



# TOWN OF NORTHFIELD



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## NORTHFIELD BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of the meeting of January 27, 2016

Present: Linda Luedke, Leif Martinson, Keith Murray, Bob Southworth, Dennis Allen, Lisa Swancott

Also Present: Kevin Waldron, Wayne Crowley, Ed Weingartner, Greg Hill, Andy Buteau, Glenn Smith

The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm

**Southworth/Luedke** moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 14, 2016. **Motion passed.** **Murray/Southworth** moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 21, 2016 as amended. **Motion passed.**

The request to record meetings was deferred as George Corliss was absent.

The Vice Chair recognized Ed Weingartner, Chair of the CIP Committee, who reviewed his committee's recommendation to fund a town-wide assessment of the town roads to be used to develop a long term plan for managing the asset, which has an estimated value of \$40 - \$50 million. Budget Committee members said that the \$40,000 cost was excessive for what is essentially a windshield survey of the town roads. Ed responded that \$40,000 is not a lot of money for engineering. The project is not just a windshield survey, it will also include walking the roads, inspecting problem areas, development of engineered solutions and cost estimates. Ed noted that the cost of the road assessment is .001% the value of the asset.

Keith Murray asked how often we would have to repeat this survey. Ed responded that the plan will be a living document; that will have to be updated annually as conditions change. Keith asked if the cost will be \$40,000 annually. Ed said no, the annual updates will be in the \$10,000 range. Leif Martinson said that the \$40,000 is to establish the baseline. Glenn Smith discussed the financing of the plan, and the source of funding from the Road and Bridge Reconstruction and Repair Fund. Keith expressed concern that this is nothing more than a windshield survey. Dennis Allen responded that the engineers will not be looking at just the road surface; they will also be inspecting drainage issues.

Ed said that it isn't cost effective to put all our money into reconstruction; we need to manage the asset that we have now. Lisa Swancott pointed out that we will never have enough money to fund all the identified problems. Ed agreed, saying that is why it is important to spend the money we have wisely, this plan will allow the CIP committee to balance reconstruction projects with repair projects. We have to look at the entire road system, not just those roads in need of reconstruction.

Keith asked if this assessment can be done by the road agent. Ed responded that the CIP Committee tried that for several years, but they were not getting the information they needed. The Committee

needs to present a long term plan to the voters for their input and they can't do that without accurate information.

Lisa Swancott noted that we can't repair every road in town. Ed responded that he is not suggesting we do, he just wants to manage the asset. Keith Murray asked if we would have to re-engineer the roads that were done in 2015; Ed responded that these roads would not be redone. He also said that hearing from taxpayers would be an important part of this task, but he wants to be able to present them with hard data.

Leif Martinson reviewed the revised Hall Memorial Library budget. Greg Hill asked if the building had increased usage. Leif responded that usage is measured in different ways, a two week physical count, circulation counts and computer use counts. Linda Luedke noted that when she was in the library the other day all the computers were in use. Leif said that the library is consolidating computer maintenance to save costs and more effectively manage the equipment.

Wayne Crowley asked if the library looked at merging its heating expenses under the school contact. Leif responded that they were already doing this.

Bob Southworth outlined changes that the Selectmen recently made to their 2016 budget recommendation:

1. The mechanic position has been removed
2. The plasma cutter has been removed
3. Contracted tree limbing has been removed
4. Road project shimming has been reduced from \$70,000 to \$25,000
5. Planning wages have been reduced
6. The town wide phone system has been removed. Linda Luedke asked why this was removed. Bob responded that the Board is looking into alternatives. If they don't work out then the Board would consider buying the system from the emergency building repair fund.
7. The sander shed repairs have been removed.
8. The cost of the portable lifts has increased from \$20,000 to \$34,000. Keith asked if the Board was still recommending portable lifts. Bob responded that they were as the portable lifts were more versatile and did not take up an entire bay as a stationary lift would.

Budget Committee members reviewed the proposed warrant. Linda Luedke asked why the police department was proposing buying a pick-up truck as a front line cruiser. Bob responded that PD needs a four wheel drive vehicle. Kevin Waldron noted that the pick-up and the expedition are built on the same frame; the only difference is the frame.

There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 8:26pm

APPROVED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 3, 2016