

[NORTHFIELD SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES]

November 30, 2021

Northfield Town Hall
69 Main St

Selectboard Present: Heath Cummings, Chair; Barbara “Bee” Jacque, Vice Chair; Alexander Meisner; Bernard Boudreau, Clerk; Mary Sullivan-Bowen

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

Others Present: Tom Walker, Highway Superintendent; Joe Graveline, Rte 10 West Rd

Assessors Present for Tax Classification Hearing: Alice Lord, Bob MacEwen Co-Chairs; Beth Walker

- Meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm
- **Tax Classification Hearing**
 - Cummings read the 11/23/21 Posted Notice: The Selectboard, in conjunction with members of the Board of Assessors, will hold a joint public hearing on Tuesday, November 30, 2021 at 6:00 pm. at Town Hall, 69 Main Street, Northfield, MA to determine the percentages of tax levy to be borne by each class of real and personal property for Fiscal Year 2022, per MGL c. 40, s.56, as amended. All Northfield residents are welcome to attend this hearing and to present any oral or written comments on the matter. In the event that a taxpayer is unable to attend, written comments may be submitted in advance to the Selectboard’s Office in the Town Hall.
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Meisner the board voted to open the Public Classification Hearing to discuss the allocation of the local property tax levy among the property classes for FY2022. Vote: unanimous
 - BWalker presented information describing single versus split tax rates. A split tax rate would include agricultural and Chapter land. Northfield traditionally opts for a single tax rate
 - This is a re-evaluation year. Property values and home sales are up. Increased sales lower the tax rate
 - The value average for this year is \$244,800
 - Meisner expressed a split rate would assist low income but raise business rates. Preferred the single rate. Bowen and Boudreau supported single rate
 - There were no written or in-person comments
 - Cummings stated the excess levy capacity was \$1,292,153.43
 - Llamas explained the excess levy capacity
 - There are limits on raising taxes
 - Excess levy is raised through taxation before an override required
 - Northfield carries a high levy due to former properties with higher taxation having been removed from the tax rolls. This does not lower the levy
 - Motion by Meisner, seconded by Bowen the board voted to adopt a uniform tax rate, otherwise known as a single tax rate for all Classifications for the fiscal year 2022. Vote: unanimous
 - The Selectboard signed the allocation classification for the Assessors submittal.
 - Motion by Cummings, seconded by Meisner to close the hearing at 6:21 pm. Vote: unanimous
- **Scheduled Appointments**
 - Tom Walker Four Mile Brook; addressing Perrea letter
 - Cummings referred to the areas of concern called Site 1 and Site 2 from the letter addressed at the 11/16/21 meeting
 - Walker explained about the existing culverts and the pitch of the road
 - Site 1 is a potential problem. A six-foot wall would help the issue
 - Site 2 is ripped up to prevent washing and clogging. The road was undermined and repaired. Plan is to pave after repair has settled
 - An engineer has been contacted for proposed changes
 - The brook is higher than the road causing undermining of road and trees when the brook overflows. A permanent fix will take time
 - Meisner asked about town liability if there was an accident
 - Town not liable if the road has been maintained. This problem has not been neglected
 - Walker gave a brief update of the Eversource funded project on Millers Falls Rd.
 - Culvert delivered, tree to be saved

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- **Review and Approval of Warrants**
 - Motion by Meisner, seconded by Jacque the board voted to approve the 12/02/21 Payroll warrant of \$50,911.10
 - Motion by Meisner, seconded by Boudreau the board voted to approve the 12/02/21 Vendor warrant of \$261,440.13
- **Review and Approval of Minutes**
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Boudreau the board voted to approve the minutes of 11/16/21 as amended
- **Meetings/Events attended by Selectboard members**
 - Bowen: Franklin Regional Transit Authority; First Parish Board
 - Meisner: Police Chief contract negotiation with Cummings
 - Jacque: First Light; Finance Committee
- **Business**
 - Sidewalk Clearing of snow
 - Meisner raised the issue of seniors being unable to remove snow from sidewalks connected to their residence and if there was a town aided solution
 - Llamas added the Town Hall was in the same predicament with snow removal. Will discuss with Highway Superintendent Walker at December meeting
 - Building Maintenance Technician job description
 - With the prospect of additional town buildings, different skill sets will be required
 - Discussion on distinguishing duties, scheduling, position grade in relation to highway personnel positions and to change the title to Building and Grounds Maintenance Coordinator
 - Motion by Meisner, seconded by Bowen to accept the changes to the Building Maintenance Technician job description effective November 2021 with the position title change to Building and Grounds Maintenance Coordinator
 - Certificate of Adoption of the Hazardous Mitigation Plan
 - Certificate of Adoption read
 - Motion by Meisner, seconded by Jacque the board voted to set forward the resolution to adopt the Northfield and Warwick Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan
 - Mosquito Control
 - Jacque requested an article be added to the Special Town Meeting warrant for Northfield to join the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (PVMCD)
 - No money needed at town meeting, just to notify PVMCD of our intent
 - Application needs to be approved by the State Reclamation Board
 - Discussion to meet to sign warrant with added article on 12/3/21
 - Special Town Meeting Warrant
 - Review of the articles
 - Jacque questioned the exclusion of bylaw articles, one for open space was cited.
 - Llamas explained the topic cited was a Planning Board regulation, not a bylaw
 - Joe Graveline joined the discussion to dispute the language in section C315. He said the Planning Board passed it without proper language and deviated from the advisory
 - Llamas has contacted Peggy Sloan of the Franklin Regional Council of Gov. Planning for clarification
 - Motion by Meisner, seconded by Jacque the board voted to approve and recommend said articles for Special Town Meeting December 20, 2021
 - Time off request
 - Motion by Jacque, seconded by Meisner the board voted to approve the time off request.
 - Request from Martha Morse to resign from the 350th Anniversary Committee

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- Motion by Meisner, seconded by Cummings the board vote to approve the request from Martha Morse to resign from the 350th Anniversary Committee with deep regret effective immediately
- Exit Interview policy
 - Llamas explained the process but said exiting staff have not responded by sending back the questionnaires mailed to them
 - Cummings suggested an online form be emailed to the exiting personnel
- **Town Administrator's update**
 - Received full \$263,798 in CARES Act reimbursement. Project Specialist from FEMA has submitted our final FEMA request for \$11,975. After we receive funding, we will reconcile the books – shouldn't have a funding gap of much if any at all. Will update.
 - Received a small (\$628) MIIA safety grant to buy OSHA safety equipment for the transfer station (manual material handling devices like carts and dollies) etc.
 - Attended a workshop with a legislative update
 - The State of MA is expecting about 9 billion in infrastructure money –we will see funds for projects, water, sewer, broadband and Cyber security are top on the legislator's lists. Climate mitigation will be another area we can expect to see funding.
 - OSHA rule about vaccination of work force is currently on hold due to litigation. MA is NOT an OSHA state; however, our Department of Labor Standards traditionally mirrors federal OSHA law. They are talking employers of 100 or more at this point, we may not qualify (may include part time, etc.). At this point the bill does not exempt cities and towns, the state could choose to do so
 - Held Screening interviews for potential candidates for maintenance and highway. Will hope to bring final selections to the SB meeting on the 14th.
- **Correspondence:**
 - Letter of resignation from Joshua Bonaiuto of the Highway Dept.
 - Resignation letter read
 - Motion by Meisner, seconded by Boudreau the board voted to accept the letter of resignation from Joshua Bonaiuto
- **Proposed Agenda Items**
 - Sewer Dept. Appointment
 - Police reform & bridge academy
 - Parking on Main St. (MB)
 - Liquor license renewals
- **Announcements**
 - 6 Town Regionalization School Focus Group meeting at PVRs December 1; 5pm
- **Recognition for Service**
 - Acting Police Chief Alexander Pirozhkov for filling in the vacant position
- **Executive Session**
 - **Motion by Meisner, seconded by Jacque the board voted to go into executive session at 8:35 pm for Contract Negotiation** under M.G.L. c.30A, Sec. 21 (2) To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel and to return to open session. On a roll call vote Boudreau said yes, Bowen said yes, Cummings said yes, Meisner said yes, and Jacque said yes.
- **Return to open session at 8:51 pm**
 - **Police Chief Contract**
 - Motion by Meisner, seconded by Boudreau the board voted to enter an employment agreement by and between the Town of Northfield and Jonathan Hall for the position of Police Chief. This agreement shall

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be in effect as of the 1st day of December 2021 contingent on a necessary background checks for this employment.

- Contract signed
- **Motion by Cummings, seconded by Jacque the board voted to adjourn at 8:59 pm**

Recorded by Sandra L. Wood, Secretary

Selectboard Clerk

12/14/21
Date Approved