

[NORTHFIELD SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES]

December 19, 2023

Northfield Town Hall
69 Main St

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

Select Board Absent: Bernard Boudreau

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

Others Present: Patter Field, Highland Ave; Bill Llewelyn, Conservation Commission Chair (remote);Tori Lucksha & Mike Barry, Conservation Commission; Joanne McGee, Open Space Committee; Chief Hall

- Meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm
- **Scheduled Appointments**
 - Conservation Commission update with Bill Llewelyn, Tori Lucksha, Mike Barry and Sarah Kerns
 - Kerns joined the other present members of the Conservation Commission at the guest table
 - Llewelyn stated the Select Board and Town Administrator don’t know what the Conservation Commission does and that area needs improvement citing a recent Conservation issue with a resident who complained to the Chair of the Select Board. He explained the Conservation Commission has procedures they need to follow with the states guidance
 - Lucksha reviewed the Protection of Wetlands Executive order and Chapter 131 section 40.
 - The Conservation Commission enforces the Massachusetts Wetlands Act and the order of process in through the Massachusetts Department of Environment Protection out of Springfield
 - Jacque summarized the purpose for this meeting was to get a general update from the Conservation Commission and not discuss a particular issue. The webpage needs some updating to fix broken links and outdated information.
 - Kerns explained the Conservation Commission is mostly about enforcing the wetlands
 - Barry talked about the commission’s need for a person to help with reporting to the state and Llewelyn added they have been trying to work with the Franklin Regional Council of Government (FRCOG) for an assistant program. Llamas has responded to the FRCOG that this is an area of interest to the town if the service was made available
 - The state is involved with all filings of the Conservation Commission. The Commission has no power of enforcement. The Commissions role is to advise and guide
 - Meisner asked what the best way to reach out to the Conservation Commission. Llamas explained in an emergency if someone contacts the administrative office, the Chair is contacted, and non-emergency questions are submitted to the email. Both sources can be addressed by the entire committee
 - Lucksha advised to send all inquiries to the email for documentation and gave an example of their process
 - Discussion on whether Robin Conley, who takes the minutes for the Conservation Commission, should be hired as a part-time clerk
 - Budget has been submitted with no additional technology requests at this time
 - Discussion on submission of the new annual report
- **Citizens’ Concerns (limit 3 minutes per speaker)**
 - Patter Field, School St. Bridge closure: request for opening to pedestrian and trail use only
 - 7:15pm-Joanne McGee of the Open Space Committee also commented on opening the bridge for pedestrian and trail use
- **Review and Approval of Warrants**
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to approve the 12/13/23 Payroll warrant of \$100,155.89
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to approve the 12/13/23 Vendor warrant \$308,703.80
- **Review and Approval of Minutes**
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of 12/5/23
- **Meetings/Events attended by Selectboard members**

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- Kerns: Highway Superintendent; Police Chief; Open Space Committee; Pioneer Valley Regional School Environmental Education Department; Assessor; School Committee, collective bargaining representative; Boy Scout Troop 9 leader; staffing professional re: organizational chart; residents with individual concerns; Northfield Bird Club
- Meisner: Police Chief
- Jacque: Franklin Regional Council of Government Finance Committee; three position classifications; Historical Commission; Police Chief; evaluation reviews
- **Town Administrator's update**
 - 2023 Mosquito District Report provided for review as first full year as members. Board of Health has taken leadership.
 - Double Poles – Highland Ave Spoke with the Verizon Regional Director Ellen Cummings for State Government Affairs She explained the process:
 - There is a database shared by the pole users (Verizon, Eversource and Comcast mostly)
 - This database shows the status of all the poles in a community and the NTG (Next to go) member in one column. WME is Eversource (old Western Mass Electric), CMTC (Comcast), VZW (Verizon)
 - Kerns noted 8 poles along Glenwood are not listed. Llamas will need the numbers on the poles
 - The last column shows the job to do – like transfer or set or pull
 - They transfer in a specific order – Electric (Eversource) on top, and phone (Verizon) on the bottom – others like Comcast will be in between
 - Verizon has an internal metric and they review these every 30 days
 - If you read the report there are 5 on Highland and for Highland 4 of the 5 are waiting for Comcast to transfer
 - Tablets- set up, instructions and shared calendar included
- **Business**
 - Resignation letter from Chris Miner
 - Meisner read the resignation letter from Miner and commented on his disappointment of the departure
 - Motion by Jacque seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to accept with regret the resignation letter from Officer Chris Miner
 - Chief Hall has received a few potential candidates. Meisner and Jacque volunteered to be on the screening team
 - Grant Development Director Resignation and Position Posting
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to accept the resignation from the Grant Development Director Mallory Sullivan with regret and with gratitude with the best of luck moving forward
 - Sullivan forwarded a few changes to the job description
 - Adding attendance of afternoon and evening meetings as necessary; informs the public of grant economic development projects through public outreach including but not limited to writing press releases, communicating with local news sources; Kerns suggested adding “maintaining grant dashboard”, Llamas to add under “develops organized facility planning process to identify grant ideas; under education experience add public administration or related liberal arts field
 - Position will still be funded with American Rescue Plan until 2026
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to approve the changes to the Grant Development Director position
 - Discussion: Kerns inquired if they needed to say something about using ARPA funding. Funding would be discussed during the hiring process. Funding has to be expended in 2026

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- Discussion on approach to review updated Police Department Policies and Procedures
 - The policies and procedures come from the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police and accredited police departments
 - Jacque suggested further explanation of the investigation chapter how it is followed regionally for consistency; further review of policies and procedures under administration and operations in regard to pursuits and body cameras for updates and working with transgender and hearing-impaired people; more explanation on the overlap of police policy and town personnel policy
 - Chief Hall and Llamas will meet to review the overlap and possibly move the town policies into the police policy if there is no conflict
 - Meisner suggested continuing to meet and review over the next few months. Chief Hall suggested each Select Board member take 10 policies to review to process in a timelier manner. Jacque asked the rest of the board if they wanted to tackle all of them or choose policies of more interest to the public. Kerns suggested a separate round table meeting due to the length of time it would take for review. Jacque added some of the policies like body camera and pursuit have already been discussed. Chief Hall noted some are mundane and once approved the document will be added to an online program called PMAM and treated as living documents for frequent changes and would be visible to the Select Board every time a document is changed instead of reviewing on a yearly basis. Chief Hall suggested the Select Board split up the chapters and reach out to him individually for personal discussions, then meet for approval. He will email each member with the list for them to choose what they would like to review.
 - This will be added to the agenda for January 9, 2024
 - Discussion on tasers. Chief Hall does not like them and removed the policy with the tasers. He is open to discussion on the topic
- Possible Special Town Meeting (January)
 - Kerns asked to move to this agenda topic as listed below while the Police Chief was present. She referred to article 3 and in a previous conversation with Chief Hall discussed portable versus permanent digital speed markers. Chief Hall, with help from the Grant Development Director Mallory Sullivan, had secured a grant for a couple of the permanent units. Kerns asked, as there is money in the police budget that will be returned to the town from department salaries, would it be useful for the article to ask the town to vote to spend \$27,215 for eight stationary solar radar units based on the cost of \$3,300 per unit from the grant.
 - Jacque noted the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) had talked about them for each end of Main Street when the crosswalks were installed.
 - The locations of the units obtained by the grant will go to the highest ranked problem areas of Main Street, Gulf Road/Maple Street. Posting the signs at the 35 mile per hour (mph) signs on Main St are an option but Chief Hall would like to address making all Main Street 35 mph with the state before placing them. This is a process Chief Hall will request the MassDOT system to do a traffic study. He hopes this will help with the accidents at Maple Street and in front of Thomas Aquinas College to safeguard the influx of students walking into town. Jacque and Llamas referred to a letter that was sent to MassDOT two years ago requesting installation of these types of signs. Chief Hall has a list of five priority locations
 - Llamas raised questions on long-term maintenance responsibilities.
 - Kerns added the Highway Superintendent was concerned about portable units being in the way of plowing and becoming stuck due to ice and the police could not remove them. Chief Hall currently replaces those batteries to get them recharged.

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- Jacque asked about the funding from the police salary budget. Chief Hall said it was based on information from the accounting department and is a rough estimate from vacated positions and the Student Resource Officer position not being filled
- Kerns suggested taking out the specific number of units. Llamas suggested changing to “purchase of solar units. Discussion on the options of unused article funds
- (see continued discussion on below)
- Fire Department Policies and Procedures
 - Llamas needs the Select Board to address the lawyer’s comments. Chief Dunnell has not forwarded any information and was notified the topic would be on the agenda
 - Cummings voiced his concerns this was becoming a long process. Meisner and Jacque agreed
 - Kerns asked if there was a difference in volunteer versus full-time department for what could be done. Llamas said they are on- call, but they are paid as town employees. The department is not in a union
 - Clarification on the notes from the town’s lawyer KP Law for recommended strikeouts and proposed deletion and Llama’s notes for items the Select Board had already passed.
 - Jacque summarized there was nothing controversial; retains most of what the fire department had becomes renamed as policies and procedures; is clear they are employees of the town as indicated by Chief Dunnell as understood at the last meeting; includes additional description of auxiliary firefighter
 - Llamas added it makes it more of a department like fire and police rather than an organization as it has been in the past. State laws have been created and evolved on retirement, hiring, injured on duty, command and control, and chief’s duties
 - Jacque noted there was no specific firefighting language, but was about organization
 - Kerns asked if the positions of secretary and treasurer would be removed or made town employees
 - Llamas explained there cannot be a department treasurer as there is a town treasurer where everything should be submitted. Llamas was not sure of the department’s purpose other than as written to keep the regular account, which is incorrect and goes to the town treasurer and Llamas believes is what is being done.
 - Kerns said after a tour of the department, the Chief talked about a need for a lockable office for documents and case histories that a secretary may be doing. She did not want to leave the department without the tools, personnel, to do the work. Jacque responded that policies and procedures do not handle the issues of job descriptions but do with the policy and procedures of the town. The department has a history of self-containment and items being struck are things for any other town department would be a job description. Llamas said a job description could be created whether paid or not and encompass the duties they need
 - Discussion of language remaining for impeachment of officers. Llamas explained this was an organizational piece as a policy for meetings and committee duties for that part of on-call/volunteer. Jacque asked why they wouldn’t just be fired or brought on disciplinary action. Llamas will check on this section. Kerns suggested items on page 13 may also need be checked
 - On recruit training, Kerns was impressed how the department brings people along and pass on the culture and training but does not understand why it would be cut. Llamas explained it was the breakdown on how it was done
 - Kerns asked for the difference between volunteer and full-time if everyone is an employee. Meisner explained the volunteer staff is on call 24/7 in the event of an emergency but no full-time staff at the fire station. The fire department is referred to as on call. Examples of the emergency medical service and police on call include being available to serve after a shift versus volunteering to respond to an emergency if not assigned on call or a shift. The firefighters do not get paid an on-call stipend but are paid if they respond to a call. Payment for training and meetings to be discussed further

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- Discussion on the mission statement, membership updating and next steps to finalize a basic document at the January 9 meeting that can be added to at a later date if needed
- Llamas to forward questions to the lawyer, and get a final review to Chief Dunnell. Llamas, Kerns and Cummings to meet with Chief Dunnell before 1/9
- Select Board policy: Town Lawyer Access
 - Kerns feels strongly individual Select Board members should have access to the town attorney and is inappropriate for the Select Board members having to ask permission from the Town Administrator. There could be a limit of hours for budgeting
 - Jacque could not justify having individual members consulting the town lawyer on behalf of the town when individual members are not representing the town
 - Cummings couldn't think of any scenario where a member would need to contact counsel and offered other avenues such as the state ethics commission
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Jacque the Select Board voted to approve the access to Town Counsel policy. 3 yes/1 nay, passed by majority vote
- Possible Special Town Meeting (January)
 - Review of the remaining articles include engineering for the sewer department, joining the Franklin Regional Council of Government permitting program, increasing the sewer commission membership.
 - Jacque asked if the increase on the sewer commission could be set up like the water district with an appointed member. Llamas to consult with the lawyer to redraft the article and forward to Karen Boudreau of the Sewer Commission
 - Kerns asked if a quorum bylaw for town meeting. Possible Annual Town Meeting article. Llamas suggested setting a regular special town meeting in the fall that could be passed over if not needed but would get people used to a set special town meeting
- Select Board Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed Budget
 - Add to postage costs and explore Every Door Direct Mailing; reduce technology
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to approve the Select Board fiscal year 23025 proposed budget
- Governance Section of the Select Board Goals (new Annual Report)
 - Mosquito control, Economic Development, Public Safety, Human Resources, community outreach, infrastructure added
 - Trends and metrics is being worked on
 - The Select Board agreed with the additions and format
- Strategic Goals Section (new Annual Report)
 - Items from various boards and departments synthesized into coherent themes and priorities included
- **Topics not reasonably anticipated by the chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting**
 - Request from Jess Krupa, SunRun for a renewal of a temporary Vendor, Hawker and Peddler License; (*dates to be determined*), Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10 am-5pm; Saturday & Sunday 10am-3pm; Tuesday & Thursday 12pm-5pm- request denied due to holidays and weeks not specified
- **Committee/Board Appointments**
 - Re-appointments:
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to re-appoint: Erin Jaworski and Shawn Foster to the Zoning Board of Appeals terms expire 12/31/2028
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to re-appoint: John Cowan, Robert Holst, Chistopher Redmond, Benjamin Welcome, William Kimball, Jason Bassett, David Shoemaker, Laura Gordon, Scott Minckler, Steve Gould, Angelia Rodriguez, Christian Santiago, Thomas Chabot, Darren Gale, Jordan Zukowski, Derek Worden, Mark Ruddock, Alison Dalpe, Nicholas Feld, Adam Paicos, James Palmeri,

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John Richardson, Curtis Weaver, Brandon Bryant, Mitchell Waldron as Police part time/mutual aid; terms expire 12/31/24

- Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to re-appoint Mark Fortier, Jill Fortier, Rachel Shearer, Ethan Sicard, Cameron Kennedy, Michael Shedd, Jake Whitney, Ryan Betters, Brandon Breault, Philip Wonkka, Jennifer Reid, William Kimball, Emily Milles, Todd Czernich, Mariah Anthony, Talia Hicks, Martin Given, Shawn Garland, Carolyn Warger Czernich, Dan Momaney, Joseph Reed, Yvonne Moreno to Emergency Medical Services: terms expire 12/31/24
- Motion by Jacque, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to re-appoint Stacy Bond to the Historical Commission; term expires 12/31/26
- Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to re-appoint Elizabeth Whitcomb, Deb Lanou to the Council on Aging; terms expire 12/31/26
- Motion by Jacque, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to re-appoint Spirit Joseph to the Energy Commission; term expires 12/31/26

• **Proposed Agenda Items**

- School Street Bridge; Fire Dept. policies & procedures; town meeting quorum bylaw; COLA (cost of living adjustment); appearance schedule for boards, committees, commissions, departments

• **Announcements**

- Kerns announced the school district had a grant to produce a conditions report on their building in a binder for the town
- Fred W. Wells Fund 2024-2025 Scholarship applications are available in the main hallway in Town Hall. Deadline March 20, 2024

• **Recognition for Service**

- Thanks to former Economic Development Director Mallory Sullivan for service to the town
- Thanks to the 350th Committee
- Congratulations to the Senior Center on receiving a fiscal year 2024 service incentive grant funded through the executive office of Elder Affairs to be used to implement fund demonstration projects to improve capacity to support older adults in the community

Motion by Jacque, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to adjourn at 8:57 pm

Recorded by Sandra L. Wood, Secretary

Select Board Clerk

1/9/24_
Date Approved