

[NORTHFIELD SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES]

October 3, 2023

Northfield Town Hall
69 Main St

Select Board Present: Alexander Meisner, Chair; Bernard Boudreau, Vice Chair; Sarah Kerns (entered 6:08pm), Clerk; Barbara “Bee” Jacque; Heath Cummings(entered 5:28pm)

Also Present: Andrea Llamas, Town Administrator; Sandra L. Wood, Town Secretary; Tyler Bourbeau, BNCTV

Others Present: Bob MacEwen, Transfer Station Supervisor; Jeff Loomis; Tom Stewart, Massachusetts State Track Coaches/Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association; Dwight Harrison, Northfield Mountain Recreation; Justin McDonald, Trinity Solar; Terry McKeon; Michael Edwards, Edward Collins Jr. Center for Public Management; EMS Chief Mark Fortier

- Meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm
- Motion by Boudreau, seconded by Jacque the Select Board voted to go into executive session at 5:00 pm for Boyer Litigation under M.G.L. C.30A, Sec.21(3) To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body as declared by the Chair, and to return to open session. On a roll call vote Jacque said yes, Meisner said yes and Boudreau said yes.
- Select Board returned to open session at 6:00pm
- **Scheduled Appointments**
 - Transfer Station Attendant appointment-Jeff Loomis
 - Transfer Station Supervisor Bob MacEwen introduced Jeff Loomis and recommended Jeff for the position of Transfer Station Attendant
 - Loomis has volunteered at the RE-USE shed at the transfer station and is familiar with the operations and staff
 - Motion by Boudreau, seconded by Jacque the Select Board voted to hire Jeff Loomis as a Transfer Station Attendant at \$19.82/hour at grade 5 step 1
 - Monster Dash Special Permit request
 - Terry McKeon was present for the request to hold the annual Monster Dash on Saturday October 28, 2023
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to approve the special event permit for the Monster Dash and waive the fee
 - Massachusetts State Track Coaches/Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MSTCA/MIAA) Cross Country meet Special Permit request
 - Tom Stewart of the MSTCA/MIAA gave a brief background of the event that has been in existence since 1984.
 - Review of the layout. Estimated attendance 1400
 - Emergency Medical Services has contacted Stewart for services. Dwight Harrison to coordinate with the police chief on coverage
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to approve the MSTCA/MIAA Cross Country meets special permits for October 21, 2023 and November 11, 2023
 - Request for Temporary Vendor, Hawker & Peddler License, Trinity Solar-Justin McDonald, date to be determined upon approval 11am to 8pm
 - Justin McDonald explained that he would be going door to door giving information on Trinity's services. The company works with MassSave Energy
 - McDonald was asked to stick to the permitted hours and time frame
 - Motion by Boudreau, seconded by Jacque the Select Board voted to approve the request for a temporary Vendor, Hawker, Peddler license for Trinity Solar/Justin McDonald; starting October 4 for two weeks with consideration for an additional two weeks to be considered from 11am -8pm
 - Discussion on whether Trinity had been in for a permit previously. McDonald plans to average 30 -40 households visits per day

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- If in good standing McDonald will not need to come to another meeting but will need to re-apply for approval
- Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Presentation
 - Michael Edwards of the Edward Collins Jr. Center for Public Management gave a presentation on the Emergency Medical Services Regionalization Study summary. The presentation included:
 - Project Summary
 - Bottom Line
 - EMS has started regionalization. Staffing model is not sustainable and assessments need to be increased. Current service area is at its limit
 - Summary Trends & Data
 - Revenue Trends
 - Discussion on indirect costs needing to be included to compare with other towns' costs. Concern that raising assessments could create competition for Northfield's service with other regionalized areas keeping their costs lower. EMS districts are not allowed in Massachusetts creating organic regionalization between smaller towns. Higher assessments would help solve the salary issue but not the staffing problem.
 - Chief Fortier added there is no competition here providing paramedic ambulance services
 - EMS revenue history review
 - At current rate of community aging in Northfield and Bernardston and reimbursement of Medicare at \$300 per call vs. \$3,000 of private insurance brings a challenge to revenue
 - Current enterprise fund is running in the black but without increasing assessments, indirect costs including payroll, computer technology and capital planning could cause a deficit
- Billable vs. Non-billable calls
 - Chief Fortier explained the two services provided for Northfield, first response and transport, and how they reflect higher costs than other member towns who have their own first response teams
- Other revenues
 - Additional agreements are available to consider such as intercept only with other towns. Additional management time needed to focus on additional revenues
 - Comparison of operating revenues and operating expenditures without the assessments
 - Per run costs and revenues shows a decrease in operating cost per run and revenue per run showing a good balance
- Revenue Opportunities
 - Service agreements for intercept; shift and overnight coverage; mutual aid given and received
- Key Findings
 - Deficiencies
 - Staffing
 - Volunteer model not sustainable

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- Hours exceeding 20 hours/week triggers required insurance, retirement benefits and liability. 80% of coverage is from five individuals
 - In station coverage needed 24 hours per day
 - Overnight coverage would be a way of selling excess capacity but Northfield does not have at this time
 - Indirect costs
 - Data used for best estimates. Indirect costs incurred to the town include non-EMS personnel, town administration staff, financial department staff and square feet occupied that do not get covered by the enterprise fund. Estimate based on fiscal 2024 budget is approximately \$41,000 as a general fund subsidy to EMS operations
 - Capital planning
 - Recommend and are working on 6 year capital improvement program to replace assets every ten years
 - No reason not to use of debt, state house note program is less than 1% or at bank rate backed by the state
 - Replacement program would reduce down time
 - Review of the replacement schedule for each ambulance, cardiac monitor, radios and other equipment
 - Assessments
 - Should provide for staffing, capital equipment, indirect costs
 - Estimated EMS costs of \$715,000 for FY 24. Revenue calculation without the other town assessments minus the costs totals the subsidy needed.
- Organizational Models
 - Non-profit Incorporated
 - District- must be part of Fire Department
 - Municipal Department- current model
- Next Steps
 - Form task force with other towns to establish level of service, staffing model, management structure, etc. to bring back recommendations for an intermunicipal agreement under the purview of the Select Boards
 - A task force would consist of two members of each town plus Chief Fortier as an advisor, with a specific mandate with no authority to appropriate money or execute agreements on behalf of a town. Select Boards and town meeting for funding. Grants are available for implementation.
 - Llamas gave a timeline for available grant funding due in January
- **Review and Approval of Warrants**
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to approve the 10/4/23 Payroll warrant of \$75,274.67
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Jacque the Select Board voted to approve the 10/4/23 Vendor warrant of \$319,463.88. 4 yes/1 abstain, vote passed
- **Review and Approval of Minutes**
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of 9/19/23 as written
- **Interim Selectboard Meetings**
 - 9/26/23- Planning session

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- **Meetings/Events attended by Selectboard members**

- Kerns: Economic Development Advisory; parade & fireworks; Geographic Information System (GIS) training; met with the Moderator
- Cummings: Harvest dinner and 350th festivities
- Boudreau: Franklin Regional Transit Authority meeting; Friends of Northfield Seniors
- Meisner: 350th parade
- Jacque: American Rescue Plan-Storefront renovation; Harvest dinner; Community Preservation; 350th parade; met Anne Gobi. Director of Rural Affairs

- **Town Administrator's update**

- 10/17 visit by Senator Comerford/Representative Whipps – review topics for discussion
 - Discussion with Senator Comerford and Representative Whipps
 - Grant Development and Economic Development – funding for small town economic development initiatives
 - Support for grants small towns rely on
 - Public Building Assistance Funding (Bill)
 - Rural funding
- Performance Evaluations and Process/Timing
 - Performance Evaluations that are currently out:
 - waiting to finish the final edits on the job descriptions and then having you vote to approve them – but it is taking longer to get them all out/back and then there will be time needed to change all the performance evaluations.
 - sent them out and have asked people to make edits if things have changed – but I didn't want to wait any longer as we head into budget season and the end of the year.
 - will update all the Performance evaluations after the final Select Board vote to approve the job descriptions
 - Most of the edits are fairly minor at this point.
 - Recommended Performance Evaluation for a Town Administrator – remember that last year the board was not happy with the process as it was difficult to do so publicly.
 - Llamas talked to members of the Mass Municipal Managers Association to find out what is done in their communities – the overwhelming majority use the following process:
 - All Select Board members receive their evaluation forms.
 - fill them out and return them to the Town Secretary to be placed in the Town Administrators's personnel file
 - The Select Board chair (or designee) reviews them as part of the personnel file and creates a composite evaluation.
 - The Select Board Chair (or designee) meets with Town Administrator to review and sign off.
 - After the review, this composite becomes the public document.
 - Discussion of terms of professional competency and reputation, character
 - Issuing draft (new) job description that is currently part of the process with UMass Boston – and current performance evaluation – which hasn't been updated yet – which Llamas will do with all of them once the Select Board formally approves them.
 - But as that process is taking a while, Llamas sent out the performance review forms as is.
 - None of the job descriptions out under review are dramatically different – most are receiving minor updates or tweaks.

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- Completed evaluations given to Town Secretary by the 15/16th. Llamas can meet with Alex (or designee).
 - Clarification on Town Administrator job description and bylaws passed when the position was created.
 - Discussion of 360 review. Not implemented at this time. Kerns would like to discuss implementing a 360 review
 - Evaluation format from another town
 - Highway Maintenance Position
 - Highway Superintendent Walker would like to change this position.
 - Will bring forward when Walker's input is received in form of edited original for comparison
- **Business**
 - American Rescue Plan Advisory(ARPA) – Fire Department Grant Match request
 - This is the match to the \$120,671 Federal Assistance to Firefighters grant awarded in September.
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to approve the \$6,033.00 to be applied as a 5% match for the AFG grant the town received for new breathing apparatus for the fire department from ARPA funds
 - Building Permit Fee Schedule -tabled
 - Emergency Services Committee Members - tabled
 - Firstlight Erosion Control – Shared Consulting Services and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (\$2,500)
 - The Select Board supported this back in May with each town contributing \$2500.
 - Select Board needs to vote and sign the MOU
 - This is a one-time funding for the consultant. May need to be revoted if crossing into a different fiscal year
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to approve the MOU between the towns of Gill, Erving, Montague and Northfield and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments and as part, contribute \$2,500 for shared erosion consulting services to come from the legal account
 - Fire Chief Extension of Employment Bill – Select Board to approve new language limiting extension to August 13, 2024
 - Review of what was considered substantive change from the Public Service Committee of the date December 31, 2026 to August 13, 2024 needing the Select Board to vote the change, have the vote stamped by the Town Clerk's office and forwarded to the legislator's office
 - Motion by Kerns, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to accept the change of the date on line three from December 31, 2026 to August 13, 2024 on the House Bill number 4048
 - Requests from Kerns - tabled
 - Vendor Warrant schedule –
 - Amend 6/13/23 and 9/5/2023 minutes
 - Remote Town Meetings
 - Select Board Holidays Meeting Schedule
 - New schedule discussed
 - Boudreau work schedule may cause him to be delayed or may not be able to attend. Will send comments on agenda topics to Llamas or Wood for inclusion if unable to attend or schedule topics later in the agenda
 - Schedule accepted and subject to change
 - Time off request
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to approve the time off request
- **Committee/Board Appointments**

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- Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to appoint Steve Malsch as an Auxiliary member of the Northfield Fire Department; term expires 01/31/24
- Proposed agenda items
 - 360 review description and tabled items from this agenda
 - Formal 350th thank you
- Recognition for Service: Letter of appreciation of service from Dorothy Koda re: Officer Chad Sumner
 - 350th parade volunteers and other participating towns, including Robin van der Maat, Samantha Tavares, Regis Crosby, Tony Amatto Sr., Kathy Llamas, Northeast Paving and other volunteers, Four Star Brewery, Stacy Bond and Andrea Llamas
- Motion by Kerns, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to adjourn at 8:35pm

Recorded by Sandra L. Wood, Secretary

Select Board Clerk

10/17/23
Date Approved