

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of June 9, 2026**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Tim Davis, Lydia Petty, Merry Shernock, and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Mary Smith, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, David Mears (Chair, Northfield Conservation Commission [NCC]), Mead Binhammer (Project Director, Vermont Land Trust), Jeremy Whalen (Chair, Town Forest Stewardship Committee [TFSC]), Susan Stillinger (NCC), Desiree Matheson, Russ Barrett (NCC & TFSC), Carolyn Stevens, Kristin Pollard, Melinda Davis, Rhonda Doyon, Stephen Coley, and Elroy C. Hill.

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

- II. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** Chair Maxwell said the municipality received a letter yesterday from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) containing an inspection report on Bridge #56 on TH-54 over Sunny Brook. This letter asks the Select Board members to confirm as soon as possible how they will respond to this report so this matter will be added as an action item on tonight's agenda (see below).

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. David Mears (NCC), Jeremy Whalen (TFSC) and Mead Binhammer (Vermont Land Trust): Town Forest Conservation Easement.** Mr. Mears said he has been an NCC member for about four (4) years but proposals to establish a conservation easement for the Town Forest have been discussed and debated for several more years. The last time a formal proposal was brought before the Select Board members they did not approve it but Mr. Mears said there have been some notable developments since then. For example, there now are grant funds available from the Vermont Land Trust that would cover a good part of the process expenses. Local matching funds would be required but Mr. Mears said that could be covered out of the NCC operations budget. He said approving a conservation easement would be a commitment by the municipality that there would be no future development projects in the Town Forest for perpetuity. The NCC have held a number of meetings on this topic and have learned that although they might be divided on the proper method to do so, Northfield residents do love their Town Forest and want steps taken to protect it for future generations. These meetings have been held in a number of venues, such as the local schools, Senior Center, etc. Mr. Mears believes there was a sense of general support for the municipality establishing a conservation easement. Mr. Whalen said establishing this conservation easement would be consistent with the guidelines included in the Town Forest Stewardship Plan that the Select Board members approved in 2019 as well as provisions in the Northfield Town Plan adopted the following year. Adoption of a conservation easement would ensure that the Town Forest would be protected from future development for all time. Mr. Binhammer said the Select Board members have been provided with a written summary of the conservation easement process including a timeline. This summary includes the statement that "A town forest easement includes purposes of protecting wildlife habitat and natural features, productive forestland, public recreation and education, open space and scenic views, and access for the general public for non-commercial, non-motorized uses."

The summary also lists a number of prohibited uses, such as mining activities, stream alterations, use of motorized vehicles, etc. Mr. Binhammer added that the State of Vermont is now providing municipalities with funds for town forest protection that would cover the expenses associated with the legal process as well as future easement oversight. Mr. Mears said if the Select Board members provided their authorization, the NCC will work with Manager Smith to submit a grant application within the next month to begin the process. Board member Davis believes that although approving a conservation easement is widely considered to be a permanent step, it is always possible that a future state legislature could change this. Mr. Binhammer said that as long as land records are kept as they are now, the easement would be a permanent document. Board member Petty asked how many people attended the public meetings when the conservation easement possibility was discussed. Mr. Mears said there were probably a least a dozen people at each meeting and there did seem to be fairly strong support for conservation easements. Some people were concerned that new restrictions regarding Town Forest use would be imposed but the only new restriction would be to prevent future development. Board member Petty felt this was a big decision and would like to hear from a broader range of local public opinion. Mr. Binhammer said Vermont Land Trust does perform community outreach but those who attend their meetings usually have similar views about forest protection. Chair Maxwell asked if communities have been asked to hold a public vote on this matter. Mr. Binhammer said that has happened in the past but usually as a result of a public petition to reconsider local legislative action. Chair Maxwell would like to engage Northfield residents more on this subject and perhaps holding some public hearings could accomplish this. Mr. Binhammer said it was possible to start the easement approval process while still taking in public input.

Mr. Mears said the NCC is tonight asking for Select Board authorization to work with the Town Manager on the grant application. There would be no binding commitment on the Select Board members to approve the conservation easement until the full process has been played out. There certainly would be time for additional public meetings during this timeframe. Board member Petty felt it was good that the Select Board members could authorize the grant application without formally committing themselves to easement approval at this time. Board member Stevens asked if this easement would cover the section of the Northfield Town Forest that is located over the Berlin borderline. Mr. Mears said it would not. However, there might be a long-term opportunity to form a linked forest conservation areas that included the Paine Mountain ridgeline from Northfield through Berlin. This also might include Norwich University land at some future time. This would be a protected corridor that would benefit local wildlife as well as outdoor enthusiasts. Chair Maxwell then thanked Mr. Mears, Mr. Binhammer, and Mr. Whalen for tonight's presentation. As this matter was not warned as a possible action item, it will be put on the next regular meeting agenda (06/23/26) for further discussion.

- b. Desiree Matheson: Public Nudity Concerns.** Ms. Matheson said that as a mother of two (2) young daughters, she has serious concerns about a person who recently has been seen walking around naked in public places. This person at one point decided to put on an offensive display of himself near Ms. Matheson's home and she and her family members were very distressed by this. This person has also been seen walking around nude at Dog River Park and at the Shaw's supermarket in Berlin. Ms. Matheson doesn't care what people do in the privacy of their own homes but she did not feel such public displays were appropriate. She can see the both sides of the public nudity issue in most cases but draws the line when children become affected by this.

Ms. Matheson noted the communities of Burlington, Bennington, and Barre have approved local ordinances banning public nudity and would like the Select Board members to consider taking this action as well. Board member Petty would first like to hear from local law enforcement regarding whether there is a real need for a local ordinance and/or whether this person could be prosecuted through existing statutes. What this person did in front of Ms. Matheson's family certainly seems to fall under the category of "lewd and lascivious" behavior. Manager Smith said current state law says that if a person is simply naked outside and doesn't make displays of themselves, there is really nothing law enforcement can do. Board member Davis felt there was a big difference between someone skinny dipping at a local waterway and someone acting in a lewd and offensive manner around children. However, he does not believe an ordinance would totally solve this problem due to enforcement concerns. Board member Davis noted that the person involved is reported to be driving a vehicle with out-of-state license plates so he is probably just traveling through Northfield and not a permanent resident. He also is unaware of any more recent incidents. Board member Petty noted skinny dipping locations are usually well known to residents and kept out of view from the general public. She also felt passing an ordinance doesn't automatically solve the problem and it isn't good practice to write ordinances due to isolated incidents. Should this become a repeated problem, the Select Board certainly could revisit this matter and take appropriate action.

IV. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION (7:45 p.m.)

a. Liquor License Renewals

- 1. Norwich University (Sodexo).** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Davis, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- 2. O'Maddi's Deli & Café.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Davis, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- 3. South Village Mobil (T.K. Ventures, Inc.).** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Davis, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

b. Outside Consumption Permit

- 1. O'Maddi's Deli & Café.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the outside consumption permit. Board member Petty would like the Select Board members to develop a policy that governs the use of public sidewalks for private businesses. Chair Maxwell said perhaps future applications like this should include additional information like maps, etc. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (7:48 p.m.)

- a. May 26, 2026 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. Board member Stevens had one minor correction. **Motion to approve the amended minutes passed 4-0-1, with Board member Petty abstaining.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS (7:50 p.m.)

- a. **Approval of Warrant #23-26.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #23-26 in the amount of \$2,001,512.61. Board member Petty noted that of the total warrant amount, \$1,441,915.31 represents property taxes collected by the Town of Northfield and forwarded to the Paine Mountain School District. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Warrant #23-26A.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #23-26A in the amount of \$110,831.92. This is a payment on a fire tanker truck bank note. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Warrant #23-26B.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #23-26B in the amount of \$28,743.07. This is a payment on a fire pumper truck bank note. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **Receipt of Biweekly Payroll through May 24, 2026.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to receive the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$85,947.01. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD (7:54 p.m.)

- a. **Appointment of Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund (CWSRF) Authorized Representative.** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Shernock, to appoint Mary Smith as the CWSRF Authorized Representative. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Appointment of Municipal Planning Grant Authorized Official(s) and Grant Administrator.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Davis, to appoint Mary Smith as the Municipal Planning Grant Authorized Official; K. David Maxwell as the Alternate Municipal Planning Grant Authorized Official; and Mary Smith as the Grant Administrator. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Capital Expense Note (2021 Fire Tanker).** Motion by Board member Stevens, seconded by Board member Shernock, to approve and sign the Capital Expense Note in the amount of \$90,986 at 4.59% interest; to approve the Capital Expense Borrowing Resolution; and approve the No-Arbitrage and Use of Proceeds Certificate. Chair Maxwell noted that this is a refinanced bank note at a reduced interest rate. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **Request to Abate Property Tax Late Payment Penalty and Interest.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the abatement of \$43.36 in late payment penalties and \$5.42 in interest charges for InFraUS Renewables. Town Clerk Kim Pedley had requested that the Select Board members approve this abatement because a new property owner had been misinformed that one of the tax installments had been paid when it had not. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- e. **Approval of Revised Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) Rates.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the revised Northfield Ambulance Services fees effective July 1, 2026. Manager Smith said NAS Chief Meggan McCusker had requested this rate increase last summer but it was not brought to the Select Board members at that time. The revised rates also include the amounts charged for various event standby packages. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- f. Awarding the Bid for Cross Brothers Dam Removal Project.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to award the Cross Brothers Dam Removal Project to Tatro Construction. Manager Smith said there had been three (3) well-qualified bidders for this project but she and the engineers working on this project recommended Tatro Construction due to their extensive experience with similar dam removal projects. They also exhibited significant technical expertise. Board member Davis asked if the project would be completed by October 15, 2026. Manager Smith said due to their experience, she felt they would be able to accomplish this. She added that this project has been a long time coming. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- g. Authorization for Select Board Regular Meeting Time Change.** Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Petty, to change the regular meeting starting time for Select Board regular meetings to 6:00 p.m. beginning with the June 23, 2026 meeting. Chair Maxwell said the possibility of moving up the regular meeting starting time from 7:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. has been discussed in the past but we are now seeking formal action to enact this. Board member Stevens opposes this change as it would disrupt the normal dinner time for many residents, making it more difficult for them to attend. Board member Petty favors the change as 6:00 p.m. has become the normal starting time for most local boards and committees. She noted several recent Select Board regular meetings have run quite late in the evening and that can create a real burden for board members and members of the public. Chair Maxwell said if problems do arise with public attendance, etc., the Select Board members could decide to revert the starting time back to 7:00 p.m. **Motion passed 4-1-0, with Board member Stevens voting in opposition.**
- h. Bridge #56 on TH-54 over Sunny Brook VTrans Inspection Report.** Manager Smith said VTrans recently provided an inspection report on this bridge that indicates it has a number of problems including “a gap of over 1” between the deck and the top of the steel beam.” VTrans is asking that the municipality post a new weight limit of “Single Axle = 4 tons, Tandem = 9 tons, Gross = 13 tons.” As an alternative, the municipality could close the bridge to traffic until it is repaired. There is a \$110,000 current balance in the Highway Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget to repair this bridge with an additional \$50,000 to be added in the next fiscal year. It was noted that the nearby retaining wall along Vermont Route 12 is now undergoing repairs so perhaps the contractor performing that work could be contacted about also doing the bridge repairs. Motion by Board member Shernock, seconded by Board member Stevens, to return the receipt confirmation form indicating that the bridge will be posted as recommended. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT (8:20 p.m.). Manager Smith submitted her written report to the Select Board members and department heads yesterday afternoon (06/08/26). Notable items include an additional meeting of the working group negotiating a contract with the collective bargaining unit now representing part-time NAS employees; interviewing candidates for the Finance Director position; moving forward on the smart meter installation process; etc. She noted that the Main Street Waterline Installation is still ongoing but the Cheney Field Water Tank Installation project has been completed. Manager Smith also reported that the Highway Department has been working diligently on a number of the backroads, i.e. Dole Hill Road, Bean Road, Hallstrom Road, etc. over the past couple of weeks.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS (8:24 p.m.)

- a. **Street Paving Problems.** Board member Davis said there still remains some road debris on the roadsides due to recent paving projects including Union Brook Road, etc. Manager Smith has a meeting tomorrow with the paving contactors about this.
- b. **Community Banner Problem.** Board member Petty said one of the community banners installed on the Main Street bridge needs to be better secured.
- c. **Culvert Crawlers.** Board member Shernock said this volunteer organization based in Springfield VT is willing to work with local highway departments to help identify failing culverts and provide additional information related to stormwater mitigation.
- d. **Falls General Store Community Conversation.** Board member Shernock said there will be a meeting termed the "Northfield Falls General Store Strategy Session" held on Thursday, June 11, 2026 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Falls General Store's top floor. This meeting is intended to provide public support for the store's owner-operator, who is having some difficulties in keeping the store open for business. This meeting will be facilitated by Ben Doyle, a coordinator from Preservation Trust of Vermont. Board member Shernock felt general stores are very important community centers and she hopes residents will take part in this discussion and provide useful suggestions.
- e. **350 Vermont.** Board member Shernock said this organization will work with utility customers to help reduce their energy consumption during peak usage periods. It was noted that the new battery storage facility to be built on King Street later this year will help mitigate this problem locally.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED) (8:35 p.m.)

- a. **Elroy Hill: Conservation Easement Alternatives.** Mr. Hill serves on the Northfield Planning Commission (PC) and he noted that the PC members previously presented the Select Board members with information about the possibility of establishing a conservation overlay for Northfield that would provide additional protections for the Town Forest without the loss of future local control. After some discussion, it was decided that it would be a good idea to invite PC Chair Royal DeLegge and/or Zoning Administrator Mitch Osiecki to the next meeting when the conservation easement is discussed in order to provide additional information about this other alternative.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Board member Stevens, 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 and contract negotiations with Manager Smith present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:50 p.m.

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

The Board came out of executive session at 9:12 p.m. No action was taken.

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

The Board adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

A video recording of this meeting is available at: <https://youtu.be/SaQwW0pd1G4>

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