

NORTHFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
Minutes of the Meeting of January 26, 2010

Present: Debra Shepard, Jamie Knowlton, Steve Bluhm

Also Present: Charles Harris, Ronald Huckins, Geoff Ziminsky, Derek Lacourciere, Dina Waldron, Gretchen Wilder, George Flanders, Bill Wilder, Patricia Sawicki, Steve Sawicki, Kent Finemore, Leif Martinson, Duane Harbour, Pat Clark, Tom Beaulieu, Paul Auger, Jared Hebert, Pat Consentino, Sandy Plessner, Normand Boudreau, Harold Harbour, Stephen Carrier, Meghan Siegler, Brian Constant, Gail Ober, Greg Michaud, Roland Seymour, Ross Cunningham, Lisa Swancott, Greg Hill, Kevin Waldron, Maureen Bouchet, Gary Bouchet, Blake Barclay, Randy Barclay, Joe DeMello, Dennis Allen, Valerie Allen, Joyce Fulweiler, Keith Murray, Greg Machaud, Chief Adams, Glenn Smith

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

1. Public Appointments

The Chair recognized the members of the Fire Services Committee. Members introduced themselves. Geoff Ziminsky reviewed the Committee's charge and recommendations, call data, proposed staffing level and budget summary.

Steve Bluhm provided a summary of estimated costs of enhancements being proposed for TNFD, including the proposed new facility, renovations to Park Street, finance costs, operating costs, and staffing costs. Although these costs are not finalized yet, using the available figures presented by the Town of Tilton and TNFD staff, Northfield can expect its TNFD costs to increase by 42%, to an annual total of 805,404 if the proposed enhancements are implemented.

Jamie Knowlton asked for a brief description of how the plans presented by the FSC and Tilton will effect Northfield. Geoff Ziminsky responded that the Committee's review of other departments shows that service to Northfield would not be impacted by this change. Derek Lacourciere noted that Tilton's proposal to relocate the Center Street Station to Rt. 140 will result in shorter response time to a small part of Northfield. Steve Bluhm reviewed the historic distribution of calls throughout the day and how that related to the Committee's staffing recommendation. Sel. Knowlton asked if the Committee were divided in its recommendation. Committee members indicated that they were not.

The Chair opened the floor for questions. Randy Barclay asked how many call firefighters were projected. Charlie Harris responded 36, realizing it will take some time to reach this number. Mr. Barclay stated that he thinks dissolution is a good idea, there used to be a lot of interest in serving as a call firefighter. Derek Lacourciere noted that the reason there are fewer call firefighters now is that volunteers are discouraged by TNFD. Kent Finemore inquired as to the process for possible dissolution. Steve Bluhm outlined the process. Joe DeMello expressed his

concern with moving in the direction recommended by the FSC, his worry is that the level of service would be diminished by relying on call personnel. Steve Bluhm responded that the Committee's goal was to provide the citizens with information needed to make an educated decision. The system being proposed works well in other towns, including Alton, Auburn, and Gilmanton.

Gretchen Wilder reported that the FSC did not take its job lightly, it reviewed financial and service information and presented a viable option for the citizens.

Pat Consentino asked if the FSC conducted any cost analysis that did not include Tilton's Life Safety Building Committee recommendation. She expressed her opinion that the TNFD Commissioners do not have a plan for the future. Steve Bluhm responded that the FSC did not cost out a scenario without Tilton's Life Safety Building and reviewed the plan adopted by the TNFD Facilities Review Committee. Debra Shepard noted that all parties agree that changes are coming to the District, which is why Northfield needs to make a decision on this. Joyce Fulweiler indicated that she likes 24/7 coverage and wants to be convinced that the level of service will be retained. She asked if the Committee reviewed means of reducing costs other than dissolution. Gretchen Wilder responded that it had not, cost control within the District was beyond the jurisdiction of this Committee.

Lisa Swancott noted that with a net budget of \$441K Northfield could add two people and still be maintain the level of service we have now with significantly more control over the department. The problem now is that we have very limited control over how fire services are provided in our community.

Harold Harbour urged caution, stating that cities are having problems recruiting people for call firefighter positions.

Pat Clark indicated that the District has been in existence for 100 years and doesn't want to see it go down the toilet. He reviewed the history of the recent conflict relating to this issue, informed the group that he is running for Commissioner and briefed attendees on what he would do if elected. Pat disputed the FSC overtime numbers and bottom line, stating that the Fire Services Committee cherry picked its facts to fit its conclusion.

James Knowlton asked Pat Clark why Tilton was so concerned with how Northfield provided these services. Pat responded that Tilton is concerned because if the District is dissolved Tilton taxpayers will have to pay more to maintain the level of service they have now. It was noted that it seems that the only reason Tilton is interested in talking now is that it fears losing the 40% funding Northfield contributes to the TNFD.

Joe DeMello noted that it is harder to get people to volunteer these days. Dina Waldron responded that she is a paramedic and is ready to volunteer, and she personally knows of several others who are also willing.

Steve Bluhm noted that of the 24 call firefighters currently serving with TNFD some would serve with Northfield. If dissolution occurs the FSC recommends that the two towns still work together, as the police departments do now. Debra Shepard inquired as to the cash assets of the TNFD. Steve Bluhm responded that there is approximately \$500,000 available through reserves, billing revenue and fund balances. This would be split between the two towns.

Jared Hebert asked if the \$3 million price for the proposed fire station includes the cost of the land. Steve Bluhm and Pat Consentino responded that it did not. If Tilton buys the land it has not determined how much it will charge the District to build a fire station on the property.

Lisa Swancott inquired as to whether the citizens of Northfield would benefit by absorbing 40% of the cost of the proposed new fire station. Charlie Harris responded that it would not. Derek Lacourciere noted that we need to review all perspectives.

The Chair closed the public hearing at 7:45pm

Chair called a recess at 7:45 pm

Chair reconvened the meeting at 8:00 pm

The Chair asked for input from Board members concerning the Fire Services Committee report. The consensus of the Board was that the Committee did a very good job and the matter should be put before the voters. **Bluhm/Knowlton** moved to accept the recommendations of the Fire Services Committee as presented and move forward with placing a warrant article for dissolution on the TNFD warrant by petition. **Motion passed.**

Scott McGuffin informed the Board that he will be out of town for town meeting. He is seeking re-election as Moderator and wanted to be up front about his unavailability for that day.

There was a general discussion of the recommendation of the Fire Services Committee and the TNFD. Greg Hill offered to donate funds to get the word out on this. Joyce Fulweiler reviewed the history of Tilton's Life Safety Building Committee and how it came into existence.

Kevin Waldron noted that the overwhelming majority of TNFD calls are generated west of I-93, this needs to be taken into consideration.

Keith Murray noted that much of the increased cost is related to the development of exit 20. Kevin Waldron reminded him that this development resulted in the hiring of a full time fire inspector, for which Northfield assumes 40% of the bill.

There was a general discussion of pros and cons of various plans, options, service delivery, and response times under various service provision scenarios.

2. Highway Department

Mike distributed purchase requisitions.

Mike passed out information on requisition for Oak Hill to the Selectmen. He is still working with Edmonds on the final amount of this bill.

Mike reviewed options relating to replacing the 350 truck with a 450 or 550. The 450 and 550 can bear heavier loads. He noted that if we get rid of the 10 wheeler then this truck will do heavier duty, the 550 has a bigger engine and better transmission, it hold up better. Mike indicated that the price of the 550 is approximately \$38,500. Mike presented the material to the Board for review.

Mike and the Board reviewed the vehicle replacement schedule.

Mike reviewed a bill received from Public Service concerning damage done on Bay Street by a Town truck. When facility was installed the occupancy permit stated that we were not responsible for such damage. Board authorized Mike to send Public Service a note indicating that we were not responsible for this damage.

Mike reported that a hole has been knocked into the Town's 2500 gallon calcium tank. He will get a price on fixing it.

3. Police Department

Chief Adams reviewed bids for the new cruiser. Irwin's has dropped its price to \$24, 645 Grappone's bid is \$25, 265, Hillsboro hasn't bid yet.

Chief updated the Board on the costs of the recertifying radar units. The State charges \$45 per unit, for a total cost of \$225. The other vendor charges \$70 more, but he doesn't require that we remove the units from the vehicles, which is costly and can damage the units.

4. Town Administration

Glenn and the Board members reviewed proposed warrant and the proposed Northfield Sewer District budget. Glenn reviewed the recommendations of the Budget Committee in advance of next Thursday's public hearing.

Glenn reviewed the agreements needing approval before construction of the Winnepesaukee River Trail can begin.

Bluhm/Knowlton moved to approve the Interceptor Sewer Trail Agreement as presented by DES and to authorize Glenn Smith to sign the agreement on behalf of the Town. **Motion Passed.**

Bluhm/Knowlton moved to enter into an agreement with The Louis Berger Group for WRT Phase II construction monitoring services as presented. **Motion Passed.**

Knowlton/Bluhm moved to accept the bid of J. Parker and Daughters dated January 11, 2010 for construction of Phase II of the Winnepesaukee River Trail as presented in the amount of \$419,325. **Motion Passed.**

Jamie Knowlton expressed concern with the condition of Cannon Bridge. Mike noted that the bridge inspection report indicated that the bridge was satisfactory. Glenn was asked to put this matter on an April agenda.

Bluhm/Knowlton moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 19, 2010 as amended. **Motion Passed.**

Knowlton/Bluhm moved to enter into non-public session under the provisions of RSA 91-A3IIc

at 9:50 pm. **Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.** Present at the non-public session was Mike Summersett. **Knowlton/Bluhm** moved that the minutes of the non-public session be sealed. **Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.** **Bluhm/Knowlton** moved to reconvene the public session at 10:10 pm. **Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.**

There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 10:10 pm

APPROVED BY THE NORTHFIELD SELECTBOARD ON FEBRUARY 2, 2010