

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING**  
**Minutes of March 22, 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, Trent Tucker (Highway Foreman), Kaitlyn Keating (NCDN), Donald Doyon, Carolyn Stevens, Jon Ignatowski, Lois Melander, Brad Johnson, 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. Chair Maxwell noted this was the first time in two years that all five Select Board members were physically present for a regular meeting.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE.** 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 PARTICIATION (SCHEDULED)**

- a. Kaitlyn Keating, Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN): Northfield Community Revolving Loan Fund (NCRLF).** Ms. Keating wanted to state her understanding of the NCRLF program and then ask some questions. The NCRLF was authorized by the Select Board members a year ago (03/09/21) and a resolution was approved at the following regular meeting (03/23/21) that defined how the program would work and allowing \$17,000 in existing economic development funds to be transferred into the NCRLF account. At that same meeting, Economic Development Director Jon Ignatowski was authorized to apply for a USDA Rural Business Development Grant that, if successful, would result in a doubling of the NCRLF account balance. Ms. Keating noted that the grant application was successful and in September 2021, Northfield was awarded \$20,000. It also should be noted that by that time, Mr. Ignatowski had to resign his position due to health concerns. Ms. Keating wanted to know if Manager Schulz had submitted the required paperwork with USDA Rural Business Development regarding the status of the grant funds. Manager Schulz said he did reach out recently and was told that due to the pandemic and other factors, USDA Rural Business Development is willing to allow grant extensions of two or three years. Ms. Keating asked if the grant funds had already been spent, would Northfield be able to apply for more this year. Manager Schulz said he didn't inquire about that. When the NCRLF resolution was drafted, it provided for a five- to six-person loan committee that would oversee the program, review applications, etc. to be "composed of at least one banker and one Select Board member in addition to individuals with strong ties to the community." Ms. Keating asked if this committee has been formed and approved by the Select Board members. Manager Schulz said prospective members have been contacted and they now are reviewing NCRLF documents, etc. Once it is confirmed these persons do want to serve on the loan committee, there will be formal Select Board appointments. Ms. Keating asked how often the loan committee would meet. Manager Schulz said there would be a few initial meetings as committee rules are established and NCRLF documents are reviewed and perhaps updated. After then, the number and frequency of meetings would depend on when loan applications are submitted by local businesses, etc. Ms. Keating asked how many loan applications have been made to date. Manager Schulz said there had been none. Ms. Keating suggested that perhaps some entrepreneurs had been reluctant to apply until the loan committee was in place, etc. Manager Schulz said once the committee is established, there will be outreach to local businesses explaining the NCRLF program, the process for applying for a loan, etc. Ms. Keating asked if the loan committee's meetings would be warned and open to the public. Manager Schulz said these meeting would be posted like any other public meeting. Ms. Keating then thanked Manager Schulz and the Select Board members for allowing this discussion.

**V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT**

- a. Trent Tucker, Highway Foreman.** Chair Maxwell wanted to first commend Mr. Tucker and his crew for the exceptional work over this past week. Ten days ago, a winter storm deposited over a foot of snow on Northfield. The following week saw record temperatures of over sixty degrees for a couple days, which caused some of the backroads to turn into seas of mud. Mr. Tucker confirmed a lot of work has been done on the backroads but much more has to be done. His crew has been working twelve-hour work shifts including the past weekend.

The gravel stockpile was depleted so more had to be delivered to the pit. Manager Schulz has heard some local people say this Mud Season was the worst in ten years. This comes after two years of relatively mild winters and springs. Mr. Tucker said his crew should have a handle on the worst spots by tomorrow.

Once Mud Season is behind us, Mr. Tucker has a number of summer road projects to start including Central Street sidewalk work, ditching, installing new culverts (where needed), tree removal, backroads gravelling, etc. Manager Schulz said the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) has grant money available for work to be done on "hydrologically connected" roads in order to improve drainage, reduce stormwater runoff into nearby streams, etc. Such funds were used over the past couple years to address serious problems on Dole Hill Road, Barrows Road, Colson Road, and Terry Hill Road and the results were very positive. Mr. Tucker said that due to the recent increases in the cost of road gravel, it might be necessary to reduce the amount of backroad resurfacing this summer. We had been doing about three and one-half miles each summer in recent years. Manager Schulz noted there had been a number of resident complaints about tire damage from the crushed stone being put down. We have been trying to obtain slightly smaller stone that is crushed down further by our road roller as soon as it is put down.

Chair Maxwell asked where the current stockpile of culvert will be used. Mr. Tucker is unsure of the exact locations at this time but said it definitely will be used as there are a number of roads with drainage issues. Chair Maxwell asked if the Highway Department had enough personnel and equipment for all the summer projects now anticipated. Mr. Tucker had no concerns about this. He added that his current crew is well-trained, hard-working, and work well together. There hasn't been any employee turnover for a few years. Board member Morse concurred that we have a good crew, good equipment, and difficult roads. Board member Stevens is grateful that the "road craters" by the Stony Brook Road Bridge were fixed. They were terrible! Mr. Tucker said that particular stretch of road gets a lot of heavy truck traffic so potential road damage is a constant concern. Board member Stevens asked about the proposed purchase of a new Town Loader. Manager Schulz said the bids for this purchase will be provided at the next regular meeting (04/12/22). Mr. Tucker said the current plan is to trade in the current vehicle. Five quotes already have been received. Board member Goodrich asked if all the backroads will be fixed tomorrow. Mr. Tucker said the worst problem areas should be addressed by the end of the day. This includes sections of Rabbit Hollow Road, Hallstrom Road, and Bear Farm Road. Board member Goodrich asked if the purchase of additional gravel will cause an overage in this budget. Manager Schulz said this was considered before the purchase was made and it was determined the additional cost would be within budget. Board member Goodrich asked if the RSMS (Road Surface Management System) program would be followed in determining which backroads would be resurfaced this summer. Mr. Tucker confirmed it would. Chair Maxwell then restated that the Select Board members recognize the excellent work Mr. Tucker and his crew have done in recent months and they fully support their efforts.

## VI. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

### a. Liquor License Renewals

1. **American Legion (1<sup>st</sup> Class).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
2. **American Legion (3<sup>rd</sup> Class).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
3. **Norwich University (1<sup>st</sup> Class).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
4. **Norwich University (3<sup>rd</sup> Class).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
5. **South Village Mobil.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

### b. Outside Consumption Permit

1. **American Legion.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the outside consumption permit. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

## VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **March 8, 2022 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. Board member Goodrich would like it clarified that although the new operators of the Northfield Transfer Station (Casella Waste Systems) charge about the same for trash disposal, recycling, etc. as the previous operators, a few customers have noticed some higher costs in the new fee schedule. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

## VIII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Approval of Warrant #18-22.** Motion by Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #18-22 in the amount of \$228,620.10. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through March 6, 2022.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$111,264.91. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

## IX. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Town Grader Purchase Bids.** Manager Schulz said the budget approved on Town Meeting Day included funds for the purchase of a new Town Grader. The plan is to keep the current one as a backup. Bids were solicited and three were received by the deadline. One was from Milton Cat for a new Caterpillar 140AWDE Motor Grader for \$315,000. United Construction & Forestry (formerly Nortrax) provided two bids for a new John Deere 772G Motor Grader for \$348,600 as well as for a used 2020 John Deere 772G Motor Grader for \$257,844. Manager Schulz said it is his and Mr. Tucker's recommendation to purchase the used grader, which is less expensive and would be available almost immediately. Mr. Tucker said the used John Deere grader has only 846 hours on it, which is not extensive. The vehicle is in good condition and comes with a lot of extras, such as a winter tire package, plow wings, etc., at no additional cost. Manager Schulz noted this grader also has five-year warranty. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to authorize the purchase of a 2020 John Deere 772G Motor Grader from United Construction & Forestry for \$257,844.

Board member Stevens has concerns about purchasing another John Deere grader given the many problems we've had with our current one. Mr. Tucker said about 12,000 hours have been put on that grader so any repair issues can be attributed to a heavy workload. When this vehicle is on the road, it does a great job. Board member Stevens asked if there have been problems with the grader's drive chain. Mr. Tucker said these problems can be considered general wear and tear on a machine that puts in so many work hours. Chair Maxwell asked what was the expected lifespan for a grader. Manager Schulz said for budgeting purposes, we assume the grader will be in service for twenty years. Board member Goodrich asked if the current grader would be kept in the garage and only used when needed. Mr. Tucker said he plans to use both graders as much as possible. Manager Schulz noted there are times in the early summer and late fall when graders are used the most. This is when the roads are prepared for higher summer usage and later in the season in preparation for winter road maintenance.

Board member Goodrich asked what was the purchase price authorized in the Highway Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget. Manager Schulz said it was \$300,000. Chair Maxwell has asked around and he wondered why so many of our neighboring highway departments prefer Caterpillar (Cat) machines over John Deere. Mr. Tucker said it was a matter of personal preference. Some buyers like Cat's post-purchase servicing program but he felt John Deere provided about the same level of service. Board member Goodrich asked what Mr. Tucker would have done if the used vehicle available was a Cat. Mr. Tucker said in that case, he would have recommended the purchase of the used Cat. He added that the used John Deere that is now available has been lightly used and there are many advantages at this time in purchasing a used vehicle. Due to the backlog in manufacturing new graders due to parts shortages, etc., it would be several months before a new grader could be delivered to Northfield. The already-installed extras that come with the used John Deere at no additional cost are very impressive as well. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Board member Stevens abstaining.**

- b. Annual Financial Plan for Town Highways.** Manager Schulz said VTrans requests that municipalities provide annual financial plans for highway maintenance each year in order to show that the amount of local tax funding is at least \$300 for each mile of Class 1, 2, and 3 Town Highway. Northfield's plan for FY 2022/2023 indicates \$2,836,030 in revenue from state assistance, local taxation, and special funds, i.e. grants, prior year surplus, etc. The exact same amount is expended with the funds broken down into Winter Maintenance, Non-Winter Maintenance, and Major Construction Projects. The latter category includes the \$365,000 to be spent repairing Stony Brook Bridge. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Morse, to approve and sign Northfield's Annual Financial Plan for Town Highways. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) Utility Relocation Agreement.** As part of the Main Street Bridge Replacement Project, VTrans is asking for Northfield to approve an agreement covering the relocation of the waterlines in the construction area. The agreement will specify the respective responsibilities of VTrans and the municipality. Manager Schulz said the format is a standard agreement form. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve and authorize Manager Schulz to sign the VTrans Utility Relocation Agreement. Board member Goodrich noted a stipulation that VTrans will notify the municipality "at least twenty-four hours in advance of a planned [water service] interruption." She asked if this was sufficient time for Northfield to warn its customers. Manager Schulz said it probably was not. He will ask VTrans if the advanced warning period could be extended. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. Appointment of Various Town Officials.** Manager Schulz said the terms of some appointed municipal positions expire this month. The positions were advertised and the current office holders were contacted to determine if they would like to be reappointed to serve an additional term. Board member Morse was pleased so many residents are willing to serve on our local committees. This includes three new office holders. Chair Maxwell was particularly impressed with the résumés of these new applicants.
- 1. Conservation Commission.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Russ Barrett and appoint new members David Mears and Jeremy Whalen to the Conservation Commission. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
  - 2. Development Review Board.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Timothy Donahue III to the Development Review Board. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
  - 3. Dog River Park Committee.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Kim Adams and Fred Nadon to the Dog River Park Committee. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
  - 4. Energy Committee.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Sarah Wolfe to the Energy Committee. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
  - 5. Planning Commission.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Nancy Peck to the Planning Commission. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
  - 6. Town Forest Stewardship Committee.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Russ Barrett and Colin T. Bright and appoint new member Caroline Zeilenga to the Town Forest Stewardship Committee. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
  - 7. First Constable.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Richard Wobby as First Constable. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
  - 8. Grand Juror.** There were no applicants for this position.
  - 9. Tree Warden.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Russ Barrett as Tree Warden. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
  - 10. Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) Representative.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Laura Hill-Eubanks as Northfield's CVRPC Representative. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
  - 11. CVRPC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Representative and Alternate.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reappoint Jeff Schulz as the CVRPC TAC Representative and Patrick DeMasi as the Alternate Representative. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

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

- a. South Main Street Stormwater Mitigation/CSO Elimination Project.** Manager Schulz said the project engineer (Dufresne Group) has begun advertising this project with bids due by Wednesday, April 6, 2022. There will be a pre-bid meeting held tomorrow (03/23/22) at 10:00 a.m. in the Community Room. At least four companies have shown interest in bidding.
- b. FY 2021/2022 Financial Statements.** Manager Schulz said financial statements for the current fiscal year through the end of February 2022 were included in the packets. This period covers eight months, which is two-thirds of the current fiscal year. Manager Schulz said all the various department budgets are in good shape, indicating the department heads are doing a good job in keeping down expenses, etc.
- c. Northfield Transfer Station & Recycling Depot.** Manager Schulz met with representatives of the new facility operators, Casella Waste Systems, last week in order to start the process of drafting a five-year agreement. This agreement would include provisions for site improvements. Manager Schulz will keep the Select Board members aware of any developments. A draft agreement should be ready in a few weeks for Select Board review and (possible) approval.
- d. Economic Development Director Position.** Manager Schulz said this position has been readvertised with the salary increase indicated in the notice. There have been twelve letters of interest already submitted. The deadline is Friday, April 15, 2022. Board member Stevens asked when the hiring committee would receive copies of these letters. Manager Schulz felt it best to wait until after the application deadline in order to protect the privacy of the applicants.
- e. Municipal Building Basement Concerns.** As indicated at the last meeting, DuBois & King has provided an engineering study that shows some structural problems with the basement. They will be developing an action plan in order to address these concerns. The work should be started within the next month.
- f. VTrans Class 2 Highway Grant Applications.** Manager Schulz is preparing a VTrans grant application that, if successful, could provide funding to address serious concerns on Lovers Lane. This would include the installation of new guardrail and other road improvements.
- g. Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) COVID-19 Testing.** Manager Schulz said the municipality benefited significantly from the state providing funds to cover the expense of NAS conducting COVID-19 testing at the NAS bay and other locations. However, the state program is winding down so the testing should be ending in the next couple months.
- h. Northfield Falls Crosswalk Study RFP.** Manager Schulz said the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) has begun advertising for an engineering study that would address safety concerns at this intersection. Submissions are due by Wednesday, April 13, 2022. Board member Petty is pleased this project is going forward and would like to be involved in the process when the study ready for review and discussion.

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

- a. Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant Award.** Board member Morse noted the Town of Northfield and the Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC) recently was awarded a \$122,965 grant. The funds will be used to improve our Town Forest trail systems, provide better Town Forest access, and install numerous signage and other enhancements along the trail system. Board member Morse is both surprised and pleased that local volunteers were able to achieve so much on behalf of the community. Manager Schulz said NCC Chair Deb Zuaro provided the bulk of work on this effort. Board member Petty said Ms. Zuaro was assisted in her efforts by other NCC members, members of the Town Forest Stewardship Committee, and members of the Northfield Ridge + River Routes Steering Committee. Board member Goodrich asked if the Select Board members would have input on how these VOREC grant funds are spent. Manager Schulz said the grant was awarded to the municipality so Select Board authorization would be required for any purchases. Board member Petty said a Town Forest Access survey was conducted recently with the assistance of the CVRPC. The Select Board members will be appraised of the results and provided with the resulting recommendations. Board member Petty felt local feedback should be a major factor in helping determine how VOREC grant funds will be spent. There also will be an emphasis on working with Norwich University (NU) to improve Town Forest public access. Manager Schulz has had positive interactions with NU officials regarding opening up some of their parking spaces adjacent to the Town Forest for this purpose. There had been some concerns expressed by residents at a previous meeting about increased visitor parking on public streets located near Town Forest access points.

- b. ARPA Funds Outreach Committee.** Board member Stevens said the committee has held four Friday night meetings to date and great process in being made in determining how best to obtain public feedback on how to spend these funds on local projects. Chair Maxwell has attended a couple meetings. The plan is to hold five in-person meetings this spring at various locations throughout the community. There also will be informational displays at various locations around Northfield. The next step is to finalize the community survey that will be distributed in order to receive feedback from residents, including those who cannot attend these public meetings. Chair Maxwell then thanked Merry Shernock for all her initiative in leading these initial discussions.
- c. Brown Public Library (BPL) LED Lighting.** Board member Stevens, who also serves as Treasurer on the BPL Board of Trustees, reported that new LED lights have been installed throughout the facility. The original estimate for the work was \$4,000 but the actual cost will be closer to \$11,000 due to the number of new ballasts that had to be installed.
- d. Life Celebration for Kathryn Szelag.** Board member Stevens noted BPL Deputy Director Kathryn Szelag passed away on February 26, 2022. A life celebration for Ms. Szelag will be held in the Community Room at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 23, 2022. Ms. Szelag was popular employee as well as an industrious worker so her absence will be keenly felt.
- e. Recreation Committee Update.** Board member Stevens asked if there was any update regarding the proposed group that would replace the Northfield Recreation Committee that was disbanded last year. There had been discussion of perhaps forming a regional recreation committee that could share their facilities, submit joint grant applications, etc. Manager Schulz reached out to the Town of Berlin regarding this possibility but there wasn't much commitment either way. He will make contact again soon.
- f. Common Fountain Project.** Board member Goodrich has concerns about the possibility of a children's fountain being installed on the Common. She doesn't want the area turned into another playground. Of the suggested upgrades to the facility, Board member Goodrich would like the current fountain upgraded so that it can recirculate the water used. She believes many residents would oppose removal of the current fountain. Manager Schulz noted Norwich University (NU) engineering students are exploring three options. The first would be an upgrade of the existing fountain as Board member Goodrich suggests. The others would be the installation of a new fountain or the elimination of the tradition fountain structure in favor of a children's fountain that squirts water upwards from spaced out openings. Once the studies have been completed, they will be forwarded to the Select Board members for discussion. Public feedback on the various options also will be sought. Chair Maxwell said the process will need to be transparent and thorough so the Select Board members will be able to make the best decision. He felt whatever they decide would be a definite improvement over the current situation. Board member Morse thought this might be a good discussion topic when the ARPA funds outreach meetings are held.

## **XII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)**

- a. Elroy Hill: Town Grader Purchase.** Mr. Hill has long experience in vehicle maintenance and he applauds the municipality for deciding to purchase a good, used grader in order to save taxpayer money. He believes the Highway Department's vehicle maintenance program has improved at least seventy-five percent over the past couple of years so Mr. Hill has no qualms over the purchase of a used vehicle that is in relatively good condition.

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

The Board adjourned at 8:20 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 regular Select Board regular meeting of April 12, 2022.