

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of November 8, 2022**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Julie H. Goodrich, Charles Morse, Lydia Petty (absent), and John Stevens. Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Donald Doyon, Carolyn Stevens, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

- 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):** None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. October 25, 2022 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-1, with Board member Stevens abstaining.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Approval of Warrant #09-23.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #09-23 in the amount of \$451,464.24. Board member Morse noted that of the total warrant amount, \$228,284.02 represented power purchases for the Northfield Electric Department (NED). Board member Stevens asked about several NED invoices for "reconstruct" work on Jarvis Lane. Manager Schulz said a number of utility poles were replaced on that street after he and Electric Utility Commissioner Steve Fitzhugh reviewed the situation. It usually costs about \$4,000 to replace one utility pole. Board member Morse said the cost has gone up significantly since he was Town Manager twenty (20) years ago. Board member Stevens asked about a \$2,134 payment for "oil pan and filter" work on the Dodge sander. Manager Schulz said there were several issues with this vehicle and he can provide additional information. Board member Stevens is concerned because this truck is only four (4) years old. Board member Goodrich noted payments for "ice rink preparation" and asked if this was related to Jeremy Drown's offer to donate an outdoors ice rink to be situated in Memorial Park. Manager Schulz confirmed it was. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. Approval of Biweekly Payroll through October 30, 2022.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$106,383.03. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. Purchasing Policy Revision.** Manager Schulz noted the Select Board members have reviewed the proposed revision to the municipal purchasing policy during the last three (3) meetings. It seemed to him the Select Board members were comfortable with the draft wording at the last meeting so he forwarded it to an attorney for legal review. Only minor changes were made as a result. The current draft now has a signature page should the Select Board members choose to approve it tonight. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the revised purchasing policy for the Town of Northfield. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) Abatements.** Manager Schulz said the Select Board members are being asked to abate uncollectable NAS bills that total \$96,483. They were generated mostly over a four (4) year period (2017-2020) although there is one bill dating back to 2015. A collection agency was engaged to pursue payment but was unsuccessful since many of those involved are deceased or have otherwise demonstrated their inability to pay. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the provided list of ambulance abatements. Chair Maxwell asked if this is a budgeted expense. Manager Schulz confirmed the municipality budgets about \$29,000 annually for this. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- c. **Deputy Health Officer Appointment.** Manager Schulz said this position became vacant recently and Zoning Administrator Mitch Osiecki has indicated his willingness to serve. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Morse, to appoint Mitch Osiecki as Deputy Health Officer. Board member Stevens asked if this will result in added expense to the municipality. Manager Schulz said it was possible as Mr. Osiecki is paid an hourly wage. However, Manager Schulz does expect Health Officer Lawton Rutter, who as NAS Chief is a salaried employee, will continue to provide the bulk of work on health officer matters. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- d. **Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC) Appointment.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to appoint Mariela Swiech to fill the vacant NCC position. Ms. Swiech currently is a freshman at Northfield Middle/High School and has been involved with environmental advocacy for several years. Board member Morse has known Ms. Swiech for some time and he confirmed that she truly is an exceptional young person. He hopes other Northfield youngsters will follow her example and get involved in local government. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VIII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **South Main Street Stormwater/CSO Elimination Project.** Manager Schulz said the project contractor has made good progress in recent weeks and the work on South Main Street should be completed in a few days. There will be some minor cleanup afterwards and the repaving of the street has been scheduled for the week of November 21, 2022. The sections of sidewalk that have been affected also will be restored.
- b. **Main Street Bridge Replacement Project.** Manager Schulz and Mr. Fitzhugh have been working with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) regarding the relocation of utility lines near the construction site. Most will be buried underground and Manager Schulz will provide the proposed plan to the Select Board members at their next meeting. VTrans representatives also will be available at that meeting to present preliminary bridge replacement plans. This will include a discussion of the proposed location and style of new lighting fixtures. Board member Morse hopes TDS Telecom and Trans-Video representatives were included in the utility line relocation discussions with VTrans as they will be directly affected. Manager Schulz confirmed they were. He added that most of the cost will become part of the overall project budget and that they are on board with the process. Board member Goodrich asked if there would be written agreement covering utility relocation. Manager Schulz confirmed that there would.
- c. **FEMA Buyout Process (310 Water Street).** Manager Schulz said the Select Board members agreed last year to support the application of a Northfield resident (Matthew Gadbois) to participate in the FEMA buyout program for his property located at 310 Water Street, which now hosts a laundromat and apartments. It was through this program that several riverside homes damaged by Tropical Storm Irene were purchased and later razed. The structure in question is located in a flood plain and this has resulted in higher than supportable flood insurance costs. The submitted application has been approved by the State of Vermont and has been forwarded to FEMA for its approval, which is a virtual certainty. Manager Schulz noted that even with this approval, it probably will be at least another year before the structure is razed. There usually is a ten percent (10%) local match amount for these buyouts but in this case the State of Vermont is covering the full amount. Board member Morse noted since this property will be removed from the Grand List, there would be some lost municipal revenue. He then asked if there would be relocation assistance for the building's tenants. Manager Schulz said the tenants would receive about \$5,000 each in housing support.
- d. **Northfield Housing Task Force.** Manager Schulz said this group held its first meeting last Friday (11/04/22) during which many organizational concerns were discussed such as approval of a mission statement. Their next meeting will be held on Friday, December 9, 2022. Board member Stevens asked if this group is a Select Board subcommittee. Manager Schulz confirmed it is an advisory board that is answerable to the Select Board. The expectation is that the current group will serve for the next two (2) years.

- e. **Winter Parking Ban.** Manager Schulz noted the local winter parking ban will start on Tuesday, November 15, 2022 and will conclude on Saturday, April 15, 2023. During this timeframe, parking is prohibited on Northfield streets or roads between the hours of 12:00 midnight and 6:00 a.m.
- f. **Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection.** Manager Schulz said Mountain Alliance and Casella Waste Management will be holding the second of two (2) collection events this year behind the Northfield Fire Station (128 Wall Street) on Saturday, November 12, 2022, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This event is for residents of Randolph, Braintree, Brookfield, Roxbury, and Northfield. The full list of materials that will and will not be accepted is on the municipal website and has been posted on Front Porch Forum. Chair Maxwell was in Montpelier recently when a HHW collection event was held there and he was surprised by the amount of backed-up traffic. He hopes Northfield residents will take advantage of this event to properly dispose of such items.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **United States Marine Corps (USMC) Anniversary.** Board member Morse noted this coming Thursday (11/10/22) will be the 247th anniversary of the establishment of the USMC by the Second Continental Congress in 1775. Semper Fi!
- b. **Select Board Regular Meeting Cancellation.** Board member Goodrich asked if there would be any objection to cancelling the next regular meeting (11/22/22) since it falls during the week of the Thanksgiving holiday. There was no objection but it was noted the Select Board members first should authorize Chair Maxwell to review and approve future payroll and operating expenses through that date in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §961(b)]. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to provide Chair Maxwell with this authorization. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. **Halloween Night "Trunk or Treat."** Chair Maxwell wanted to thank the Northfield Activities Group (NAG) for organizing this year's Halloween night candy distribution on the Common. He also thanked the residents who purchased and handed out candy to the trick-or-treaters that night. Chair Maxwell dropped by during the event and was surprised by how many children were taking part in the festivities.
- d. **Recognition of Mark Podgwaite, Sr.** Chair Maxwell noted the recent passing of Mark Podgwaite Sr. who was a longtime Northfield resident and NAS member. He also served as Northfield Health Officer for several years. Most recently Mr. Podgwaite was the Executive Director of the Waterbury Ambulance Service. This past Sunday (11/06/22), his funeral service was held at Norwich University's Plumley Armory and was preceded by a procession of emergency service vehicles that started in Waterbury, Vermont.
- e. **Highway Department Crew Appreciation.** Chair Maxwell wanted to commend the employees of the Northfield Highway Department for their excellent work recently in preparing our roads for the onset of winter.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED). There was none.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)], in order to discuss a contract negotiation and a personnel issue with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 7:45 p.m.

Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 8:50 p.m. No action was taken.

XII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, 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

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

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