



NORTHFIELD BUDGET COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of January 28, 2021

Present: George Corliss, Steve Randall, Amy O Hara, Kaitlin Lounsbury, Carl Bartlett, Morris Boudreau and Selectmen Representative Kevin Waldron.

Also Present: Town Administrator Ken Robichaud,

The 2021 Budget Committee meeting was called to order at 6:28 pm by Chairman George Corliss.

Randall/Boudreau motioned to approve the Minutes of January 21, 2021 as presented. All in favor, motion passed.

The first item up for discussion was the Legal Budget Line. This line is to cover legal expenses for the Administration of the Town. The Selectmen utilize this line for outside counsel for guidance and direction on legal issues that arise with employment, town issues and the legal interpretation for NH Revised Statute Annotated, (NH RSA). Also, this line may be used to offset other legal lines within other town department budgets especially planning and zoning, if those lines are expended due to unforeseen circumstances or legal issues that crop up in the budget year.

Randall/Boudreau motioned to accept the Selectmen's budget recommendation of \$11,000.00 to fund the Legal Line budget. All in favor, motion passed.

Discussion was had on the Planning and Zoning department with emphases on legal expenses, and does this have anything to do with the last budget that was just discussed, Legal Line. The T/A stated that it is different as this legal line tends to cover legal issues with the planning and zoning committees, that come up at their meetings. The T/A stated that last year due to the Covid outbreak the courts were closed and when they reopened they were slow to have hearings, they were being cautious because of the threat. This may happen again if we get a resurgence before everyone is inoculated with the vaccination.

Randall/Waldron motioned to accept the Selectmen's budget recommendation of \$14,564.00 to fund the Planning and Zoning Department. All in favor, motion passed.

Solid Waste was revisited as the Selectmen had a meeting with Casella Waste on Tuesday and were able to renegotiate the price lower. Also discussed was the Hazardous Waste Recycling Program through the Lakes Region Planning Commission where residents of Northfield may dispose of hazardous household waste on selected days throughout the year. Discussion was why the Town should spend \$3,300.00 when only 20 plus residents took advantage of this program in 2019. Selectmen Waldron produced an alternative to this program, where a resident could participate in this program but would be responsible for the destruction costs of their own hazardous waste. Members of the Committee decided to fund this program instead of leaving it up to the individual resident.

Randall/Lounsbury motioned to approve the amount of \$179,120.00 for the Solid Waste Collection budget. There was a 5-1 vote, motion passed to include the Hazardous Waste Recycling Program.

Solid Waste Disposal budget was next as was a discussion on a small dollar amount correction.

Lounsbury/Bartlett motioned to approve the Solid Waste Disposal budget at \$157,615.00. All in favor, motion passed.

Welfare Administration was reviewed next, a question was asked if the Welfare Director is still the same person, the T/A answered yes, that she is still with us.

Lounsbury/Waldron motioned to approve Welfare Administration in the amount of \$20,388.00. All in favor motion passed.

Welfare Payments was next. Committee Member Randall asked why there is a \$12,000.00 difference between the amount that was budgeted and what was spent. The T/A stated that prior to his arriving in Northfield, the Town was awarded a Covid Grant in the amount of \$115,000.00 and the town was able to offset some of the rents to the Grant, which saved the Town some expense. Randall asked what the historical rent expense on this line was. The T/A stated that he handed out the last 5 years of budgeted amounts for all lines, previous to starting this process. Randall asked not for the budgeted amounts, he wants the expenses of the past 5 years for rents. The T/A stated that he has no idea of what was spent in the past 5 years, only what was spent in 2020 and this is the first time any of the Committee members has asked for 5 years of expenses. Selectmen Waldron voiced objection to the escalating tone that Committee Member Randall was using towards the Town Administrator with this question.

Lounsbury/Waldron motioned to fund the Welfare Vendor Payments line at Selectmen's recommendation amount of \$27,910.00. There was a 5-1 vote, motion passed.

Parks and Recreation Department was up next for discussion. A question was asked about the Island issue between Tilton and Northfield and where is that now. Selectmen Waldron stated that it is almost completed, but it still needs to go back to Town Meeting after a NH Senate bill in Concord.

Randall/Waldron motioned to approve the Selectmen's request of \$9,000.00 for Parks and Recreation Budget. All in favor, Motion passed.

Randall/Boudreau motioned to approve the Selectmen's recommendation of \$1,850.00 for the Conservation Commission Budget. All in favor. Motion passed.

The TAN budget was next for discussion. The T/A stated that last year the Town's TAN's interest rate was at 2.38% on a \$700,000.00 draw. This year the interest rate given to the Town is 1% on the draw up to \$1 million dollars.

Randall/Waldron motioned to accept the Selectmen's recommendation of \$10,000.00 for the TAN budget. All in favor, motion passed.

A question was asked about the Economic Development Commission and there is only \$1.00 in the line. The T/A stated that this group has not been meeting as often due to Covid and a lack of interest, therefore no funds were requested. The Selectmen recommended \$1.00 be in the line, just in case funds are needed or an opportunity arises.

Lounsbury/Randall motioned to approve the Selectmen's request of \$1.00 for the EDC Budget line. All in favor, motion passed.

The T/A presented the 12 warrants for consideration. The committee reviewed the Warrants as submitted.

Committee Member Bartlett asked how many trees the Selectmen are planning on taking down at Pines Park. Selectmen Waldron stated that he believes about 40 trees need to be removed. Bartlett says that would like to put the tree cutting at Pines Park on a Warrant article. Bartlett stated that he feels that we are going behind the communities back by not bringing this up; for lack of a better word we are being sneaky. Bartlett also feels that we are destroying Town Property. He also states that there is no plan once the trees are down and gone to revitalize that area. Selectmen Waldron stated that we are not destroying Town Property but the Selectmen are making it a safer area.

Selectmen Waldron stated that the Selectmen have discussed a revitalization plan possibly using the Agricultural Center at the High School.

The T/A stated that the Selectmen conduct their business each week in a public setting, Residents are encouraged to come to the weekly meetings or they also have an option to zoom in each week, if Covid restricts their presence in person. The Selectmen conduct business in public each week in order to get things done, no residents attend these meetings.

The Town also sends out the minutes and an audio recording of each weeks meeting to anyone who is interested in receiving it. It is the resident's responsibility to become informed of Town happenings and the Selectmen make it easy for them to do so, by having many modes of informational venues. Website, monthly newsletters, information blasts, audio recordings and minutes sent via email. No one resident has ever consistently come to a meeting or has zoomed in to a meeting in the last 5 months. The Selectmen are not being sneaky by any means.

Selectmen have had a study done by an arborist at Pines Park and the report states that most trees are either diseased or are weakened and or broken and hollow. The safety and responsibility lies with the Board of Selectmen. They have been notified that this is a safety issue and the trees must come down. If someone is injured or worse the town will be held accountable.

Randall/Lounsbury motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 pm, all in favor, motion passed.

The next meeting of the Budget Committee will be on February 4 at 6:30pm for a public hearing with the Board of Selectmen on the 2021 budget.

Minutes Recorded by T/A Ken Robichaud

Minutes approved on February 4, 2021.