

**2008 NORTHFIELD TOWN MEETING
MINUTES**

The polls were open for voting at 10:00 a.m., March 11, 2008 by Moderator Scott McGuffin. Voting was terminated at 7:00 p.m. with 344 ballots cast.

ARTICLE 1: To choose all necessary Town Officers, Tilton-Northfield Fire District Officers and Winnisquam Regional School District Officers for the ensuing year:

For Selectman: (3 years)

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| Nadine Marshall | 37 |
| Mark St. Cyr | 55 |
| Stephen D. Bluhm | 210 |
| Frank Harvey | 13 |

For Town Clerk/Tax Collector: (3 years)

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| Cindy Caveney | 310 |
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For Supervisor of the Checklist: (6 years)

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| Margaret D. LaBrecque | 141 |
| Rita L. Bruno | 122 |

For Moderator: (2 years)

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| Scott McGuffin | 298 |
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For Trustee of Trust Funds

Majority write-in candidate declined, position to be appointed

ARTICLE 2: To see if the town will vote to adopt Amendment Number One (1) to the Northfield Zoning Ordinance Article Sixteen (16) as proposed by the Planning Board for the Northfield Zoning Ordinance as follows: Amend the floodplain ordinance as necessary to comply with requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program.

YES 260 NO 48

The Annual Town Meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m., March 15, 2008 by Moderator Scott McGuffin.

ARTICLE 3: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty Four Thousand Six Hundred and Ninety Nine Dollars (\$24,699) for the purchase of a replacement cruiser for the Police Department. (Majority vote required for adoption)

Article moved by Steve Bluhm and seconded by Glen Brown.

Police Chief Steve Adams spoke to the Article and responded to questions regarding the cost.

ARTICLE PASSED.

ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$200,000) for drainage work, grinding and paving of portions of Oak Hill Road. (Majority vote required for adoption)

Article moved by Steve Bluhm, seconded by Debra Shepard.

The Moderator commended Mike Summersett and the entire Highway Department for their great efforts during this difficult winter. Mike Summersett explained that Article 4 is to complete Phase 3 of a 3-Phase project. This will cover approximately 1000 feet of

underground drainage and 4000 feet of grinding and repaving to improve the driveway situation for residents. Additional discussion that the total cost of this project is \$220,000. The \$20,000 listed separately in the Budget was put aside to cover at the very least maintenance in that area in case the Article did not pass, and that the cost for this project would likely be higher in the future if not completed now.

ARTICLE PASSED.

ARTICLE 5:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Three Million Three Hundred Fifty Two Thousand Five Hundred Thirty Dollars (\$3,352,530) which represents the Budget Committee's recommended budget on the posted MS-7 and pass any vote in relation thereto. (Majority vote required for adoption).

Article moved by Glen Brown and seconded by Steve Bluhm.

Steve Randall moved, seconded by Steve Bluhm to amend the amount of \$3,352,530.00 to \$3,622,229.00. This amount reflects the changes as voted in Articles 3 and 4, and an additional \$55,000.00 to be added to the Highway Department Budget for expenses related to this winter's storms. **Amendment passed.**

ARTICLE AS AMENDED PASSED.

A mathematical error was discovered after the passage of the Article. A Motion for Reconsideration of Article 5 was made by Keith Murray and seconded by Bill Dawson. **Motion for Reconsideration Passed.**

A Motion to amend the amount to \$3,632,229.00 was made by Deb Wheeler and seconded by Linda Luedke. **Amendment passed.**

ARTICLE AS AMENDED PASSED

ARTICLE 6:

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into an agreement with Gravity Mountain Inc. to construct mountain bike trails on portions of Town-owned parcel R18-2 (a landlocked parcel) in exchange for access rights over Gravity Mountain Inc. property, cost of agreement preparation to be borne by Gravity Mountain Inc. Said agreement to include appropriate protections for the town from liability, including adequate insurance coverage. Said agreement to be completed within 90 days.

Article moved by Eliza Conde and seconded by Scott Hilliard.

Eliza Conde described the Gravity Mountain (former Highlands Ski Area) property in relation to parcels owned by the school and town in the same area. She stated the Conservation Commission is interested in having access to the ten-acre town owned parcel. Leif Martinson, an abutter to the property, spoke in favor of the Article. He stated Gravity Mountain has done a great job restoring the property that had been deteriorating for some time. Walter Hall provided historical perspective and wanted to ensure the Boy Scouts would be able to continue to utilize the property.

Additional questions were raised about verbiage in the deed for the town parcel and further defining "adequate" insurance coverage. Steve Bluhm stated the Town is interested in access and parking so residents and the Scouts can better use the property. Lana Dearborn pointed out that the Article only gives the Selectmen the permission to negotiate. She feels the questions being raised would be investigated during the process and it would be a wonderful opportunity for the town. Valerie Kehr made Motion to Table the Article until a legal opinion can be sought, seconded by Barbara Wirth. **Motion to Table was defeated.**

The Moderator asked permission from the Assembly to allow Mark Hayes, owner of Gravity Mountain, to speak. Permission granted. Mr. Hayes further explained the relationship of the parcels and referred to a map displayed in the hall. Several others spoke either in favor of the Article or to express concerns. Glen Brown stated all concerns voiced will be taken into consideration during the process, legal advice will be sought and public hearings will be held.

ARTICLE PASSED.

ARTICLE 7:

To hear the report of the Recycling Committee
Article moved by Steve Bluhm and seconded by Bill Dawson.

Dave Coulter gave report, highlighting that currently participation is at a low level, and that disposal costs are rising. Peg Shepard encouraged higher participation and gave specifics of the current prices the Town receives for recycled items and how recycling has resulted in a tax saving to the town.

ARTICLE PASSED.

ARTICLE 8:

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to re-appoint the Recycling Committee to encourage effective recycling, to reduce the cost of solid waste disposal, support the recycling functions of the transfer station and educate the community. The committee shall report its findings to the Board of Selectmen no later than October 2008.

Article moved by Glen Brown and seconded by Deb Wheeler.

Donna Bouchard commended the Recycling Committee for their efforts, and suggested they work closely with members of the Highway Department who already have substantial experience with waste management and the recycling process. Lisa Swancott spoke in favor of letting the committee continue its work in order to bring forward more options next year. Mary Maguire, a member of the committee, explained they are requesting additional time because after much research into numerous options, they learned the Co-op Northfield belongs to is considering going to a "Single Stream" process. This change would render much of the committee's research obsolete. They hope to come back with solid data after the decision is made by the Co-op. Wes deSousa stated more participation could make a substantial impact on our tax bills, and that mandatory recycling should be considered. Bob Ivon expressed concern that if disposal fees were enacted there would be much more trash dumped on the sides of our roads.

ARTICLE PASSED

ARTICLE 9:

To hear the report of the Education Committee.

Article moved by Steve Randall and seconded by Wes DeSousa.

Dave Court, Chairman, gave report. The nine-member Education Committee was established at last year's Town Meeting. They looked at the educational system from Northfield's point of view. Report has been given to the Selectmen. The committee reviewed numerous options with consideration to the school funding formula and State funding plan. Stated it is difficult for a citizen committee to tackle this complex issue. Greg Hill offered a motion to amend Article 9 to read: "To see if the town will give its consent to re-authorize the continuing work of the Northfield Education Committee. The purpose and focus of the committee will remain the same, namely the exploration and discussion of innovative ways to further promote educational opportunity and

EXCELLENCE for the students of the Town of Northfield with an eye to cost-cutting from a purely Northfield perspective.” Motion seconded by Keith Murray. Discussion on the Amendment: Keith Murray spoke in support of continuation of the committee, stating there are current legislative issues relating to State aid that need to be monitored. **Amendment passed.**

Catherine Ferreira spoke in favor of the Committee and their work. She thanked the Education Committee and the School Budget Committee for their work over the last year. **ARTICLE AS AMENDED PASSED.**

ARTICLE 10:

To see if the Town is willing to authorize the Selectman to hire a municipal engineer for the purpose of studying the feasibility of hiring outside private contractors to perform any of the town functions. The scope of the study should include, but not be limited to, the Highway Dept duties of snow removal, road repair, and roadside ditch maintenance. In the case of the Highway Dept, our Road Agent would act as a coordinator of all contracts for service and oversee all projects.

Article moved by Greg Hill and seconded by Steve Randall.

Greg Hill explained his reasons for submitting the Article by petition and asked for a ballot vote on the article. He stated there are many services we currently subcontract and thinks we should evaluate additional areas for possible savings. Lana Dearborn moved to Table the Article, stating there was no money in the budget to fund this Article, so any cost would have to be taken from somewhere else. Motion seconded by Paul Wilson. Vote on Motion to Table was by division of the house.

YES 69 NO 19

MOTION TO TABLE PASSED.

ARTICLE 11:

To see if the Town is willing to institute a TOWN BUDGET CAP that would allow the size of the town budget to be NO MORE than the same size as the prior years budget PLUS the current rate of inflation (CPI) as determined and posted in the Wall Street Journal.

Article moved by Laurie Hill and seconded by Deb Wheeler.

Greg Hill explained his reasons for submitting this Article by petition. Pointed out this year’s budget is lower than last year because there are no major road projects in it. He is concerned the budget may balloon when we do have new road projects and feels we should get more expert opinions on items such as employee benefits. Donna Bouchard stated she agrees we need to keep an eye on expenditures but this should be left up to the Selectmen and Budget Committee. Steve Randall said a tax cap of this nature would not have allowed us to do projects that have been done in the past. Scott Hilliard pointed out that the County portion of the tax rate is not subject to the limit. If the County budget goes up money would have to come from local services. Lana Dearborn said she applauds the concept being brought forward and agrees we need to keep an eye on the tax rate, but we need to consider the impact of a tax cap and how we are required to submit our budgets to the DRA. She gave credit to the Selectmen and Budget Committee, stating all these members act in the best interest of this town. They are concerned and aware of the tax rate. Leif Martinson asked people to come out to Budget meetings and get involved.

ARTICLE FAILED.

ARTICLE 12:

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Tax Collector to discount by two percent (2%) any amount in property taxes due when said taxes are paid within 30 days of the date of billing. (Majority vote required for adoption).

Article moved by Lisa Swancott and seconded by Glen Brown.

Leif Martinson explained that the amount credited in discounts causes the Town to borrow additional funds and will be added with interest to next year's budget. Rich Bellerose asked for figures on the cost of giving the discount. Steve Randall responded that it resulted in 36 cents per thousand on the tax rate last year. Eliza Conde confirmed the cost factor and explained it is a huge amount of paperwork for the tax collector and would save us money if we didn't offer the discount.

ARTICLE FAILED.

ARTICLE 13:

To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.

Glen Brown introduced the new Town Administrator, Glenn Smith.

Thank you's were offered from members of the Assembly to the Selectmen, Town Budget Committee and the Winnisquam Regional School District Budget Committee for their work, and to Eliza Conde for compiling the Town Report. Scott McGuffin acknowledged Northfield's elected State Representatives in attendance, Joy Tilton and Deb Wheeler, and also advised there will be a recount of the Fire District Election for office of Fire Commissioner on March 18, 2008 at 3 p.m.

Motion to adjourn by Kent Finemore, seconded by Keith Murray.

Meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.
Respectfully submitted,

Cindy L. Caveney, Town Clerk