

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
HIGHWAY PLANNING &
PROJECT OVERSIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE
Minutes of November 19, 2025**

SITE VISIT: RE Tucker Sand Pit, Vermont Route 12A:

The site visit was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

Roll Call was Ron Tucker, Sherrie Tucker, Trent Tucker, Select Board Chair Charles Morse Board member John Stevens, Manager Jeff Schulz (1:20 p.m.), and canines Max and Molly Tucker.

Trent Tucker had a backhoe and opened a test pit exposing material at depth. Ron and Sherrie Tucker explained that the approach to the railroad crossing was recently updated by the railroad. No electronic crossing is needed should the municipality take ownership. Commercial ownership would require an electronic warning as the activity would be year round. The municipality would not be accessing the property year round as a commercial endeavor would. The property is 21.2 acres with railroad tracks approximately 500 feet from the river. The 14.5 acres on the south side of the RR Crossing has been partially harvested but not materially to the discussion. The flora of the property is largely hardwoods that could be a source for firewood, The State will be asked to inspect the bridge that accesses this property. Standing at the test hole level with the RR crossing everything goes up from the RR crossing and for that matter the river. There is a moveable 50' wide unrestricted easement that is variable in its location while material extraction is taking place. The access must be maintained but is moveable the final location mutually agreeable" Discussion of the soil make up was detailed and the terms exceeded my layman's vocabulary. An acre is 48,402 yards, an excavation of ten feet would yield nearly 15,000 yards of winter sand after bony material was incorporated into the mix. Northfield budgets for 5,000 yards annually. Manufactured sand is expensive and does not have the same quality as natural sand. Screening the material was discussed, To screen 5,000 yards would take considerable time, the cull would have no value for municipal purposes and would need to find a home. The test results indicate the material is bony. Crushing the material to 3/4" minus would eliminate the cull mixing with natural sand for ideal winter road maintenance. Initially, the material would have to be loaded and hauled to the falls and crushed there until an area large enough for a crushing operation could be developed onsite. Estimated time for that to develop is two years.

The site visit ended and the subcommittee meeting was recessed at 1:29 p.m. Leaving the Tuckers at the Pit, Manager Schulz, Board member Stevens, and Chair Morse returned to the Municipal Building for the regular meeting portion of the subcommittee meeting. Photographs taken during the site visit are attached to these minutes.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles L. Morse

Charles L. Morse, Acting Clerk

REGULAR MEETING: Municipal Building, 51 South Main Street

I. ROLL CALL. Chair Charles Morse and Select Board member John Stevens. Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Karl Bailey (Highway Foreman), Chris Bradley, and William Harrison.

Chair Morse called the subcommittee meeting back to order at 2:05 p.m.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled):

a. William Harrison: Stagecoach Road Problems. Mr. Harrison said that Stagecoach Road seems to have had its own particular set of problems in recent years. For example, there is a large hole at the bottom of the road that was repaired once but the temporary filling seems to have lasted only about a week. In addition, Mr. Harrison has lived on Stagecoach Road over about thirty-eight (38) years. It seems to him that the residents have put their leaves by the side of the road for collection each autumn but they aren't picked up by the Highway crew before the service is shut down due to the "first snowfall." That is what happened this year with the leave collection ending about a week early due to a predicted heavy snowstorm that never really materialized. Mr. Harrison understands that the leaf picker truck was converted for snow removal the middle of last week. Chair Morse noted that there was some heavy snow that had to be moved on the backroads at higher elevations this past weekend. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Highway crew would remove the collected leaves on Stagecoach Road using shovels and a loader truck. This will be the last leaf removal this year as Mr. Bailey said the line had to be drawn somewhere. He added that he plans to have a spare truck on hand next autumn so there will be less of a rush to convert equipment for snow removal, etc.

III. DISCUSSION

a. FY 2026-2027 Highway Projects. Chair Morse noted that the two (2) Western Star trucks that were purchased for the next fiscal year will not be delivered until next autumn. In the interim, Mr. Bailey was able to locate a used truck that was purchased from the Town of Colchester for \$56,000. We should get some real benefits from this truck while it is in service. Chair Morse then noted that this fiscal year Kirkpatrick Lane, Moody Lane, Spring Street, and Main Street were paved by the municipality. He asked which streets are planned for repaving next year. Mr. Bailey said the tentative list was Gillespie Road, Robinson Road, and Old Mill Hill. Manager Schulz said the length of planned paving for next year is a little less than was done this past year. Board member Stevens said there also needs to be some repaving done north of the Main Street Bridge. Manager Schulz said the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) is planning to repave this area by 2029 but we may need to do some of our own repaving beforehand due to the road surface damage caused by the water project. The project contractor will provide a temporary patch before winter sets in but there should be more permanent work done next spring.

Mr. Bradley noted that there are no RSMS reports provided for this meeting, which was called for a discussion on 26-27 Highway Projects. He referred to Minutes of the Select Board meeting of March 21, 2024 (page 4, 1st paragraph), where a citizen asked "...if there is a municipal plan for scheduled road maintenance or if we just wait and see what problems show up each summer." In response to that question, the Manager said "...there is the RSMS (Road Surface Management System) program that is used to track road conditions throughout the community. This program is used to plan and budget for road maintenance on a regular basis".

Mr. Bradley then stated that he felt RSMS was a "joke." He stated that when he was a Selectman, he took a copy of RSMS home and tried to work with it (Mr. Bradley is a Computer Systems Engineer) but was not impressed. Firstly, RSMS is geared towards monitoring pavement, not dirt roads – which Northfield has approximately 80 miles of. Further than that, to be useful at all: It needs to be updated regularly as work is done on our roads – but those updates have not been occurring. He believes that Northfield should not be telling its citizens that RSMS is a useful planning tool. It isn't, and the fact that no RSMS reports were provided or even promised attests to that fact.

Mr. Bradley said that the Road Surface Management System (RSMS) should be updated frequently in order to show which paved and unpaved roads should be prioritized for road work in the next fiscal year. Manager Schulz said he has been working on an RSMS update but added that this program is more of an inventory than a set plan for future road work. The program does show which roads have been addressed recently, how much was spent in the process, etc. Mr. Bradley would like to see a long-term road maintenance plan developed rather than waiting to see which road begins to deteriorate first. Chair Morse asked how the Highway Department keeps track of road conditions. Manager Schulz said the Highway crew keep logs that track how much work in time and material has been devoted to a certain road. Those work logs are later converted into full reports. Mr. Bradley asked if it was possible to hire roadwork subcontractors to help with specific road projects. Mr. Bailey said that has been done recently with the work on Lovers Lane. The Highway crew is short-staffed and Mr. Bailey wanted them to keep focused on routine road maintenance this past summer. He agreed that outsourcing certain special projects can be worthwhile. Mr. Bradley said that the Highway Subcommittee should be able to help with determining when such outsourcing should be considered. Mr. Bailey said he does keep track of all employee hours and material used for specific roadwork projects, such as the resurfacing of Turkey Hill Road this past year. He added that sometimes a backroad has to be moved up on the priority list should serious problems are found during drive through inspections. This happened on Bear Farm Road this past year when stormwater runoff damage had to be addressed.

Mr. Bradley asked if there was an inventory kept of the backroad culverts. Manager Schulz said the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) did provide an updated inventory recently. This includes the age of the culvert, its condition, etc. Chair Morse noted that this database is available online at www.vtculverts.org. He added that we know there will be another Mud Season next spring but we have no way of knowing how bad it will be. Manager Schulz said the resurfacing of the backroads over the past four (4) years has really helped to alleviate Mud Season problems. He also received state grant money for stormwater mitigation that was used to purchase and install new culverts along certain backroads, etc. Chair Morse asked if we have looked into paving Lovers Lane from end to end. Manager Schulz said this hasn't been a recent conversation but as it does serve as a connector road between two state highways VTrans might be interested in taking over its future maintenance if it was paved.

Mr. Bailey said the municipality would need to first perform some road upgrades before the paving. Manager Schulz said that even with all the subbase work done recently, it probably would cost about \$600,000 to pave all of Lovers Lane. Mr. Bailey then noted that there are some bridges on the backroads that need some minor repairs. This includes a couple of bridges on Chamberlin Road and one on Monti Road. He added that considerable work was done on Hockman Hill Road this past summer but there still is a little work to be completed on the road that will be done next spring. After reviewing a list of projects that had been done so far this fiscal year (25-26), Mr. Bradley asked about what work would be done for the remainder of this fiscal year. He then asked when we will address the drainage issue at Slaughterhouse Bridge which forced Northfield to pay approximately \$250,000 to repair. Manager Schulz would like VTrans to reinspect the bridge as soon as possible and whatever repairs they recommend should be a budget priority. Chair Morse said if VTrans can't do this in a timely manner, we should hire our own engineer and contractor for the project. Board member Stevens recommended using some used conveyor belts to help shore up the bridge floor. Theye would be flexible enough to handle the plows going over them, etc.

Mr. Bradley feels a list should be developed for the major highway projects anticipated for the next two (2) fiscal years. Manager Schulz can draft such a list. Chair Morse said we also need to determine the ownership of the Rabbit Hollow Bridge, i.e. state, town, or railroad, before moving forward with the needed bridge repairs. Manager Schulz said a couple of years ago VTrans developed a program for the rehabilitation of historic bridges and included four (4) Northfield bridges in the program. These were Rabbit Hollow Bridge and the three (3) covered bridges on Cox Brook Road. The program was to have estate funds pay for all the bridge repairs but Manager Schulz was subsequently informed that the funds that had been allocated for this program had been spent elsewhere. VTrans now says that the funding may become available in the future but this might not be until at least 2029.

Mr. Bradley hopes that another Highway Subcommittee meeting will be held in the near future and preferably in the evening hours so more Northfield residents would be able to attend. Chair Morse said this meeting was held in conjunction with a daytime site visit and that was why it was held mid-afternoon. As for the timing of the next Highway Subcommittee meeting, Chair Morse said the Highway Department will be discussed in full when the budget meetings for the FY 2026-2027 Town Budget are held. These budget meetings are held at night and will be widely advertised beforehand.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled). There was none.

V. ADJOURNMENT. Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk