

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of August 22, 2023**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Charles Morse, Lydia Petty (absent), Merry Shernock, and John Stevens (absent). Also present were Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Nicole DiDomenico (Norwich University), and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 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. August 8, 2023 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve the minutes. One correction: during the discussion of the Labor Day Weekend Festivities, the Select Board members decided that "No Dogs" signs would not be posted on the Common this year. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Approval of Warrant #04-24.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve Warrant #04-24 in the amount of \$375,045.27. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- b. Approval of Biweekly Payroll through August 6, 2023.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$108,678.97. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. Approval of Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update.** Manager Schulz said the municipality, using grant funds, hired a consultant (Paul Luciano, OPH Consulting Services) to update its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. This plan has to be updated every five (5) years so that Northfield will remain eligible for state and federal natural and man-made disaster recovery funds, etc. Suggestions made by Select Board members at previous meetings have been incorporated into the updated version, which already has been approved by Vermont Emergency Management (VEM). If approved tonight by the Select Board members, the document next will be forwarded to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the final stamp of approval. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Morse, to approve the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Upgrade. As two (2) Select Board members are absent tonight, Chair Maxwell asked if there is an urgent deadline to approve this document. Manager Schulz said there was not. Board member Morse said he values the content of this document but felt approval should be delayed until its misspellings, punctuation errors, etc. can be corrected. In addition, Board member Morse feels that since this is now a merged community, any references to South Northfield, Northfield Center, and Northfield Village should be removed. He then noted that this document was sent to neighboring communities for comment but no feedback was received. Manager Schulz said local planning documents are routinely sent out to neighboring communities in order to comply with state regulations but actual responses back are rare.

Board member Morse felt it was unfortunate that such a poorly written document could be associated with Northfield in future. Board member Morse then asked how much was spent producing this document. Manager Schulz said the total cost was \$8,700 and grant funds covered about ninety-seven percent (97%) of this. Board member Morse would like this document to be proofread again and any identifiable errors corrected. There is much good information in this document but this is marred by the aforementioned problems. Board member Morse looks forward to seeing the next version of this document when it is re-presented for approval. Without objection, the motion to approve the plan was tabled until the next regular meeting.

- b. Labor Day Weekend Pedestrian Safety update.** Manager Schulz reported he met recently with Northfield Observances, which is the committee that organizes and oversees the annual Labor Day Weekend Festivities. There had been concerns expressed by a Northfield Observances representative at the Select Board's last regular meeting (08/08/23) that since Norwich University (NU) cadets would be unable this year to provide traffic control over the holiday weekend, it might be necessary to block off part of South Main Street to traffic during that timeframe in the interest of pedestrian safety. At that time, the Select Board members did not approve that request due to concerns about the impact on the businesses in that area, etc. Manager Schulz said there was agreement at the Northfield Observances meeting to withdraw this request and seek other options. Manager Schulz said one action taken was to rent a message board to be sited at the intersection of Central Street and South Main Street to inform drivers of the need to slow down whenever pedestrians are present. Nicole DiDomenico is Director of NU's Center for Civic Engagement, which oversees all student volunteer service programs. She wanted to quash the recent rumors that NU will not be providing any student volunteers to assist with the various activities taking place over the holiday weekend. Ms. DiDomenico said her office has received five (5) separate requests for student volunteer assistance over the holiday weekend, all of which were approved. This included a request from Northfield Observances for student volunteer assistance on and near the Common over the entire weekend starting at 11:00 a.m. on Friday, September 1, 2023, and through mid-afternoon on Monday, September 4, 2023; a request from the Northfield Activity Group (NAG) for assistance in operating their fundraising "Corn Roast" on the Common over the holiday weekend; a request from Jim Flint (Central Vermont Runners), who will be overseeing the adult and kids foot races to be held on the morning of Saturday, September 2, 2023, to help with traffic control, etc. along the race routes; a request from Gail Hall on behalf of the Brown Public Library (BPL) to help with the setup and breakdown of their annual book sale fundraiser; and a request from Louisa Tripp from Northfield Observances for student volunteers to help with traffic control, etc. in conjunction with the Labor Day Parade. Regarding the last request, Ms. DiDomenico said the NU cadets will be marching in the parade that morning but said non-cadet NU student volunteers will be able to help out. As the NU students are now returning to campus, Ms. DiDomenico said her office will work to sign up volunteers as soon as possible. Board member Morse said the university has always been a good neighbor and that is why the previous erroneous report of its non-participation this year was so surprising. Board member Shernock was very grateful that Ms. DiDomenico was able to attend this meeting in person to clarify the situation. Chair Maxwell also was appreciative of the information provided tonight and for NU's continued commitment to local community service. He then noted that Northfield Observance's leadership structure has seen some turnover in recent years and this might have led to the confusion.

VIII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **July Flooding Rainstorm Update.** Manager Schulz said all the roads damaged by the storm event have been fully reopened except for Lovers Lane, which still has missing guardrails, etc. He has reached out to Lafayette Construction about repairing the damage and they provided a quote. However, they will be unable to perform the work until October due to previous commitments in other storm-damaged communities. Manager Schulz also said the local FEMA reimbursement process has begun and he has held both in-person and remote meetings with FEMA representatives regarding the extent of local storm damage, how best to document this damage, etc. This will be an ongoing process in the coming months. Manager Schulz said now that almost all the roads are passable, the Highway Department is working on those that did have some minor roadside damage due to the flooding. These include Monti Road, Cox Brook Road, Little Northfield Road, and Stony Brook Road.
- b. **South Main Street Stormwater Mitigation Project.** Manager Schulz noted since the affected part of South Main Street has been fully repaved and striped, the Courtland Construction Corporation work crew have shifted over to Prospect Street, where new stormwater drains, etc. will be installed in the coming weeks. The first step was to remove the old sidewalk, which already was in very poor condition but will be replaced with new asphalt after the project's completion.
- c. **New Northfield Police Department (NPD) Chief.** Manager Schulz said the start date for the new NPD Chief, Pierre Gomez, will be on Monday, September 18, 2023. Mr. Gomez has already secured local housing and should be in town the previous week in order to introduce himself to the community.
- d. **Northfield Falls Pedestrian Safety Grant.** Manager Schulz reported the recent grant application to secure funding to install pedestrian safety measures in Northfield Falls, such as new signage, new sidewalk, etc. was successful and will cover about fifty percent (50%) of the total cost. We will have to wait for the signed grant agreement from the state before making any purchases.
- e. **Northfield Falls Covered Bridges Protection.** Manager Schulz said six (6) cameras have been purchased for installation on the covered bridges located on Cox Brook Road. These bridges have been plagued by damage from hit and run drivers in recent months and hopefully having these camera will help identify the culprits and make them financially responsible for any repairs.
- f. **Rabbit Hollow Road Bridge.** Manager Schulz said representatives from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) will be present at the Select Board's regular meeting of September 26, 2023, in order to provide information and get public feedback regarding their plans to start a scoping project regarding their plans to rehabilitate/replace the bridge on Rabbit Hollow Road that goes over the railroad tracks. This bridge has been in poor condition for quite some time.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Depot Square Artwork Vandalism.** Board member Morse noted that the marble sculpture on the east side of the Common was recently vandalized. The sculpture, which was crafted and installed by local artist Tossy Garrett, had a matched bronze butterfly and caterpillar affixed to it but the butterfly has been removed by persons unknown. Manager Schulz confirmed the NPD has been informed of this theft and will be checking the downtown cameras and possible witnesses for any clues. Board member Morse said that although the bronze butterfly itself probably isn't worth much, by defacing a valuable work of art the perpetrator probably is guilty of criminal larceny, which is a felony.

The Select Board members all agreed that the wisest course of action for the person(s) responsible would be to return the item as soon as possible.

- b. Clean Up Day: Saturday, August 26, 2023.** Board member Shernock said Governor Phil Scott has declared this coming Saturday as Clean Up Day for Vermont residents who would like to dispose of (at no cost) any damaged items resulting from last month's flooding rainstorms. The organization that runs Green Up Day each May will distribute orange bags statewide for the use of flooding victims. Ms. DiDomenico said NU student volunteers normally would assist with such an effort but unfortunately this weekend is when returning students are just coming back to Northfield with classes starting next Monday (08/28/23). As an alternative, NU will hold a "Day of Service" on Saturday, September 9, 2023, when about one hundred (100) NU student volunteers will be performing cleanup services in Northfield and neighboring communities over a roughly four (4) hour period. This is intended to make up for NU's inability to help out this weekend. Board member Shernock thought it would be nice if we could set up a dumpster for residents to use during these cleanup events. Chair Maxwell said word about both these events should be disseminated soon. Board member Morse hopes clean-up participants will be sure to use protective equipment, i.e., gloves, masks, etc. when dealing with moldy waste. Elroy Hill is concerned some unethical residents might try to take advantage of these cleanup events for the free disposal of household trash, including old appliances, that have no connection to any recent storm damage.
- c. Northfield-Norwich University Agreement Extension.** Chair Maxwell announced the municipality and NU have approved a one-year extension of the agreement through which NU makes an annual gift to Northfield. He thanked NU President Mark Anarumo for his role in this and Chair Maxwell looks forward to strengthening this relationship in coming years.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. Elroy Hill: Bridge Repairs.** Mr. Hill recently drove along Chamberlin Road, West Hill Road, and Smith Hill Road and saw a number of bridges that were missing guardrails or needed other minor repairs. He thought it would be prudent to hire someone to address these matters before they got worse. Chair Maxwell believes there is money in the Highway Department budget for these repairs. This should be a topic for discussion at the next Highway Planning & Project Oversight Subcommittee meeting.

- XI. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Shernock, to adjourn. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 7:38 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 amended and approved at Select Board regular meeting of September 12, 2023.