuing the possibility of establishing an Amtrak stop here in Northfield. She added that there has been improved coordination with NU in recent months regarding community usage of the Shaw Outdoor Center as well as emergency management. Manager Smith said the main municipal emphasis now seems to be getting ready for winter before it strikes.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS (6:44 p.m.)

a. Sanders Road Concerns. Board member Davis said some residents have contacted him regarding Sanders Road, which they felt needed roadwork and the possible installation of guardrails where there is a steep dropoff on the side of the road. One concern is that the 2023 flood took out a number of trees that had served as roadside buffers previously. Manager Smith will look into this.

b. **NU Shaw Outdoor Center.** Board member Petty served on the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant Implementation Committee and she asked what the new developments were with the Shaw Outdoor Center that Manager Smith alluded to earlier. Manager Smith said we have been working with Shaw Outdoor Center Director Andrew Padilla about providing more community access to the recreational facilities at and near the center on NU property. This collaboration probably would expand should the municipality go forward with hiring a Recreation Director in the next fiscal year. Board member Petty noted that the new disc golf course is very popular with residents although perhaps it could be better advertised. She added that the Paine Mountain trail system also is very popular but requires continued investment to keep it in good condition.

c. **Vine Street Pedestrian Bridge.** Board member Stevens asked about the status of this pedestrian bridge, which is currently closed to the public. Manager Smith said the bridge would be fixed but there currently is no timeline for completing the repairs.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED) (6:49 p.m.)

a. **Lorna Doney, NU Special Events Parking.** Ms. Doney said the NU Homecoming Weekend seemed to go well but she was concerned about the parking situation near the intersection of South Main Street and Central Street. There were some places where illegal parking created some travel obstructions so perhaps safety pylons should be put out in future to prevent this. Chair Maxwell said he was grateful for this after-event report, which will be forwarded to NPD Chief Nordenson. Board member Petty noted that the local traffic ordinance will be revised soon so perhaps any ambiguity about parking at that location can be clarified in the revised ordinance.

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

The Board went into executive session at 6:55 p.m.

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

The Board came out of executive session at 7:18 p.m. No action was taken.

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

The Board adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

A video recording of this meeting is available at: https://youtu.be/BLg85wZlNfk

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