

October 17, 2023

Northfield Town Hall
69 Main St

Select Board Present: Alexander Meisner, Chair; Bernard Boudreau, Vice Chair; Sarah Kerns, Clerk; Barbara “Bee” Jacque; Heath Cummings

Also Present: Andrea Llamas, Town Administrator; Tyler Bourbeau, BNCTV

Others Present: Senator Jo Comerford, Representative Susannah Whipps; Fire Chief Skip Dunnell; David McCarthy; Bernie Porada

- Meeting called to order at 6:00 pm
- **Scheduled Appointments**
 - **Senator Jo Comerford and Representative Susannah Whipps**
 - Representative Whipps and Senator Comerford presented a framed copy of the historical handwritten declaration of Northfield becoming a town from a shire and congratulated the town on it’s 350th anniversary
 - Grant Development and Economic Development – funding for small town economic development initiatives
 - Communicate the town’s interests through their offices.
 - Work with state and federal agencies, forwarding grants to Northfield’s Grant Developer and Town Administrator
 - Inviting state agencies to Northfield to see what the interests are and submitting supporting letters to state colleagues to develop grant opportunities and following up
 - Jacque stated she would like something like the American Rescue Plan
 - Review of American Rescue Plan, including Storefront Renovation, and the grants for funding the Schell Bridge renewal, tying in recreation on both ends of town. Economic Development Committees work on Trails to Main Street keeping the town’s natural beauty
 - Kerns spoke on the need to update the sewer and water infrastructure incorporating grants possibly on a federal level as a part of economic development. Representative Whipps explained she has a financial background in sewer and to avoid any conflict, deferred to Senator Comerford on the topic. Comerford would like to come and do a deep dive into the water and sewer needs of the town. Boudreau added the emergency services facility along with water and sewer needing to be in place for economic development success
 - Comerford and representatives of Whipps office will contact Llamas to layout what the town is wrestling with on the sewer issue. Kerns expressed an interest in attending the meeting and Boudreau will forward the information to Karen Boudreau of the Sewer Commission.
 - Comerford referred to RCAP(Rural Community Assistance Partnership) for help in funding.
 - The Grandin Water district used RCAP. RCAP has been in communication with the sewer department and will be contacted now that the asset management plan has been presented
 - Kerns added looking for solutions and possibly the Department of Environmental Protection taking over the sewer in a 5-10 year process as a potential option but will need more information. Important to keep costs for the town and individuals affordable
 - Support for grants small towns rely on – Massworks, Complete Streets, Community Compact

- Llamas referred to the American Rescue Plan funding coming to an end and how it will affect applying and getting additional grants to supplement projects
 - Comerford explained “earmarking” funds with town matching funds to be held while the earmarking process is developed on the state level
- **Public Building Assistance Funding (Bill)**
 - Whipps explained the bill would help with the assistance of a state appointed municipal building authority for dedicated funding from marijuana excise tax for straight up grants
 - Comerford stressed the importance of municipal involvement in these programs by addressing town issues with the state legislature
 - On the question of giving testimony for bills, Whipps explained the option of remote participation gives western Massachusetts a seat at the table it did not have before
 - Comerford asked the Select Board to submit testimony or support as a united whole to the legislature, and directly to her office for additional support
- **Rural School Aid**
 - This legislature session has appropriated \$15 million for rural schools and a bill scheduled for a hearing at the end of October
 - Comerford suggested a panel be formed to assist advocate for the bill
 - Jacque commented on the planned capital costs for Pioneer Valley Regional School (PVRS), Franklin County Technical School, the study for regionalizing PVRS and Gill-Montague school district and the Northfield Elementary School
 - Comerford has met and discussed the visioning with the superintendent and the regionalization panel. She would like to hear from the towns directly affected
- **Infrastructure Aid (water, wastewater)- see Grant Development and Economic Development above**
- **Review and Approval of Warrants**
 - Motion by Boudreau, seconded by Jacque the Select Board voted to approve the 10/18/23 Payroll warrant of \$75,400.42.
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to approve the 10/18/23 Vendor warrant 130767.11. 4 yes/1 abstain- passed
- **Review and Approval of Minutes**
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of 9/26/23 Select Board Planning session as amended. 3 yes/2 abstain- passed
 - Motion by Boudreau seconded by Jacque the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of 10/3/23. 4 yes/1 abstain- passed
- **Meetings/Events attended by Select Board members**
 - Kerns: met with business owners and citizens on Economic Development; Sewer Asset Management report meeting
 - Cummings: closing of French King Bridge project
 - Boudreau: Sewer Asset Management report meeting
 - Meisner: Dog hearing appeal in District Court
 - Jacque: Dog hearing appeal in District Court; Franklin Regional Council Of Government (FRCOG) Finance Committee; met with Chamber of Commerce business owners; Sewer Asset Management report meeting; FRCOG Select Board training; Dickinson Library Dog Show judge
- **Business**
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to approve the Rag Shag Parade Special Permit for October 31, 2023 ; Northfield Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9874 and waive the fee

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- Motion by Jacque, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to approve the Trinity Solar request for temporary solicitor, hawker peddler permit. October 18-November 1, 2023; 11am-8pm
- Motion by Jacque, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to approve the request from Cameron's Winery for one-day Temporary liquor license for October 22, 2023; 1pm-4pm at 105 Main St, Deerfield Valley Art Association
- Emergency Services Regionalization Task Force – Establishment, Charge and Appointments
 - Grant due in January. Collins Center looking for task force from all member towns
 - Discussion if Chief Fortier is included in the two member appointment
 - Jacque volunteered citing experience in the topic. Kerns nominated Chief Dunnell. Chief Dunnell declined.
 - Llamas offered her services having five years' experience. Discussion clarifying the Collins Center membership criteria
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to create the Emergency Medical Services Regionalization Task Force to consist of two members from the towns of Erving, Bernardston, Northfield and Gill and Mark Fortier
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to appoint Bee Jacque and Andrea Llamas as members from the Town of Northfield for the Emergency Medical Services Regionalization Task Force.
- Green Communities Grant – Approve and Sign for submission
 - Llamas gave an overview of the grant. Energy efficiency improvements to Northfield Elementary School
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to approve and sign for submission to the Green Communities Grant. Signed by Meisner
- Emergency Services Committee (ESFC) Members and Charge
 - Members:
 - Criteria included building and understanding of issues of government and municipal buildings and qualifications of knowledge in relative areas; committee experience with complex topics and site selection; relevant public safety experience; getting individuals against the project in the past on the committee to bring their views; experience in funding; applicants' interaction with the project for or against
 - Top three candidates from each Select Board member written and handed to Llamas for tally
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to appoint David McCarthy, Barry Bordner and Victoria Luksha to the Emergency Services Facility Committee; term expiring 12/31/24
 - Charge discussion:
 - Chief Dunnell offered looking at the departments individually and spreading the project out over a longer period of time since one complex was voted in favor by the majority but failed the 2/3 required vote
 - Bernie Porada explained the Select Board members at the start of the project more than six years ago directed the committee to focus on one building. Time and other capital projects have changed the needs. The direction should come from the Select Board so the committee can move forward. Unified building or separate, do in stages and what is the priority, what should be spent
 - Kerns felt the committee as an advisory should bring the order and urgency to the Select Board to consider and make final decisions.
 - Cummings as a member of the ESFC, suggested meeting with the new members to discuss moving forward in a feasible direction and for people to understand it will not be the building or water and sewer, it all needs to be addressed. With no money being spent over the decades it's all hitting like a storm. A target price calculated with interest to bring back to the Select Board

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- Jacque suggested an after- action review, of what was learned and what were the problems. Discuss costs of scenarios of one building, two or three. Separate buildings may cost more and putting all effort into the first building and leaving the other buildings behind is a concern. Defining the major obstacles, then coming back to meet with the Select Board for discussion.
- Chief Dunnell would like to meet with the three new members, give them background and get a consensus on where to focus
- Boudreau commented that the special town meeting didn't provide enough information on cost including engineering but was probably a good choice at a reasonable cost but failed because it was done too quickly. Jacque reminded the board that the Select Board was castigated for spending money on engineering, the special town meeting property had other uses than EMS and was voted down. Llamas clarified the vote was to allow the Select Board to investigate the property, then allow them to buy the property if it met specifications including costs.
- Cummings summarized getting the committee back together to discuss what is palatable and come back to the Select Board. Possibly hold a community forum for ideas and direction. Jacque added to include lessons learned and what the new members feel were obstacles.
- Kerns included prioritization and including information similar to the sewer risk assessment from the newest members who may have knowledge in these areas
- Review Select Board Goals for Fiscal Year 2024
 - Review of the goals established at the Select Board planning session on 9/26/32
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to approve the Select Board goals as written for Fiscal Year 2024
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Storefront Improvement Grants
 - Looking for SB approval of the 2 most recent recommendations for ARPA funds through the Storefront Improvement Program:
 - Mim's - to replace the lighting fixture over the Mim's sign that doesn't work.
 - IGA - to improve the landscaping on the island in front of the parking lot as to add some small table and chair sets in front of and on the side of the IGA building.
 - Motion by Boudreau, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to approve ARPA funds for Mims at 60 Main St. for lighting and landscaping of \$2,068
 - Motion by Boudreau, seconded by Jacque the Select Board voted to approve ARPA funds for IGA, 74 Main St. for landscaping and table/chair sets of \$1,612
 - Discussion: Jacque noted the original amounts requested were questioned based on the amounts used by the Creamie in their request. Grant Development Director Sullivan worked with the applicant to reduce the request
- Building Permit Fee Schedule
 - Discussion on length of time and explanation for stop order fee doubling. Fees are in line within the region
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Jacque the Select Board voted to approve the revised building permit fee schedule
- Requests from Kerns:
 - Vendor warrant schedule
 - Kerns would like the opportunity to see the vendor warrant currently available two hours before the meeting and move the deadline back 48 hours to review.
 - Llamas explained the warrants are done at the same time. The employee who does the warrants is part-time and has other jobs limiting their availability. Llamas was not sure how to accommodate the request without asking the employee to change their schedule and asked to clarify 48 hours.

- Kerns responded there should be sufficient time to review before signing. Kerns is using 48 hours as a benchmark. She understands there may be movement in how to do it but does not think it supersedes responsibility to read and understand before signing
- Llamas requested a date certain to work out a change. Kerns referred to receiving the agenda which is the Thursday before a meeting. Llamas explained closing the warrant at that time would exclude five mail days pushing the payment on bills coming in that time another two weeks and did not feel it was logistically possible to pay the bills on time
- Jacque, Meisner stated they were fine with the schedule as it is. Boudreau was against risking not paying the vendors. Cummings added that because the warrant is signed does not mean the investigatory portion is over. He has in the past voted and signed but looked into items and investigated to get answers
- Llamas explained the parameters the accounting department must follow and if they feel there is an issue the bill is held until their investigation is completed.
- Kerns clarified she was asking for more time, not specifically those hours. Kerns asked about the process if she did find something questionable. Llamas said a note could be attached to the warrant for an answer from Llamas or from the financial department. Cummings said he sends a specific question via his town email
- Kerns stated this was about putting her name on the warrant and not about the employees in the financial department. Kerns asked about availability of the warrant after the Select Board meeting. Llamas explained the signed warrants go to the Treasurer the next day for checks to be cut and are filed
- Remote Town Meetings
 - Kerns said she did not want to talk about remote town meetings but instead Americans with Disabilities Act compliance for voting at meetings. She spoke to Moderator who indicated he would like to attend a discussion and asked to table this topic
 - Item will be included at a future meeting
 - For additional information, Llamas stated the town attorney has determined we cannot have a remote town meeting
- Amend 6/13/2023 Minutes
 - On a motion by Kerns, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to amend the minutes of 13 June 2023 to include under citizen's concerns "Sarah Kerns says if Select Board members are not allowed to represent concerns of the citizen's, what are we doing? Asserts that representing citizen's concerns is expressly part of the job of the Select Board" 3 yes/2 no -passed
 - Discussion:
 - Jacque stated adding quotes and adding comments several months back is a slippery slope and was not comfortable with the practice and precedent. Recommended continuing the discussion about citizen comments and commenting as Select Board members as an agenda topic as opposed to going back and adding specific comments
 - Kerns responded that she mentioned this soon after it occurred, and it has been on the agenda with the wrong date and has been this far due to putting off the last three meetings. Kerns just wanted it on the record as it had been omitted
 - Jacque pointed out these were approved minutes that were voted on and could have been amended at that time. Kerns said she didn't know it would be omitted. Jacque said the Select Board approves or disapproves of the minutes

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at that time and if the Select Board does not catch something, it's on the Select Board.

- The minutes will be amended and both copies, original and amended will be posted

- **Topics not reasonably anticipated by the chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting**

- Dog hearing update- Meisner gave a brief update on the hearing in District Court

- **Proposed Agenda Items**

- **Town Administrator Evaluaiton discussion**
- **Dog decision update/lessons learned**
- **Town Moderator for discussion on Americans with Disabilities Act for town meetings, electronic voting and additional comments on town meeting**

- **Announcements**

- Reminder: Bulky Waste Day at Northfield Highway Garage Saturday October 21, 9am – noon
 - (2)350th Celebration events: 10/22/23, 10am Dickinson Library- Postcards of Northfield and at noon a Geology of Northfield field trip starting at Heritage Boat Parking lot @ FirstLight, registration required. This event is repeated on Sunday, October 22

- **Recognition for Service**

- For the Highway Department work before, during and after the parade and for hanging the parade banner in Town Hall

- **Executive Session:** M.G.L. c.30A, Sec.21(a)(1): Motion by Cummings, seconded by Jacque the Select Board voted to go into executive session at 8:53 pm to discuss the reputation, character, physical condition, or mental health, rather than the professional competence, of and individual, or discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual and not to return to open session. On a role call vote Jacque yes, Meisner yes, Boudreau yes, Cummings yes and Kerns yes

- **Meeting adjourned at 9:26 pm**

Recorded by Sandra L. Wood, Secretary

Select Board Clerk

11/7/23
Date Approved