

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING  
Minutes of July 22, 2025**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Charles Morse, Board members K. David Maxwell, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock (absent), and John Stevens. Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Pierre Gomez (Northfield Police Chief), Ron Tucker (RE Tucker, Inc.), Sherrie Tucker (RE Tucker, Inc.), Anne Donahue (Vermont State Representative), Tim Swartz (Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety [AWPS] Task Force), Dan Anderson (AWPS Task Force), Mary Nadon Scott (AWPS Task Force), DeLane McIlvene (AWPS Task Force), Janan Hamm (AWPS Task Force), Bill Clements (AWPS Task Force), Royal DeLegge (Chair, Planning Commission), Jeremy Whalen (Chair, Town Forest Stewardship Committee), Gerard LaVarnway, Lorna Doney, Don Doyon, Susan Stillinger, Laura Hill-Eubanks, Carolyn Stevens, Pam Ricker, and Elroy C. Hill.

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

- II. SET/ADJUST AGENDA. (7:02 p.m.)** Chair Morse said Gary Laroche from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) was to address the Select Board members tonight about the Main Street Bridge Replacement Project but had to postpone his presentation for another time. He did email this afternoon and reported that the original cost estimate for this project (\$8,000,000) has now increased to \$11,500,000. The municipality must pay five percent (5%) of this as a local match amount so there will need to be a discussion at the next budget meetings regarding how to pay for this.

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

- a. Ron Tucker & Sherrie Tucker, RE Tucker, Inc.: Availability of Tucker Sand Pit for Municipal Purchase. (7:03 p.m.)** Chair Morse said R.E. Tucker, Inc. has sold road material to the Northfield Highway Department for several years. They have a sand pit located off Vermont Route 12A that they are willing to sell to the municipality with an estimated 100,000 cubic yards of road material. Mr. Tucker said they want to sell the sand pit due to increasing business permitting costs as well as higher shared costs for maintaining a railroad bridge on the property. Mr. Tucker felt the municipality should be able to handle both these costs better due to less stringent permitting rules for municipalities and the possibility of obtaining grant funds for railroad bridge maintenance. It also might be possible to create a public road running through the site to lower the bridge maintenance costs. The Tuckers have an initial sale price of \$600,000 for the sand pit and Mr. Tucker said it should provide a lifetime of sand and gravel for the community. He also noted that it has become more difficult in recent years for Vermont highway departments to obtain acceptable road materials. Board member Stevens asked if the sale price included the railroad bridge. Mr. Tucker confirmed that it did and noted that there is a migrating right-of-way for a property located above the sand pit. The municipality would need to maintain the roadway for the property owner once the right-of-way has been established. Chair Morse said this matter would need to be investigated further by the Select Board members (perhaps by the Highway Subcommittee?) before they can enter into negotiations with the Tuckers regarding the sale price, etc. Mr. Tucker fully understands this and said this was just a preliminary outreach to determine if there is any municipal interest in a possible sale. Chair Morse said the municipality would need to conduct a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) as it probably would need to borrow funds to complete the purchase. Mr. Tucker will provide the Select Board members with all the information they will require to make this decision. There had been earlier negotiations with the Town of Braintree to purchase the sand pit and that documentation will be provided as well. Mr. Tucker hopes that once all the relevant information has been provided, a site visit can be scheduled as part of the negotiation process. Chair Morse then thanked the Tuckers for bringing forward this proposal and said the Select Board members will remain in touch.
- b. Anne Donahue, Vermont State Representative: Habitat for Humanity. (7:27 p.m.)** Ms. Donahue said she was not here as a state representative tonight but rather as Interim Chair for a Habitat for Humanity committee that is working on a proposal to build a duplex building that would provide two (2) Northfield families with affordable housing. The location would be the vacant lot at the intersection of North Main Street and Dogwood Glen Drive. Ms. Donahue said the RFPs for this project have already been distributed and there will be a community meeting held this fall in order to fully describe the project. Her committee will be holding a meeting tomorrow night where they will finalize the flyer for this community meeting. Ms. Donahue added that Northfield Economic Development Director (EDD) Town Davis has attended several of their past meetings and has been of great assistance.

Board member Maxwell asked if there are eligibility criteria for the new homeowners. Ms. Donahue said the committee would determine eligibility and a major factor is whether the new homeowners would be able to make their mortgage payments. In addition, one of the families must be headed by a veteran. Board member Petty thanked Ms. Donahue and the other Habitat for Humanity committee members for working on this project.

- c. **Tim Swartz, Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety Task Force: Pedestrian Safety Improvements (Warning Signs, Roadside Trimming, etc.). (7:36 p.m.)** Mr. Swartz said he and the other AWPS Task Force members have been on the lookout for locations in the community that present pedestrian safety hazards. They have identified a few locations including near the new flashing crosswalk sign in Northfield Falls. Mr. Swartz felt drivers travelling southward towards the crosswalk don't see the new crosswalk sign until it is too late because of the sharp curve north of the crosswalk. Therefore, it would be very helpful to have a warning sign installed further north of the crosswalk approach. In addition, there are some areas where roadside bushes, shrubs, and tree branches need to be trimmed in order to create greater visibility for pedestrian crossings, road signs, etc. Mr. Swartz will provide a full list of these locations to Manager Schulz and the Select Board members. Manager Schulz said he has contacted VTrans about the need to make the Northfield Falls crosswalk more visible and also is working with them to improve road drainage in the area. He noted, however, that working with VTrans usually includes some delay before the requested work is actually completed. Bill Clements also is concerned about pedestrian safety when detours are put in place for the Main Street Bridge Replacement project scheduled for next year. He had hoped to ask Mr. Laroche about this as he has concerns about the diversion of traffic mostly along Water Street while the bridge is closed. This is a heavy traffic area and he had hoped to see some significant pedestrian safety measures installed that might include temporary traffic lights, etc. Mr. Clements said the AWPS Task Force members will be watching for any developments regarding pedestrian safety as the bridge replacement project develops. Chair Morse noted that an early decision was to bar heavy tractor trailers from the traffic detours along Wall Street, Water Street, etc. He does agree that more needs to be done to ensure pedestrian safety during this project. Manager Schulz said VTrans has submitted its final project plans and these do include improved pedestrian safety measures that include barricades, etc. Chair Morse feels there will need to be a full discussion with VTrans representatives about this matter. He then thanked Mr. Swartz and the other AWPS Task Force members for bringing their concerns to the attention of the Select Board members.
- d. **Royal DeLegge, Planning Commission Chair: Town Forest Zoning Issues. (7:55 p.m.)** Mr. DeLegge said that the Planning Commission (PC) members worked last year on updating the local zoning regulations to make them fully compliant with new state laws and more user-friendly. Since then, the PC members have been working on additional upgrades that included addressing public concerns that the current zoning regulations do not provide sufficient protection from future development for the Town Forest. The PC members have looked at several options such as further revising the zoning regulations, establishing conservation easements for some or all of the Town Forest, etc. They recently have focused on defining a "Forest Reserve Overlay District." The purpose of this district "is to produce wood products, maintain wildlife habitat, protect water supplies, and provide forest recreation and conservation education. Within the Forest Reserve Overlay District, permitted uses include sustainable commercial forestry and related uses, and all other land development is prohibited." Mr. DeLegge said he and the other PC members wanted to learn how the Select Board members would feel about this course of action before proceeding further. Board member Petty thanked the PC members for working on this as she feels (along with many Northfield residents) that protection of the Town Forest is a very important concern. She asked if Cheney Field would be included in this district. Mr. DeLegge said they only have a preliminary map of the area to be included in this district. The boundaries of the district can be changed very easily if requested. This is what makes a Forest Reserve Overlay District very different from an easement, which is very difficult to adjust once it has been adopted. Board member Maxwell also thanked Mr. DeLegge and the PC members for the work they have done on this to date. He added that his chief concern regarding Town Forest protection is to make sure that the water supply on Cheney Field is not impeded by any new land use restrictions. Mr. DeLegge said there would be no problem in excluding Cheney Field from the new district. Chair Morse asked if there has been any PC discussion of establishing an overall easement for the Town Forest. Mr. DeLegge said that possibility has not been a part of their recent conversations.

Chair Morse said he has heard some public views expressed by Northfield Farmers Market patrons stating support for establishing easements for the Town Forest that would ban any future development forever. He then added that the Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC) will be meeting tomorrow night and one agenda item focuses on the future of Cheney Field. Chair Morse then thanked Mr. DeLegge for the valuable information provided tonight.

#### IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **July 8, 2025 (Regular Meeting). (8:07 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. Chair Morse requested a minor wording revision. **Motion passed 3-0-1, with Board member Petty abstaining.**
- b. **July 11, 2025 (Special Meeting). (8:09 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. **July 15, 2025 (Special Meeting). (8:10 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Petty, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-1, with Board member Maxwell abstaining.**

#### V. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Approval of Warrant #02-26. (8:12 p.m.)** Prior to the motion for warrant approval, Chair Morse asked that the invoice submitted by Queen City P.I. be removed from the warrant. This would reduce the warrant amount by \$11,889.80. There was no objection. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #02-26 in the amount of \$635,448.91. Board member Stevens noted that the allocation for the Brown Public Library was incorrect. It should be \$11,000 and not \$9,334. Manager Schulz said this would be corrected on the next warrant. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Receipt of Biweekly Payroll through July 6, 2025. (8:20 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to receive the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$117,300.71. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

#### VI. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Board of Listers Appointment. (8:21 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Petty, to appoint Alexandria Najduch to fill the vacancy on the Board of Listers. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Ethics Training Requirements for Municipal Officers. (8:22 p.m.)** Chair Morse said there is a new state requirement that certain municipal officers and board members must complete online ethics training. The deadline for completing the initial training course is September 25, 2025 and he felt those persons affected by this requirement should be contacted by letter to inform them of this. Board member Petty noted that there is a limited number of town officials and board members affected by this requirement. The Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) website has a good list of the municipal officials that fall under this requirement.

#### VII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Main Street Water Line and Cheney Farm Tank Replacement Projects. (8:26 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the water line project is progressing well and remains on schedule. The work on Prospect Street will be starting soon and he will post notices on local social media so residents are kept aware of the work schedule. The old reservoir tanks on Cheney Farm have been removed from the site and the new water tank will be installed in coming weeks.
- b. **Vine Street Sidewalk Project. (8:26 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said this project also remains on schedule for completion by August 1, 2025.
- c. **Property Tax Sale. (8:26 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said there are now about fifteen (15) properties that have accumulated at least two (2) years of delinquent taxes. That makes them subject to tax sale. Manager Schulz will be working with the property owners to see if full or partial payments can be made to keep them out of the tax sale. The tax sale is now scheduled for the end of September 2025.
- d. **Street Sign Replacement (8:26 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said a good number of street signs have been damaged or stolen recently. The missing signs will be replaced as soon as possible. Board member Maxwell said there are traffic sign locks that discourage, if not fully prevent, these types of thefts.

- e. **New Accounting Department Bookkeeper. (8:27 p.m.)** Manager Schulz announced that Kristin Paya has been hired to replace retired bookkeeper Deb O'Grady. Ms. Paya will start work on Monday, August 4, 2025.

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

- a. **Main Street Repaving. (8:29 p.m.)** Board member Maxwell asked how much of Main Street will be repaved after the water line project has been completed. Manager Schulz said the area south of the Main Street Bridge to South Street will be fully repaved. Other areas will be patched and the whole street is scheduled for full repaving in about five (5) years.
- b. **Improved Public Notification. (8:34 p.m.)** Board member Petty believes there needs to be better communication with the public regarding the water line project as to when residents' water source is switched over to a temporary line, etc. Manager Schulz said there have been a few occasions when the contractor didn't inform him before making these switchovers. Board member Petty would like additional social media postings about the project so there are no future surprises.
- c. **VLCT Compensation Study. (8:36 p.m.)** Board member Petty asked if Northfield participates in the annual VLCT compensation study. Manager Schulz said it does and free copies of the completed study are provided to participating municipalities.
- d. **Central Vermont Select Board Member Meeting. (8:38 p.m.)** Board member Petty attended the meeting of Central Vermont Select Board members hosted by VLCT and the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC). There was much information provided and she is glad that Northfield doesn't have the same financial problems as those communities that have suffered significant summer storm damage in recent years.
- e. **Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC). (8:39 p.m.)** Board member Petty noted the VYCC members have done considerable trail work in the Town Forest recently. Town Forest Stewardship Committee (TFSC) Chair Jeremy Whalen said some work still needs to be done on the Garvey Hill trails located near the public schools.
- f. **Clark Road Public Health Problems. (8:40 p.m.)** Board member Stevens asked about the current status of this public health concern. Manager Schulz said the municipality went to the environmental court and the people living in a structure without a septic hookup were required to vacate the property. The structure still remains unoccupied. The property owner was fined \$10,000 for allowing the situation to deteriorate. The funds have not yet been collected so the municipality might have to return to the environmental court for relief.
- g. **Crosswalk Painting. (8:46 p.m.)** Board member Stevens asked when the crosswalk painting would begin. Manager Schulz said the new contractor said it would start next week. He had hired a different contractor in early spring to get the job done sooner but that contractor subsequently went out of business. There will be some crosswalks in the water line project area that will not be repainted at this time.
- h. **Vine Street Pedestrian Bridge. (8:48 p.m.)** Board member Stevens asked about the planned repairs for this footbridge. Manager Schulz said Daniels Construction will be providing an inspection and repair quotes in the next few weeks.
- i. **Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge. (8:49 p.m.)** Chair Morse has heard complaints from residents living on Slaughterhouse Road above the bridge that the maximum weight limit currently listed for the bridge (6,000 lbs.) is too low. Some want to move hay loads across the bridge that would be in excess of the current weight limit. VTrans will be reevaluating the bridge soon and that should eliminate any confusion.

#### **IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).** There was none.

- X. **ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

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

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