

[NORTHFIELD SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES]

January 23, 2024

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; Sandra L. Wood, Town Secretary; Tyler Bourbeau, BNCTV

Others Present: Cam Kennedy, Assistant EMS Director; Marissa Atkins; Brian Dew; Chief Jon Hall; Chief Floyd “Skip” Dunnell III; Assistant Chief Michael Quinn; Paula Carr; Misha Storm, Dickinson Library Director

- Meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm
- **Scheduled Appointments**
 - **6:00 pm** – EMS appointments: Marissa Atkins & Brian Dew
 - Marissa Atkins
 - Lives in Warwick; works as an archaeologist. Has worked as a firefighter on the west coast and received emergency medical training certification (EMT) last year
 - Deals with critical accidents by talking to others and good at handling emotions. Very active to work out stress
 - Extracurricular activities include circus acrobatics and rock climbing
 - Wants to give back to the community
 - This is not an end goal career. Interested in search and rescue
 - Brian Dew
 - Grew up in Leyden. Worked in nonprofit and is looking for a career change.
 - Got his emergency medical training and is on the Gill fire department
 - In his spare time he fosters dogs
 - Has a support group to help with stressful situations
 - Would like to become a full-time firefighter
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to appoint Marissa Atkins as an on-call volunteer per diem EMT
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to appoint Brian Dew as an on-call volunteer per diem EMT
 - **6:15 pm** – Library Circulation Assistant Appointment – Paula Carr
 - Long term resident of Northfield and spent many hours in the library as a young person and with her own children
 - Background in working in libraries during high school and college
 - Library Director Misha Storm recommended Carr be hired as the Saturday Circulation Assistant
 - Carr has worked in administration and as a paralegal for 25 years at Northfield Mount Hermon School
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to appoint Paula Carr as Library Circulation Assistant at grade one, step one at \$15.71 per hour effective immediately.
 - **6:30 pm** – Chief Hall
 - Police Officer Appointment- Curtis Weaver
 - Meisner summarized his findings from the interview with Weaver and his work experience as a long-time officer; on investigations through the Drug Task Force and District Attorney’s office with Officer Weaver as Bernardston’s representative and found him to have a high level of positivity. Jacque concurred on Weaver’s level of energy at the interview
 - Chief Hall has requested Weaver be given three weeks vacation given his five years experience and also requests Officer Cobileanschi be granted three weeks vacation
 - Jacque added Weaver is community oriented and has interacted with Meisner and Chief Hall in their careers.
 - Weaver has a strong background in security and crowd control

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- Meisner gave a brief review of his interactions with Weaver in Meisner's capacity as Booking Officer at the Sheriff's office
- Kerns inquired if Chief Hall had any concerns about the transfer to community policing with Weaver's experience in security and crowd control
 - Chief Hall responded no and continued to explain his work experience with Weaver
- Chief Hall explained Weaver was in training for full-time certification and unable to attend this meeting. He will attend a future meeting. Chief Hall read parts of Weaver's resume noting his eight years' experience in law enforcement and community policing. A graduate of Pioneer Valley Regional School, he has an understanding of the local area
- Motion by Boudreau, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to appoint Curtis Weaver as a full-time police officer the Town of Northfield Massachusetts at grade 7, step 5 plus any other educational benefit he may be eligible for under the union agreement, with an offer to start with one week vacation, one week sick time and one personal day effective at the start date with and accrual of three weeks vacation on July 1, 2024 contingent upon his completion of the certification training
- Motion by Boudreau, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted effective immediately to approve Oleg Cobileanschi to a three-week vacation accrual setting
 - Police Department Policies
 - Chief Hall will review the edits and fix them. He will notify the Select Board when the online version is ready. When Chief Hall edits the online version, he will send out an email notification negating the need for him to come back before the Select Board for every change
- **Review and Approval of Warrants**
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to approve the 1/24/24 Payroll warrant of \$78,791.62
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to approve the 1/24/24 Vendor warrant of \$348,261.69
- **Review and Approval of Minutes**
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to approve the minutes as written 1/9/2024. 4 yes, 1 abstention
- **Meetings/Events attended by Selectboard members**
 - Meisner: police officer interview
 - Jacque: Emergency Medical Service Task Force; police officer interview; Franklin Regional Council of Government Finance Committee; Special Town Meeting public forum; Finance Committee
 - Boudreau: Friends of Northfield Seniors; Tighe & Bond; Sewer Commission
 - Kerns: Stewardship Advisory Committee; Board of Health; Chief Dunnell, fire department policy; Highway department; Open Space Committee; Special Town Meeting public forum
 - Cummings: Chief Dunnell, fire department policy
- **Town Administrator's update**
 - Highland Ave Sidewalks and Culvert
 - Both grants now approved, and state contracts signed
 - Signed contracts with Tighe & Bond to begin engineering, permitting, and bidding work
 - This ties in the Special Town Meeting article to do both projects at the same time so the area is only open once
 - Grant Development Director Position
 - Select Board members for Screening and Hiring Committee
 - Hire date proposed in 2-3 weeks

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- Job description has been updated
 - Jacque on screening, Meisner on hiring and Kerns on both
 - Would like to start scheduling interviews for next week
- Composition of Grandin Water District Commissioners
 - The composition of the Commission is written into the law
 - To change a new bill would have to be filed
 - One member will be up for election at this coming Town Election
 - One member is appointed until 2025
- Business Park Feasibility Study Grant
 - Deadline was 1/17
 - Received one very qualified response
 - Set up to meet with them on: Monday the 29th at 9:00 am
 - Kerns requested to be kept in the loop for economic development
- Notified the town received the Green Communities grant for \$178,910 to finish air source heat pump work at the Library and continue work at Northfield Elementary School including duct sealing and insulation.
- Attended Massachusetts Municipal Association annual meeting
- Meisner and Boudreau to assist in Building Maintenance position screening and hiring
- Kerns requested data from the economic development online survey after January 31 deadline
- **Business**
 - Fire Department
 - Policies
 - Llamas commented on review and opinion of counsel, language referring to a town department being run by a committee and impeachment by committee caused concern
 - Cummings clarified the committee is making recommendations to the Chief, the Chief makes the hiring decisions to bring to the Select Board
 - Discussion on Article 3 Section 2E "Impeachment of Officers". Language violates the town personnel policy on discipline. Kerns suggested the language be changed to "recommended to the Chief"
 - Definition of impeach, meaning an officer did something wrong, with no action in impeachment. Llamas was concerned the language could cause a lawsuit and suggested a member of the department report to the Chief who in their role would follow up with an investigation and discipline as is done with all other departments.
 - Kerns suggested editing the section; Chief Dunnell agreed.
 - Llamas added comments on the rights of individuals during the disciplinary process and the requirements for posting as a public meeting or executive session
 - Jacque recommended having the personnel policy on hand for comparison and syncing information
 - The fire department does not have an association but does have Northfield Fireman's Fund for fundraising
 - Kerns referred to Article 1 section 1c of the attorney's comments to remove language "for a majority of vote of the regular members" and section 2 on the interviewing process leaves the town open to claims of favoritism, bias and discrimination. Kerns added the town has been pleased with the department and the hiring; they tried to remove items the lawyer didn't like and standardize the form. It is the responsibility of the Select Board to vet candidates. Assistant Chief Quinn commented, the department knows what the needs are. Kerns reread the lawyer's comments and asked if the

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process had changed from what was in the document. Jacque explained because the Select Board is bringing the 1940's document up to date because it doesn't sync with employment law and the personnel policy and procedures used for all other departments. Regardless of past practice the process needs to be updated

- Assistant Chief Quinn asked for clarification on the process of hiring. Jacque explained the process of a screening and hiring committee members dependent on the department. Llamas continued with the process used for the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) as a relevant volunteer/ on-call comparison. EMS officers interview then submit a recommendation with an application and credentials. Quinn asked about the 12-week training candidates go through. Jacque suggested shifting the training to the officers. Quinn responded it is the officers that do the training. Chief Dunnell explained the three-person standing committee who meet with the candidates. The requirements and responsibilities are laid out. If the candidate wants to move forward, a 12-week training is initiated. Jacque understood the process but didn't feel it was reflected in the language of their document. Dunnell continued explaining the 12-week training and candidate evaluation. At the end, the department officers determine if the candidate would be an asset to the department and to move forward to recommend to the Select Board. Jacque inquired if the candidate fills out an application prior to starting the process. Dunnell said no but that could change. Meisner asked if the candidate could come before the Select Board to be appointed, then go through the training as a probationary period.
- Boudreau suggested changing the language from standing committee to screening committee
- Cummings related the process to his experience in the police field as a training officer, participating in ride along, like an auxiliary program and not an employee of the department, similar to what the fire department does now
- Llamas referred to the language "any member may have the privilege of presenting to the standing committee the names of any candidates eligible to for recruit training" needs to be removed. Kerns clarified there was no problem with a member bringing someone forward but if limited to any member there could be a legal issue and change the language to "any person can come forward..." and to modify 2E where the Chief could get together with members informally to ask there thoughts and not limit the hiring process. Jacque suggested the change be run by the lawyer to ensure the employment process was not being subverted with another process.
- Meisner suggested the department follow what other departments use. Llamas explained that she rewrote the town application for the fire department. It's not for employment but to put the town on notice and protect the town in case the candidate gets hurt during training. Chief Dunnell asked for clarification of the process explained that training sessions are initiated after several candidates have expressed interest. He would not want them to be made employees before the introductory training and evaluation then brought before the Select Board. Llamas re-iterated it was the language that needed to be changed to reflect the process the department was actually using. The current wording sounds like an association committee.
- Kerns asked about insurance and using the term probationary so they can be covered. Quinn stated no one gets paid during the training.
- Jacque suggested a flowchart be created to fit the language and summarized filling out the application to cover the town and department, what the candidate is called during

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this period. Llamas will check with the insurance company if they are called trainees and the town's obligation in the 12-week training period

- Boudreau asked if a physical was required prior to training. It is not required before training but is required upon hiring
 - Meisner summarized the process of becoming a correctional officer(CO), being hired, trained for two weeks and if moving forward attend the full CO academy.
 - Kerns would like it noted to avoid the appearance of turnover, it specifically say hire for training to clarify it was a vetting process rather than a mark against the department.
 - Jacque asked what Erving and Gill fire departments have for policy and if it could be borrowed so as not to re-invent the wheel and if there was an online service to publish policy and procedure online to keep them updated with state and federal law. Llamas explained the 12-week training should be written as a department procedure and all the department's procedures should be documented for reference. Llamas referred to a sample standard operating procedure
 - Meisner asked for the next step. Kerns noted the changes, lawyer's comments and discussion the group can refer to for edit. Discussion continued on documenting department procedures. Dunnell added each of the 26 fire departments in Franklin County have a similar structure to Northfield or none at all. Jacque suggested using other s as templates and filling in Northfield's specific procedures instead of re-writing from scratch.
 - Discussion on the insurance section that had been added concerning specific requirements for the fire department. The breakdown on age to be updated as indicated by the MacNamara law and does not need to be included in policy and procedures.
 - Jacque asked Llamas to send the application to the Select Board. Llamas suggested Chief Dunnell make changes on the application if necessary. Discussion on what could be added to the form and filled in upon completion of training and referral for appointment
- Fire Chief Succession Plan/Process to review and appoint new Fire Chief
 - Cummings explained the plan was to put a committee together
 - Meisner suggested anyone could fill out an application for the position then have a committee consisting of fire department members. Cummings added the particulars should be established by the committee for who would be on the committee and requirements of the position.
 - Boudreau asked if there was a set standard for Chief. Chief Dunnell said there are classes and certifications. Llamas added the Select Board would have to determine the requirements. Jacque referred to the Town of Whately recently hiring a Fire Chief and some of the certifications that were not state law but professional training for firefighting including Hazmat. Dunnell explained the levels of certification for on-call vs. full-time Chief. Jacque added record keeping and administrative duties as chief would be included in the job description.
 - Llamas suggested a few members of the fire department and a couple Select Board members become a working group to put together a packet of job descriptions and certifications on an application or resume they would like to see
 - Discussion on composite of the succession committee. Two fire, an EMS, a Select Board, a police and two citizens. Jacque suggested a smaller group, with Kerns and Cummings, pull together the packet for the larger group to work with. Cummings and Kerns agreed. Llamas to forward to Kerns what needs to be included in the packet.
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to re-appoint Floyd Dunnell III, Chief; Mike Quinn, Assistant Chief; Rob Hunter, Captain; Jeff Grover, 1st Lieutenant; Chris Kalinowski, 2nd

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Lieutenant; Caileb Milton, 3rd Lieutenant; Amanda Dunnell, Clerk; Mariah Anthony, Pat Brunette, Dan Chabot, Shane Duclos, Jacob Fuess, Andrew Goodwin Jr., Tyler Hunter, Tom Jackson, Mike Magnuson, Scott Milton, Dan Momaney, Tim Momaney, Jay Nelson, Eric Oakes, Keith Stark, Derek Worden to the Northfield Fire Department, terms expire 1/31/25

- Motion by Cummings seconded by Boudreau the Select Board voted to re-appoint Kevin Connelly, Fredd Fuller, Steve Malsch, Jim Wright as Auxiliary Fire Department members; terms expire 1/31/25. 4 yes, 1 abstention
- Direct Local Technical Assistance Projects
 - Forms sent to Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Senior Center, Board of Health, and Open Space Committee
The Planning Board has sent back the form. They expressed interest in assistance in: Battery Storage Bylaw; Accessory Dwelling Units Bylaw; Municipal Planner Services
 - Select Board to review and return with choices at the next meeting
- Approve Annual Report to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to approve the Annual Report to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission
- **Topics not reasonably anticipated by the chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting**
 - Approval and assignment of Special Town Meeting warrant articles
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to recommend Article 1
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to recommend Article 2
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to recommend Article 3. Article was amended to include: "there will be additional funds left to close out to free cash"
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to recommend Article 4
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to recommend Article 5
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted 2 yes, 2 no and 1 abstention on Article 6. Discussion: Clarification that only the law be changed. Review of the Finance Committee vote. Reasons for change discussed at the open forum were 1. More hands to do the work 2. With only 3 members, 2 members having a conversation abridged open meeting law and 3. 5 members would give quorum versatility
- **Committee/Board Appointments**
 - Re-affirm Special Town Employees
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to designate the members of the Board of Health, Board of Assessors, and the Conservation Commission's contract consultant as "Special Municipal Town Employees" pursuant to the state policy of the Selectboard adopted October 6, 2015.
 - Motion by Boudreau, seconded by Kerns the Select Board voted to re-appoint Floyd Dunnell III as Emergency Management Director; term expires 1/30/25
 - Motion by Kerns, seconded by Cummings the Select Board voted to re-appoint Amanda Dunnell as Assistant Emergency Management Director; term expires 1/30/25
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Jacque the Select Board voted to appoint Elizabeth Whitcomb, Jane Kilgore and Christine Harris as Election Officers; terms expire 8/15/24
- **Proposed Agenda Items**
 - Student Resource Officer; 3 Town Select Board and Finance Committee forum; 6 Town Regionalization; Tighe & Bond; Boy Scout House repairs; Town website; Moderator webpage; Moderator/American Disability Act/Electronic voting; Economic Development Advisory, non-attending member; preserve relaxed conversation for town voting events
- **Announcements: Town Administrator evaluation complete; Special Town Meeting January 24**

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- **Recognition for Service:** Basketball Coach Scott Thayer and team on 300th win; Police Department, Karen Boudreau & Bee Jacque for participating in the Special Town Meeting public forum
- **Executive Session: Motion by Kerns, seconded by Cummings the Select Board went into executive session at 8:43pm for review/approval of executive session minutes 10/17/23 & 11/7/23 under General Law Chapter 30A, section 21(a)(7) to comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements and not return to open session. Roll call vote: Jacque yes, Meisner yes, Boudreau yes, Cummings yes and Kerns yes.**
- Meeting adjourned at 8:51pm

Recorded by Sandra L. Wood, Secretary

Select Board Clerk

2/6/24
Date Approved