

March 6, 2018

Northfield Town Hall  
69 Main St

Selectboard Present: Tracy Rogers, Chair; Jack Spanbauer; Julia Blyth

Also Present: Willie Morales, Town Administrator; Sandra L. Wood, Town Secretary; Tyler Bourbeau, BNCTV

Others Present: Susan O'Connor & Lynn Hansell, Energy Committee; Chief Leighton; Troy Emerson; Tom Walker, Highway Superintendent; Bill McGee & Homer Stavely, Council on Aging; Alex Meisner, Sewer Commission; Everett Wickline, sewer operator; Lois Stearns; Jay Nelson; Michelle Wood

- Meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm
- **Review and Approval of Warrants**
  - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Blyth the board voted to approve the 02/27/18 Payroll warrant of 33,973.15
  - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Blyth the board voted to approve the 02/27/18 Vendor warrant of \$204,417.38 (FCTS assessment)
  - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Blyth the board voted to approve the 03/06/18 Payroll warrant of \$36,401.98
  - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Blyth the board voted to approve the 03/06/18 Vendor warrant of \$90,835.93
- **Review and Approval of Minutes**
  - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Rogers, the board voted to approve the minutes of 1/16/18 w/ Bd of Assessors. Blyth abstained.
  - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Blyth the board voted to approve the minutes of 1/23/18 as amended.
  - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Blyth the board voted to approve the minutes of 2/5/18 w/ Finance Committee as written.
  - On a motion by Blyth, seconded by Spanbauer the board voted to approve the minutes of 2/6/18 as written.
  - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Blyth the board voted to approve the minutes of 2/20/18 as written.
- **Meetings attended by Selectboard members**
  - Rogers: HEART; Teacher negotiations
  - Spanbauer: Budget & Tax Information presentation to the Senior Center
  - Blyth: FRCOG Executive Committee; Electrical Aggregation
- **Old Business**
  - Sign Change Order for Town Hall Electrical Phase II
    - Change order was signed.
  - Wages for part time police officers and volunteer EMS & fire personnel
    - Discussion for increasing the wages for part time police and volunteer EMS & fire personnel and why the volunteers are not on the wage & salary classification.
    - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Blyth the board voted to increase the part-time police officers and volunteer EMS & fire personnel to \$18/hr and increase the rates for the chiefs and asst. chiefs for the fire and EMS accordingly to start April 1, 2018.
  - CoA: request to change town meetings to day meeting
    - Bill McGee and Homer "Tony" Stavely requested Town Meeting be changed from an evening meeting to a day meeting so more residents could attend, including seniors and those with young families.
    - The Selectboard agreed to include an article for the request.
  - Energy Committee: Green Communities grant approval
    - Susan O'Connor and Lynn Hansell, co-chairs of the Energy Committee gave the Selectboard an update on the Green Communities Competitive grant application.
    - The committee met with Bernardston & Warwick energy committees along with the Clean Energy Extension out of UMASS.
    - Based on audits done by CEE and Energy Conservation Inc. the group is focusing on projects for the elementary school, PVRs and a small project for the Dickinson Library
      - Library project includes an on demand electric water heater and moving the less efficient geo spring water heater to the Town Hall

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- Weatherization will be the main project for both schools resulting in a \$70,000 yearly cost savings and reducing oil use at NES \$12,000
  - After the electrical project is completed at NES, the committee will switch to LED lighting. They noted mechanical updating is also needed.
- Projects to be executed during the summer.
- Discussed timing for putting insulation out to bid
- Incentives come from Eversource & National Grid. There is no fund matching required.
- On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Blyth the board voted to endorse and approved the proposed Green Communities Grans for Northfield as prepared by the Energy Committee.
- Accountant & Treasurer job description review
  - The Selectboard noted more control by the Town Administrator in both job descriptions and questioned the salary increase if their roles were to be diminished. Morales cited extensive training per GASB 34 and the need for continuity when turnover occurs.
  - Per Morales, Deb Mero and Barb Brassor have reviewed the job descriptions and had the same concerns the board questioned in regards to the Town Administrator's authority.
  - Spanbauer's suggested changes for the Accountant job description: under Duties, change "account" to accountant monitors; the accountant reviews expenditures for compliance for Town Meeting; keep the Selectboard and Finance Committee as guidance. Morales disagreed with the accountant taking guidance from the Finance Committee but rather gave guidance to the Finance Committee. The board agreed to change guidance to consultation with the Finance Committee and remove Selectboard. The board also reversed the authority back to the employee rather than the Town Administrator.
  - Changes for both job descriptions will be sent to Morales for updating.
  - The accountant has requested a dedicated assistant to the position. The current assistant would prefer to concentrate on the Tax/Treasurer role.
  - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Blyth the board voted to up the financial assistant payroll line item to \$7,000 after cost of living is applied.
- Town Meeting warrant
  - Capital expenditures
    - Morales read through the articles
    - Spanbauer was not ready to support the request for a ladder truck without knowing if there would be a PILOT program with Thomas Aquinas. Finance Chair Lois Stearns explained the ladder truck, according to their meeting with Chief Dunnell, would require fewer personnel and was important in fighting chimney fires.
  - Stearns requested to talk about timing and items to consider: no school budget; FinCom has not voted and needs the Selectboards' recommendations on the articles; to drop the Alexander Hall account line item; request to once the warrant is voted on there are no other changes; requested a copy of the articles to work with the Selectboard on source of funding and a request to jointly meet on March 26.
  - The board discussed keeping taxes below \$18/thousand and to contribute to stabilization.
  - The non-money articles were reviewed.
  - The board questioned articles about negotiating a new PILOT with First Light, Morales to check; an article for the cell tower, Morales is waiting on counsel.
  - Stearns asked about changing the building inspection to the FRCOG program. Spanbauer cited the town would benefit by keeping it in house while work was going on at the campus. Morales added the Building Inspector would like to propose separate rates for residents and commercial.
  - Morales will provide the board with an updated article list.
- **New Business**
  - Decision on public shade tree removal per M.G. L. 87 §4
    - Tom Walker, Highway Superintendent/Tree warden reported the home owners have not approached him about the trees but he was approached by contractors back in fall of 2017. The trees are marked and have

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been inventoried by the highway crew. He cites there should be a hearing for removal. Decision of the hearing can be overridden by the Selectboard. The homeowner's daughter, Michelle Wood described the lot on Pierson Rd. and her dealings with the Conservation Commission. Contractor Jay Nelson gave a background on the project and said the tree warden is an abutter to the property and is fighting the project. Nelson has discussed the project with the Town Administrator.

- The board reviewed MGL 87 §4 points and the Selectboards' rights.
- Rogers asked how long it had been known a hearing was needed. Michelle Wood responded the Conservation Commission told them the tree warden needs to see the trees and hold a hearing.
- The board concurred there should be a hearing and discussed using another tree expert in town to eliminate conflict.
- Michelle Wood to work with Morales to set up a tree hearing. Walker to drop off a sample of a legal ad for the newspaper.
- Chief Leighton: Request to appoint Troy Emerson
  - Emerson graduated from Greenfield High School; participated in the National Guard; graduated from the reserve academy.
  - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Rogers the board voted to appoint Troy Emerson as an Auxiliary Officer to the Northfield Police Dept.; term expires 12/31/18
- **Announcements**
  - Schell Bridge update, March 22; 6:30pm; NES
- **Topics not reasonably anticipated by the chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting**
  - **Town Administrator update**
    - Morales told the board that a former employee wishes to be grandfathered into the retirement system.
  - **Sewer Commission appointments:**
    - Alex Meisner of the Sewer Commissioners and Everett Wickline, part-time operator at the sewer plant requested the following appointments.
    - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Blyth the board voted to appoint John Little and Tim Little as part-time operators for the Sewer Dept. at grade 7 step 8.
- **Correspondence:**
  - MassDOT: Proposed FY 19 Chapter 90 transportation aid funding \$288,067
- **Appointments:**
  - Recommendation from the Energy Committee:
    - On a motion by Spanbauer, seconded by Blyth the board voted to appoint Judy Wagner and Andrew Vernon to the Energy Committee; terms expire 12/31/18.
- **Proposed Agenda Items**
  - Accountant & Treasurer job description changes
  - Warrant articles update
  - Grandfathering retiree benefits per the personnel policy

**Personnel issue and disciplinary action under reason 1:** To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual.

Rogers reported Morales requested the discussion be in open session.

The Selectboard addressed an email between Police Chief Leighton and Morales. They felt the tone of the email was rude and aggressive and not in accordance of spirit with the Selectboards' decision the night before. Morales responded the email was written because he had not been included and updated in the scheduling of a meeting of the Police Search Committee.

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The board didn't feel Morales shows Chief Leighton respect and were unaware the request that Chief Leighton not speak to Morales had been rescinded. Morales said the request was rescinded in open session. The board questioned whether Chief Leighton had been in attendance in the session and that he may not have been made aware.

Rogers read the perceived offensive section of the email. Morales understood but it was not his intent to be rude.

Rogers presented additional concerns including the Mitchell gravel pit situation and how that came about, what part Morales played, involving Blyth and that Morales should have apologized. At the time Rogers requested Morales call Spanbauer explaining the Mitchell situation and Morales claimed to leave Spanbauer a voice mail that Spanbauer claims he did not receive; a copy of the Police Chief's contract found at Mim's with an uncorroborated allegation that the copy of the contract had a shadow matching other documents coming from the photo copier in Morale's office; revised job descriptions for Tax Collector/Treasurer & Town Accountant with no markings indicating what had changed, would have appreciated something marked up otherwise it looks like obfuscation whether intended or not; response to send proposals to the HEART Committee, why general law was cited when concern was timing. Morales responded that unlike an IFP it is a private process and when they are sent they are exposed as open when they are supposed to be a private process and that timeliness also matters. Rogers continued that the board's request during Morales review for materials to be available prior to meetings are not being provided to the Selectboard or the Finance Committee until the meeting causing topics to be tabled and also feels like obfuscation and does not allow the board to do what they need to do. The last item was the reason why Heather (Senior Center Director) couldn't come to the meeting due to research Morales needed to do in regards to a previous ballot vote.

Spanbauer added his concerns about the Mitchell issue and that Morales should have briefed the entire Selectboard. He also was concerned that the board has not been cc'd on town counsel correspondence. He additionally was concerned about the budget process but acknowledged Morales was farther ahead than he thought.

Rogers expressed her difficulty in putting her trust in Morales

Morales responded to the allegation of Chief Leighton's document. He said the document was left over a weekend and if it was from his printer it was done without his knowledge. He felt it tarnished his name and upset him.

Rogers proposed scheduling a daytime disciplinary hearing. The board will coordinate their schedules with the Town Secretary.

On a motion by Rogers, seconded by Spanbauer the board voted to adjourn at 8:25 pm.

Recorded by Sandra L. Wood, Secretary

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Selectboard Clerk      3/20/18  
Date Approved