

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of August 26, 2025**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Charles Morse, Board members K. David Maxwell, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Mitch Osiecki (E-911 Coordinator/Zoning Administrator), Pierre Gomez (Northfield Police Chief), Michael J. Leddy (McNeil, Leddy & Sheahan PC), Jeremy Whalen (Conservation Commission), Janan Hamm (Northfield Community Development Network), Lorna Doney, David R. Black, Gerard LaVarnway, Nancy LaVarnway, Ryan Libbey, Kristina Kiarsis, DeLane McIlvene, Susan Stillinger, Kristina Ward, Carolyn Stevens, Katie Whitney, Chris Bradley, Donald Doyon, and Elroy C. Hill.

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

- II. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** As Mr. Osiecki was a little late for his presentation, approval of minutes was moved up in the agenda.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. August 12, 2025 (Regular Meeting). (7:01 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. Board member Maxwell wanted it clarified in the minutes that the Main Street Bridge Replacement Project budget will pay for most but not all of the Northfield utility upgrades related to the project. Board member Petty also found a typo in the minutes that will be corrected.
Motion passed 5-0-0.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. Mitch Osiecki, E-911 Coordinator: E-911 Address Corrections. (7:03 p.m.)**
Mr. Osiecki has a few E-911 address corrections that require Select Board approval to resolve. The first one involves Davis Avenue in Northfield Falls that in some maps appears erroneously to connect to Doyon Road. There is a separation between the two roads and Mr. Osiecki would like to perform additional research to determine whether the gap is a Class 4 Road, a legal ancient path, etc. Chair Morse would like the deed for the final residence on the paved section of Davis Avenue reviewed. Board member Petty remembers that this issue arose when the Northfield Ridge + River Master Plan was being developed. There was no resolution at that time but Board member Petty thought it might be useful to have a public path that connects Northfield Falls and the Falls Park southward to the downtown area, Memorial Park, etc. Chair Morse asked Mr. Osiecki to research this matter further and report back to the Select Board members. The second problem road is Jarvis Lane, which is bisected by Washington Street. The houses on the road are numbered from 3 to 304 starting with the southernmost structure. The normal practice in such cases would be to divide the road into South Jarvis Lane and North Jarvis Lane and number outward from the intersection. Should the Select Board members favor moving forward with this, Mr. Osiecki will start contacting Jarvis Lane residents in anticipation of holding the public hearing that is necessary before the public street can be renamed. The Select Board consensus was to move forward on this. Chair Morse suggested putting up a temporary sign at the Jarvis Lane/Washington Street intersection indicating the current Jarvis Lane street addresses on either side.

Other problems Mr. Osiecki brought up involved naming or renaming a number of private roads, which the Select Board members can authorize without holding a public hearing. Mr. Osiecki said the private road leading into the Northfield Falls Trailer Park is unnamed. The property owner has proposed naming the road "Falls Park Road" and he is willing to pay for the new street sign. In addition, Trent Tucker lives on a driveway with three (3) addresses and E-911 standards require that this become a named private road. Mr. Tucker would like the road named "Finn Lane" and he also will pay for the new sign. Mr. Osiecki then noted private road Fairway Drive appears on some maps as Fairway Road. He would like it confirmed that it was always the municipality's intention to name this road Fairway Drive and he has the authorization to inform the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the United States Postal Service (USPS) of this fact.

In addition, there is an unnamed driveway near the beginning of Vermont Route 12A that provides access to a number of apartment buildings. The property owner, David Fernandez, would like the road named "Northfield Apts Road" but Mr. Osiecki said VTrans did not approve this name so some additional discussion might be needed. Finally, there are two (2) roads off Fairground Road, i.e. KT and Expansion, that are indicated on maps as "KT Drive," "KT Lane," "Expansion Drive," and "Expansion Lane." As the current property owners (Randall and Terry Gray) prefer the "Lane" designation, Mr. Osiecki asked for Select Board authorization to clarify this with various agencies. Chair Morse thought the correct action for tonight was for the Select Board members to authorize the private road name changes requested by the property owners while further research is done on other the matters. Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to authorize (or reaffirm) the following private road names: Falls Park Road, Finn Lane, Fairway Drive, KT Lane, and Expansion Lane. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

V. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Approval of Warrant #04-26 & #04-26A-D. (7:21 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #04-26 & #04-26A-D in the amount of \$822,123.72. Board member Maxwell noted well over \$20,000 in vehicle repair costs on this warrant and asked why this is happening now. Manager Schulz said the two (2) Dodge trucks are having a number of problems along with some of the other older vehicles. The Dodge trucks are due for replacement in the next fiscal year. Board member Stevens suggested not buying Dodge trucks in future given the amount of trouble they've given us recently. Board member Maxwell then asked if a \$22,931 payment for Wall Street Pedestrian Improvements would be reimbursed by state grant funds. Manager Schulz confirmed that they would be. Board member Petty then asked about a \$3,885 payment to fix the Brown Public Library's roof condenser. Manager Schulz said this unit did require urgent repairs. Board member Petty felt it might be useful to conduct a full study of the building's heating and cooling systems. Board member Stevens, who also serves on the BPL Board of Trustees, agrees that would be a good idea. Chair Morse then asked about an "Ice Making Kit" that was purchased from Kenyon's Hardware for \$17.99 for the "Prospect Street-Water Project." Manager Schulz will look into this purchase and report back. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Receipt of Biweekly Payroll through August 17, 2025. (7:30 p.m.)** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to receive the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$123,684.83. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VI. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Corrective Action regarding Open Meeting Law Complaint. (7:32 p.m.)** Board member Petty had filed a complaint regarding the Highway Planning & Project Oversight Subcommittee meeting that was held on Friday, August 1, 2025. A quorum of Select Board members was present at that meeting and the following action was taken: "Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Shernock, to authorize Manager Schulz to reach an agreement with Vermont Heavy Timber to perform emergency stabilization work on the Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge at an estimated cost of \$142,000. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**" Board member Petty felt such binding action should have taken place at a properly warned Special Select Board Meeting and not at a subcommittee meeting. Subcommittee meetings usually are only intended to research and discuss matters at some length and perhaps provide recommendations for Select Board action at a later time at a properly warned meeting. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to reopen the discussion of the Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge situation. **Motion passed 5-0-0.** Board member Maxwell noted that since the contract with Vermont Heavy Timber has already been finalized, any revote on this matter would be symbolic only. Chair Morse said the meeting itself and the vote taken were the result of an emergency situation when the bridge's maximum weight limit was severely reduced by VTrans. After other options were discussed at the subcommittee meeting, the Select Board members present voted to authorize the work contract with Vermont Heavy Timber.

Board member Petty said her concern is not how Select Board members responded to a possible emergency situation but rather that the Open Meeting Law was not followed when a public meeting was warned. There is no reason a Special Select Board meeting, which requires twenty-four (24) hour notice, could not have been warned in this situation. Board member Petty also noted that the meeting focused on short-term solutions so a full discussion of how to address the bridge's long-term problems still needs to be held at a future meeting. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to ratify the action taken at the August 1, 2025 Highway Planning & Project Oversight Subcommittee meeting authorizing Manager Schulz to reach an agreement with Vermont Heavy Timber to perform emergency stabilization work on the Slaughterhouse Road Covered Bridge at an estimated cost of \$142,000. **Motion passed 3-1-1, with Board member Petty voting in opposition and Board member Maxwell abstaining.**

- b. **Water & Sidewalk Project Change Orders. (7:50 p.m.)** This item is on the agenda at Chair Morse's request in order to explain the process through which change orders are requested and approved during major construction projects. As to the projects now underway, Manager Schulz said the sidewalk project on Vine Street has seen only two (2) change orders and they were of a very minor nature. The Main Street Waterline Replacement Project has seen a good number of change orders and the Town Manager is authorized to approve them provided the increased cost of the project remains below the bond amount approved by voters. One change order involved the removal of concrete from under the road and others were due to revisions in the project work schedule. One upcoming change order will be for the repaving of Main Street after the project has been completed. Chair Morse said change orders are common with major construction projects as the need for additional work is often discovered after the ground is broken. Most are unavoidable but some can be linked to human error on the part of the project engineer, construction contractor, etc. Chair Morse would like copies of all the change orders from both current projects in the next meeting packets. Manager Schulz noted that the state engineer also has to approve all the change orders so it is not just his decision. Board member Maxwell felt the Select Board members should have been able to discern from early stages of the Main Street Waterline Replacement Project that the whole street was not going to be repaved at the conclusion of the project. Manager Schulz will be providing copies of the change orders as requested.
- c. **Planning Commission Appointment. (7:59 p.m.)** There had been at least one (1) vacant position on the Planning Commission (PC) for some time but Turkey Hill resident Doug Shiok recently submitted a letter of interest. Mr. Shiok attended the last PC meeting (08/05/25) and his appointment was subsequently endorsed by Planning Commission Chair Royal DeLegge and the other PC members. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to appoint Doug Shiok to the Planning Commission. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **Grand List Errors & Omissions. (8:00 p.m.)** Board of Listers Chair Thomas Alsheimer has requested that the Grand List total amount be reduced by \$5,900 as the size of one parcel had not been corrected after a recent survey. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve changing the value of a property from \$349,800 to \$343,900 due to a property lot size adjustment. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- e. **"Declaration of Inclusion" Implementation Survey.** Board member Shernock had asked that this matter be put on the agenda. On behalf of the Town of Northfield, the Select Board members did approve a Declaration of Inclusion at their regular meeting of December 13, 2022 with the following wording: "The Town of Northfield, Vermont condemns racism and welcomes all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, age, disability, or socioeconomic status, and wants everyone to feel safe and welcome in our community. As a town, we formally condemn all discrimination in all of its forms, commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community, and will strive to ensure all of our actions, policies, and operating procedures reflect this commitment. The Town of Northfield, Vermont has and will continue to be a place where individuals can live freely and express their opinions."

Earlier this year, the five-member Rutland-based group behind this initiative sent online surveys to the first one hundred Vermont communities to approve the Declaration of Inclusion asking how it had been implemented in their community. Fifty communities responded to the survey by February 2025 and the results can be found at the website: <https://vtdeclarationofinclusion.org>. Northfield was not one of the respondents. The survey had nine (9) questions: 1. We have posted the *Declaration* on the town website; 2. We display a copy of the *Declaration* in our municipal offices; 3. We have explained to the community the reasons why our town leadership adopted the *Declaration*; 4. We have formed an inclusive committee to review the town's official policies, programs, ordinances, etc. for implicit or institutional bias; 5. Our inclusion committee has recommended appropriate changes to correct any evidence of bias identified in the review of official town policies, programs, ordinances, etc.; 6. We have engaged to work with our school board to encourage inclusive practices; 7. We have engaged in work with our community's faith leaders to encourage inclusive practices; 8. We have engaged in work with our fire department to encourage inclusive practices; and 9. We have engaged in work with our police department to encourage inclusive practices.

The Select Board members believe some but not all of these initiatives have been done here in Northfield either directly (i.e. municipal website and Municipal Building postings) or in an indirect manner. Board member Shernock believes the next step to ensure all the initiatives are achieved would be to form the inclusive committee suggested in the survey. Board member Petty asked if this would be a new Select Board subcommittee or whether members of the public would be invited to take part as well. She added that even without this committee, the Select Board members have made efforts to revise municipal policies and hiring practices in order to make them more inclusive. Board member Maxwell would like this matter on the next regular meeting agenda so the Select Board members can discuss and determine the format of the new committee, its membership, etc. Board member Stevens agreed that a framework needed to be established for the proper formation of any new committee.

VII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Main Street Bridge Replacement Project update. (8:15 p.m.)** Manager Schulz received an email from VTrans Project Manager Gary Laroche last Thursday (08/21/25) confirming that this project will be delayed until 2027. The current plan is to advertise the project RFP early next year so that there will be no construction delays in the spring of 2027.
- b. **Main Street Waterline Replacement & Water Tank Project. (8:17 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the waterline replacement project has shifted its focus from Prospect Street back to South Main Street. There will be some street and sidewalk repairs done before the Labor Day holiday weekend and parade but otherwise the waterline project remains on schedule. As for the water tank replacement project on Cheney Field, the tank installation is now about three (3) weeks behind schedule. It might become necessary to delay the worksite restoration until next spring.
- c. **310 Water Street FEMA Buyout Property. (8:22 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said the asbestos inspector is now on site and the removal of any found asbestos will take place over the next week. After that has been completed, the building razing will be scheduled before the end of September.
- d. **Lovers Lane Road Improvements. (8:23 p.m.)** Manager Schulz said state grant funds now are being used to upgrade the road. This includes the installation of new guardrails.
- e. **Vine Street Sidewalk Replacement Project. (8:24 p.m.)** Manager Schulz met with the project contractor to perform a worksite walkthrough. They were both very pleased with the work done and only minor cleanups need to be done before the project is considered completed. Manager Schulz said this will prove to be a real improvement for students walking to the local schools.

VIII. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **South Main Street Sidewalk Restoration. (8:25 p.m.)** Board member Maxwell asked if the sidewalks on the west side of South Main Street will be restored before wintertime. Manager Schulz said repair work would be done to replace the sections that had been damaged so that there is a safe and level walking surface for pedestrians.
- b. **Pearl Street Retaining Wall. (8:26 p.m.)** Board member Maxwell asked for an update on the status of this retaining wall located at the School Street intersection, which is in poor condition. Manager Schulz is working with engineers on designing repairs. There are funds in the municipal budget for fixing this and other retaining walls even though much of the focus to date has been on the Elm Street retaining wall.
- c. **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Workgroup update. (8:28 p.m.)** Board member Petty has been attending the meetings of the workgroup led by the Geoffrey Ferrell Associates consultant team that drafted the "Northfield Vision Plan" earlier this year. However, she will not be able to attend these meetings in future and hopes another Select Board member will be able to step in. Manager Schulz said the process seems to be winding down at this point. Board member Petty thought the consulting group might be able to send updates to all the Select Board members in future.
- d. **Vine Street Sidewalk Replacement Project. (8:28 p.m.)** Board member Petty noted one crosswalk there that was planned for removal has been repainted instead. Manager Schulz said there was a miscommunication between the sidewalk contractor and the street painting contractor. The crosswalk paint will be removed.
- e. **Main Street Bridge Replacement Project (8:29 p.m.)** Board member Petty noted repairs to the bridge's sidewalks had been delayed in recent years due to its upcoming replacement. However, since this project has been delayed for another year, perhaps some repairs should be done in the interim. Board member Maxwell agreed and felt it best that steel plates should be installed. Manager Schulz said some minor fixes have been done over the past couple of years when holes developed in the sidewalk concrete.
- f. **Northfield Falls Crosswalk Painting. (8:30 p.m.)** Board member Stevens noted this crosswalk was finally painted. He was concerned no flaggers were on hand during the painting, which raised some safety concerns. Manager Schulz said he has been advising the street painting contractor about the importance of proper traffic control but sometimes they are short-staffed and don't have flaggers on a particular day.
- g. **Vine Street Pedestrian Bridge Update (8:31 p.m.)** Board member Stevens asked about the status of the needed repairs to this bridge. Manager Schulz said quotes from Daniels Construction are now being obtained.
- h. **Cheney Field Proposed Parking Area. (8:32 p.m.)** Board member Shernock said a public meeting was held last night to discuss whether a parking area should be established on Cheney Field after the water tank replacement project has been completed. The alternative is to restore the site back to its pre-construction condition. Board member Shernock said this was a positive meeting despite this being a potentially contentious matter. The next public discussion on this topic will be held at the beginning of tomorrow night's Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC) regular meeting (08/27/25). A third meeting dedicated to this subject will be scheduled after the Labor Day holiday weekend.
- i. **"Night on the Common" Invitation. (8:34 p.m.)** Board member Shernock wanted to invite the public and her fellow Select Board members to this annual celebration of local volunteer community groups on Tuesday, September 23, 2025. The Community Photo will be taken at 5:30 p.m.
- j. **Select Board Group Email Address. (8:35 p.m.)** Board member Shernock said the group email address for the Select Board members (Selectboard@northfield.vt.us) is not working properly at this time. Until it can be fixed, the individual email addresses for the Select Board members should be used instead, i.e. cmorse@northfield.vt.us; mshernock@northfield.vt.us; dmaxwell@northfield.vt.us; lpetty@northfield.vt.us; and jstevens@northfield.vt.us.

- k. **Labor Day Holiday Weekend update (8:38 p.m.)** Chair Morse said the condition of Dole Hill Road needs to be addressed soon as many people will be using this road as a detour route over the holiday weekend with the temporary closure of Depot Square. Also, some downtown streets are in poor condition due to the ongoing construction projects so both motorists and pedestrians will need show extra caution. Manager Schulz has been disappointed with the delays in patching the worst parts of Main Street in anticipation of the holiday weekend.

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Gerard LaVarnway: Cheney Field Proposed Parking update (8:40 p.m.)**
Mr. LaVarnway sent a letter to the Select Board members in which he restated his opposition to establishing a permanent parking area on Cheney Field. He noted that at the last regular meeting (08/12/25), Board member Stevens, a professional engineer, stated his concern that the access road created for the water tank replacement project is too narrow to provide safe future access to a new parking area. Mr. LaVarnway also noted that there are two (2) municipal committees devoted to protecting the Town Forest (the Northfield Conservation Commission and the Town Forest Stewardship Committee) and they have already stated their opposition to a Cheney Farm parking area. In addition, establishing a parking area and access road on Cheney Farm might result in stormwater runoff problems for nearby residents. For these and other reasons, Mr. LaVarnway hopes the Select Board members will adhere to the original plan and have Cheney Field restored to its original condition upon the project's completion.
- b. **Janan Hamm, Northfield Community Development Network: Night on the Common. (8:43 p.m.)** Ms. Hamm wanted to extend NCDN's invitation to the Select Board members to attend the annual "Night on the Common" on Tuesday, September 23, 2025. This event is held in conjunction with the weekly Northfield Farmers Market starting at 3:00 p.m. and the evening's activities should be wrapped up by 7:00 p.m. The Community Photograph will be taken from the Fire Department's ladder truck at 5:30 p.m. There will be live music provided and NCDN will be holding a raffle. Ms. Hamm then requested that the municipality provide traffic control with Depot Square closed to through traffic during the event.
- c. **Elroy C. Hill: Slaughterhouse Covered Bridge Repairs. (8:50 p.m.)** Mr. Hill would prefer that the municipality carefully consider the proposal from Daniels Construction to provide long-term repairs to this bridge rather than continue to focus on temporary repairs that might cost more in the long run.

- X. **EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Petty, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1)], in order to discuss a legal matter, a personnel issue, and a contract negotiation with Manager Schulz and Town Attorney Michael Leddy present for some but not all of the discussion. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:55 p.m.

Manager Schulz left the executive session at 9:05 p.m.

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

The Board came out of executive session at 12:43 a.m. No action was taken.

- XI. **ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Stevens, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 12:43 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

A video recording of this meeting is available at: <https://youtu.be/3Jbk546q2IU>

These minutes were revised and approved at the Select Board regular meeting of September 9, 2025.