

**SUMMARY NOTES**  
**of the**  
**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD**  
**Thursday, January 29, 2009 – 7:00 p.m.**

The Board of Trustees of the Village of Northfield met in the Multi-Purpose Room of the Village Hall for a Special Board Meeting on Thursday, January 29, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was called to order by President John Birkinbine. The Village Clerk called the roll.

PRESENT:	President	John Birkinbine, Jr.
	Trustees:	John Chapin
		Joan Frazier
		Terry Gottlieb
		Fred Teichert

ABSENT:	Frank Charhut
	Ted Greene

**DISCUSSION OF VILLAGE FINANCES**

Village Manager Sigman introduced resident Gavin Blunt who had come to the January 20 Board meeting and asked for an opportunity to address the Board and talk about finances.

Resident Blunt thanked the Board and Village Manager Sigman for giving him the opportunity to discuss Village finances. He offered his financial expertise and vision regarding Village finances. He related that he sat down with Finance Director Steve Noble and discussed areas that include capital improvements, and arbitrage on the borrowing costs of what the Village receives on its interest rates and what is going on in the private sector. He noted his reason is not to get the Village out of its current financial situation but rather for the Board and staff to have some breathing room on the budget. He expressed his concern on running the Village so “lean” and the lack of choice in the matter. He stated that the Village Board and staff is going to need a group of residents to broach the subject of home rule in a referendum so that the residents can understand that just like when their utility bills go up and other bills go up, the Village must also keep up with its obligations. He noted that if you have a \$400,000 deficit and you make some cuts, then take \$200,000 from your investment fund, by the time you include the lost interest, it is costing \$215,000. Village residents need to understand that

their officials need to be trusted with the ability to be creative and to generate other revenues for the Village. The Village needs \$400,000 which is about \$200 per household in the Village or \$15 a month. If the economy keeps going the way it is, the Village may make its budget this year, but next year you will really be in a pickle due to external causes. The money the State is able to give you or not give you affects your budget, what you have to do to fund pension liabilities, etc. and all the things you are familiar with already – these are the things people need to be aware of so they can understand. If not, the next time they call 911 when a family member is having a heart attack, it might be five minutes instead of two minutes before someone can help them. These are the type of cuts residents might experience.

Resident Blunt added that he had hoped he could help the Board by providing some ideas for cost savings that will buy time for a referendum. He noted that in his discussion with Finance Director Noble he found that Mr. Noble had already looked at a number of the ideas that he had been thinking about. The decisions the Board makes now will affect other people long after some of the Board members leave in May following the upcoming election. Mr. Blunt noted his concern as well as those of his family, who have lived in the community for 60 years. A future Board might be put in the very uncomfortable position of having to look at a merger with other area communities for services such as Police, Fire-Rescue, and Public Works to save on costs. He felt this would be a travesty because the residents who live in Northfield would lose control of their own destiny.

Mr. Blunt again thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak to them. He felt enlightened by having learned the Village's budget process and is supportive. He stated that Village staff is doing a very good job under some difficult circumstances.

President Birkinbine thanked Mr. Blunt for coming and noted that Mr. Blunt and his wife Juli are not only residents, they also run a retail clothing store in town.

President Birkinbine reminded the Board members that certain personnel issues cannot be discussed unless they go into closed session.

Trustee Teichert noted that he only speaks for himself but he is 100% for home rule and welcomed Mr. Blunt's volunteering to participate in getting information out.

### **DISCUSSION ON VILLAGE FINANCES**

President Birkinbine asked Manager Sigman to kick off the discussion on Village finances.

Manager Sigman noted that at the last Board meeting, staff saw its direction as two-fold, that they understand that this year the Village cannot solve the long term, more structural problems associated with the Village's budget system and that staff needed to

find a way to cobble together this year's budget and immediately roll into planning for the future and determine the best ways to deal with losses long term. She added that she and Finance Director Noble focused on putting together a budget that we can live with for this year and will then get the bigger public document put together and hold the necessary budget meetings. She noted that they expect a series of meetings following this meeting which would be done concurrently with the regular budget process for FY2009-10.

Manager Sigman stated that she felt the direction of the Board was to increase revenues, cut expenses and, if need be, go into reserves. They tried to focus on whatever cuts they could make knowing everyone is in a very bad financial situation and raising fees and costs is not something anyone wants to see in the community. They also looked at increasing revenues. They identified three ways they think they can increase revenues with the least amount of pain to residents: 1) increase in the fee for RedFlex citations. Currently the fee is \$75. She noted there is no one in the State she is aware of that is not charging \$100. To raise the fee is consistent with what we are seeing in other municipalities. This would add an additional \$126,000 in revenue provided we continue to see the red light violations we have had. We believe that the number of violations will begin to decline and or flatten. RedFlex has indicated that we could see a couple years of flattened numbers. Another thing we can do which is not a new revenue but a new way to use the money is a transfer from MFT funds. Motor Fuel Tax funds have always been used to pay for roadway improvements and infrastructure and we have not tried to use it for operating. However, there are a number of things in the operating budget that are legal for us to use the funds for – salt, striping, potholes. One of the concerns of the Board is whether it affects the Village's ability to bond out and do the improvements we want to see done. The Board reviewed a cash flow chart done by Finance Director Noble and Manager Sigman pointed out that they believe they can use \$100,000 from the MFT and still move forward this year with the bond issue for the 2009 roadway project. Manager Sigman noted there will be debt service of about \$30,000 this year; next year that debt service jumps to \$120,000. We can move forward with that and really deplete the MFT reserves. However, it is good to keep a balance in the MFT fund. The final way to increase revenues is a transfer from the foreign fire insurance fund. The Village gets about \$21,000 a year which is only eligible for certain expenses. It has typically been used for things outside the operating budget but staff feels this year it is appropriate to move it inside the operating fund to pay for some of the equipment used by those entities. Altogether the Village would get about \$247,000.

The final item staff is considered to boost revenues is increasing vehicle stickers from \$50 to \$75. She noted that for every \$25 increase, we raise about \$100,000 in revenue. Manager Sigman responded to a question on what the surrounding towns with vehicle stickers charge.

Finance Director Noble noted that many of the surrounding communities' stickers cost less or have been eliminated. He noted that vehicle stickers are not the most popular fee.

Manager Sigman noted that since some of the communities are home rule, they raise funds in other ways. She added that she thought the vehicle sticker price for larger SUV's in Wilmette was comparable to Northfield's price. She summarized by noting that in the end with the cuts they were able to identify by working with the Department Heads, they felt they did not have to increase vehicle stickers since it would be particularly hard to pass on to residents at this time.

Manager Sigman then moved into the expense category and noted they made cuts in two areas: 1) they looked at staffing and tried to come up with a plan that would only change staffing relative to attrition. We have one vacancy at this time and one retirement in May. With some reorganization in those departments we were able to cut about \$128,000 from the budget. They also looked at some additional part time positions that would be eliminated or have hours reduced. Manager Sigman noted that if the Board wants to discuss specific positions, she would prefer to do that in Executive Session. The final area under staffing is the Early Retirement Incentive (ERI). She stated that the Village has up to ten years to pay off the current ERI. It was initially based on a five year payout. If it is dropped to a 10 year payout, the Village would save about \$45,000. She noted that in the long run, it costs the Village more money to extend payment out to 10 years because it is based on a 7-1/2% interest rate. They discussed paying it outright and saving the 7-1/2% since the Village is not receiving even close to 7-1/2% interest on its investments. It was noted that this is a decision the Board can make every year. Hopefully, there will be a turnaround in the market and we will see higher sales tax revenues, but no one knows when that might be. Based on property taxes, we are likely to have no increase whatsoever on property taxes. They are based on the CPI and right now the CPI is 0.1%.

Resident Blunt also noted that a lot of people have experienced devaluation of their home. Cook County is an interesting place in how they calculate property taxes. Based upon value, you see a lot of people who will be protesting the value of their home so the Village can see some significant decline in the revenue we get from property

taxes. Mr. Blunt asked what if the entire Village property goes down 10%. Manager Sigman noted then the tax rate goes up; the dollars stay the same.

Manager Sigman then noted one of the things staff looked at after looking at staffing was contractual and commodities. In looking at big picture, a unilateral decision was made across the departments to eliminate things such as non-essential training, reduced memberships including NIPSTA, public relations expenses which are related to the Officer Friendly program and our Fire-Rescue Dept., specialized equipment has been scaled back, general operating expenses, office supplies, contractual work, professional services – all have been cut back as much as they can be. Manager Sigman noted that she realizes \$99,000 does not sound like a lot but remember that this is the fourth or fifth year in a row that we have gone to these same line items and cut them back. There just isn't much left at all. What is left in training is what is required for staff to legally do their job and/or stay licensed.

In cutting back hours, there are some services the Village will just not be able to get to as quickly as it has in the past. We are proposing eliminating deer culling which is a \$6500 contract and at least \$4000 a year in overtime. Holiday Lighting has been scaled back by \$1,000. The Newsletter has been switched primarily to electronic format only. Some money has been left in the budget for an annual mailing and possibly one special mailing. The new system has been set up on the website where people can subscribe to E-News and get the newsletter electronically. She added that the printing and mailing costs have gotten higher. For those who do not have access to a computer, we could make some copies of the newsletter available by copying it. She also noted that we have eliminated the 50-50 Shared Tree Program. Currently, for anyone who wants to plant a parkway tree, we do it as a 50-50 shared cost. We have eliminated that program. We could still offer the tree program but it would have to be at 100% cost to the resident. Also, the shared sidewalk program was done the same way. The 50-50 program would be eliminated. The Village would still maintain its sidewalks and replace pieces wherever there are trip hazards or dangers. What is currently being done is that if two squares need replacing, the Village offers the 50-50 match to replace the entire sidewalk since no one likes just a couple of new squares done. Under the current program, the Village would still be responsible for replacing the squares that are a hazard but residents would pay 100% to replace any other pieces. Police Accreditation has been eliminate. We would cease to be an accredited Police Department. We would change to a LexAPol system. Manager Sigman pointed out that many municipalities in Illinois are doing the same thing. Several of the surrounding communities have done

this and Winnetka and Northbrook were mentioned. We would switch to the LexAPol system which is an annual system that provides daily/regular training, continuously updating all orders, policies and procedures relative to any new laws that come out. This year the Village would save \$3,200. However, next year would have been an accreditation year and the cost savings is more dramatic in those years.

Resident Blunt asked if there is any effect on the Village's insurance by dropping out of CALEA.

Manager Sigman responded "no." She added that the final area they cut was the Police Psychologist. His consulting time was cut in half.

Trustee Chapin asked who the Police Psychologist consults with.

Manager Sigman responded that he consults with the Police staff on certain emergency situations including domestic violence issues, drug and alcohol issues. He does not provide counseling services to a family. He may counsel them on the immediate emergency and get them to other support services.

President Birkinbine commented on the cuts saying that he could live with cutting the Police Psychologist's hours; he noted that Manager Sigman has changed his mind about Police Accreditation; he agrees with the cut in the sidewalk program. On the deer culling, he feels the Village should keep the program because it impacts property damage and he feels government should continue to protect people's property. For holiday lighting he noted he would not do away with that because we are trying to draw people into the downtown area. Regarding the newsletter, he felt not as many people would read the electronic version. He noted he has received many compliments on articles by the President that residents mentioned as being informative. He also noted that the Village should keep the shared tree program. He noted that the Caucus has stated in its platform that the Village not change the character of the town and part of this is the trees on residential streets. He noted that the total number of dollars saved by making all the suggested cuts comes to approximately \$39,883. The ones I personally feel we can do away with amount to \$16,000 and the remaining \$23,000, he noted, should come out of the reserves rather than take the programs away from residents. He noted that the deer culling project works particularly well because it is a line item and does not get publicity that brings out animal rights activists and it is ultimately to protect resident's private property.

Manager Sigman noted that the rate charged by the sharpshooters has stayed pretty much the same over the last eight years.

Trustee Frazier added that she feels the potential for deer/vehicle accidents presents a real safety hazard. She then stated she would like to know more about the work of the Police Psychologist. She thought more intervention was going on and added that in her two years on the Village Board she has learned that Northfield has its share of psychological issues from suicides, to drownings to you name it. She added that she agreed with President Birkinbine that this is the time to dip into the Village's reserves of \$4.5 million.

President Birkinbine noted that in the past residents turned down tax increases which would have paid for the new fire-rescue staffing plan and the other was to bring our sales tax up to ½% to equal the surrounding areas. If the Village is planning to pursue similar referendums, he recommended that citizens get behind them not the Village Board because it would be like government raising the taxes. In the past people turned town tax increases because residents felt the Village has a lot of money in reserves and owns condos (real estate property). So until the Village dips into these resources, residents will continue to turn down referendums to increase taxes.

The Board members discussed selling the condominiums the Village owns and their value in this economy.

Manager Sigman returned to the Police Psychologist noting that he does counseling but does not act as the residents' counselor or represent them. He does go into a family that is having problems (drugs or other substance abuse) by counseling the parents or child but he is not on staff to provide private counseling free of charge to residents. He helps residents find alternative services and counsels our Police Officers in dealing with various types of personality disorders and other issues.

There was further clarification and discussion on the pros and cons of going strictly to emailed newsletters versus printed copies.

Trustee Gottlieb commended Manager Sigman and Director Noble on addressing the Board's concerns on increasing revenues and decreasing expenses. He noted they did a phenomenal job. He also noted that the Board as noted in the January meeting is willing to go into reserves to cover some of the costs. He recommended that the Board determine to keep those projects that relate to the property value and health and welfare of the residents be kept such as deer culling, the psychologist, lighting. But other things that call for just changing behavior, such as how we get the newsletter, should be cut and only do the E-News version and Police Accreditation. He noted that the Board should consider going to a middle ground keeping some programs and dipping into reserves for others.

Trustee Frasier added she agrees with Trustee Gottlieb with the understanding that programs such as the shared tree and shared sidewalk programs be brought back when times get better.

Resident Blunt then left the meeting. He again noted that he felt the Board will need to have a very candid conversation with the residents and to let them know that these are some of the tough decisions that had to be made. They affect village life styles, property values and safety. He also noted that this is the very time the Board needs more transparency and, perhaps, it is important to keep the Newsletter. He noted that residents need to know the areas where costs went up and that the Village has no control over utilities, insurance, and pension costs and, that the budget deficit would be \$402,000 without cuts. He wondered how to communicate that to residents effectively.

Trustee Gottlieb also noted on the condos, that the Village is making approximately 4% on them and, if the Village were to sell them now, they would take the worst hit. If we did not have reserves then, he agreed, we would have to sell them.

Regarding deer culling, it would be very difficult to bring the program back.

Manager Sigman noted that it is projected that there is about \$17,000 extra after all the cuts were made. As President Birkinbine pointed out, there is about \$39,800 worth of cuts. It was suggested that the Board take a vote on each of the cuts individually. Manager Sigman asked the Board's opinion on paying off the Early Retirement Incentive. The total cost is \$459,000 if it is paid off today. If paid off in 5 years, the cost is \$90,000 a year or \$555,000 and if paid off over 10 years it would be \$688,000. It was also noted that the Village's IRMF payment would go down if the ERI was paid off. However, it was noted it would look bad because the total amount would come out of the reserves.

Director Noble also noted that if we paid off the amount, IMRF would reduce our IMRF wages effective immediately.

Trustee Frazier asked what the standard for reserves is in other villages.

Manager Sigman noted there is no standard. However, six months is generally considered a strong solid reserve. Between three and six months is standard.

Fred Gougler clarified that the reserve fund balance fluctuates during the year and it is important to note that because there is a 6 month fund balance at one time does not mean there is a 6 month balance throughout the year.

There was discussion on when property taxes are received and what is done with surpluses of property tax received.

Manager Sigman asked for a consensus on the individual items suggested for cutting.

Deer Culling: Stays as is.

Holiday Lighting: Scale back \$1,000.

Newsletter: Put out information in the Newsletter to announce residents will have to subscribe to E-News which will automatically be emailed to them each month so they won't have to remember to go to the website to read it. Residents need to be educated about no longer printing the Newsletter. It was also noted that the printed/mailed Newsletter could be brought back every other month if E-News does not work or residents complain.

Shared Tree Program: We will still offer the program; however, trees would be paid 100% by residents whether for parkway or private property. The Village will continue to do planting at no cost.

Shared Sidewalk Program: Residents pay 100% for areas that are not hazards and the Village will use grants whenever possible to help with costs.

Police Accreditation Program: The Village will switch to LexAPol.

Police Psychologist: Hours will be cut by 50%.

Trustee Frazier asked if the Police Psychologist could generate a report of his activities for the past year.

Manager Sigman noted she would get that. She also noted that with the above cuts, but keeping deer culling, the Village would not need to dip into reserves for the FY2009-10 budget.

ERI: Instead of paying it off in 5 years for an annual cost of \$90,000, the Village could pay it off over 10 years at a cost of 45,000 a year. The third choice is to pay it off in total and not have to continue paying the interest on it. It was decided that the Village should pay it off over the 10 years at this time.

Trustee Frazier asked if the Village has had to dip into reserves in the past and for what kinds of events.

Manager Sigman noted that the Village went into reserves when there was the big storm in 2008, for remodeling of the 911 Center and to cover gaps at times when the State has not paid income taxes in a timely manner.

President Candidate Fred Gougler stated that the objective of paying off the Early Retirement Incentive (ERI) debt is a good one and looking at the real estate assets from a public relations or financial perspective is a good one but the question he has is the timing. Is this the time to do it. If the Board is looking to create something that is

stable not just next year but years down the road, then we have to really need to consider when is the best time to make these changes.

Board Candidate Brian Kozminski responded that the community needs to understand these issues. He agreed it does not make sense to continue to pay 7-1/2% interest on the ERI when we have the reserves sitting there. He noted it needs to be taken to the community to get their understanding.

Trustee Chapin or Warga (?) noted he agreed economically but politically he disagreed. He noted he sees a need to reduce Village reserves. He said he did not know by how much but he felt it was necessary to set the tone for the future. The Board has to show it has been using the reserves and not just sitting on them in these tough times.

It was discussed that when the referendum was put to the residents for an increase in property tax and a ½% sales tax increase, the referendums were defeated and the reserves were \$8 or 9\$ million dollars.

Director Noble noted that although that was the number that was published, it included the value of the condos, MFT funds, Police Pension money, etc. It was all lumped together.

Board Candidate Kozminski noted that he agreed that the first thing you do is pay down the high interest balances but the thing he is concerned with is that a large portion of the Village's revenue comes from a Chrysler dealership and Chrysler is teetering on the brink of going out of business. At the same time, the BMW dealership reported sales were off 40% in the last report and we have not seen that drop off reflected in revenues yet. He noted that he takes comfort in having money in the bank right now.

President Candidate Gougler added that this topic is something that can be revisited. That it does not have to be decided now or even in the next month. He also felt that because the Board is in transition with the election in early April, he felt the Board and staff should come up with a budget that is balanced or close to balanced. He also felt that there should be representation by the new Board members in the decision.

Trustee Gottlieb agreed with those comments but felt it is something the Board should consider and be prepared to act on at some point.

Director Noble added that it can be anytime; IMRF will take the money whenever we want to pay it.

Manager Sigman asked who is okay with leaving the \$45,000 (10 year plan – minimum payment) in the budget plan and for staff getting additional financial information on what the alternatives would do financially.

All agreed and that is what will be shown in the draft budget.

President Birkinbine added that if the Village were to put one or more of the condos up for sale in the future, nothing forces the Village to sell for anything less than the price listed. It was discussed that the condo can be sold before leases expire and people purchasing as investors actually prefer that. It was also noted that the condo's can be shown based on the specific wording in the leases/contracts.

Manager Sigman noted that she and Director Noble will now answer any questions regarding specific line items.

Trustee Chapin asked about the line item for Village Board Projects which went from \$20,000 to \$72,000.

Manager Sigman responded that the Village has never been budgeting the money that has gone into Willow Road projects. She noted that while there was a \$100,000 appropriation, that came out of reserves but it technically should be budgeted. The \$72,000 was budgeting for some of the consultants, attorneys, etc. that would be used. The balance of the \$100,000 left from 2008 was added into that line item of the budget. The Village has spent about \$60,000 and that was never shown in a budget and that is why it is up to \$72,000. So the additional \$50,000 in the line item covers the remainder of the \$100,000.

Trustee Teichert asked for an update of the Traffic and Transportation Meeting which met the previous evening.

Traffic and Transportation Chair Fred Gougler noted that they had a routine meeting. He stated that they have not been engaged by IDOT regarding Willow Road. IDOT was to schedule Phase I Engineering as the next step in the process. He noted that T&T Committee has introduced the Village Attorney to IDOT so they know the Village has its legal staff in place. President Birkinbine, Manager Sigman, Attorney Ed Gower and he recently had a meeting with IDOT and their engineers.

T&T Chair Gougler related that the Committee is looking at what their response would be to IDOT if and when they do engage the Village. The thought is that the group recognizes the financial concerns the Village has so they have tried to determine the costs of what a reasonable defense would be at this point using our legal counsel, and an engineering resource that would evaluate and critic any plan that IDOT would present to the Village. They are also looking at other actions they might take if IDOT's plan moves forward such as lobbyists. They will determine what actions would be taken by stages. He noted that one of the things that is different about the Village's plans this time is that it is the Village's strategy to engage the school and the park district as well

as residents in terms of sharing the cost of the defense. Chair Gougler noted that the school is in a good financial situation and the Village is in a reasonable financial situation (the NSAG citizens group). They are thinking it might cost a couple of hundred thousand dollars to put together some sort of resistance that would be shared equally between the groups. He noted that they have the team in place to do what we need to do right now. But before they spend additional resources, they want to get a sense of what an actual campaign (over a 12 to 18 month period) using different resources would cost.

Trustee Teichert asked if the \$50,000 would be good enough for the next 12 months

Chair Gougler responded "yes." He noted that the Committee agreed last night that would be their approach. T&T task is to try and determine the specifics of this plan and then take it to the Park and School Boards. They will try to determine a cash flow analysis of what money will be needed when and for what.

Trustee Chapin asked how much money the NSAG organization has.

Candidate Kozminski responded that is it next to nothing. They did a lot of fundraising a year ago and have gradually depleted it by one project after another. It is due for another round of fundraising.

Trustee Chapin stated that it should be noted that if the Board approves the budget, this line item represents what was previously approved by the Board and that there are further approvals that will have to be done in the future.

Trustee Chapin's second question on the line items addressed why maintenance went from \$14,500 to \$39,400 and noted also that further on in the budget, the building maintenance costs went way down.

Manager Sigman explained that under Community Development, there was \$70,600 that went to zero. She further explained that a maintenance position has been eliminated and the Village has hired a consultant shown under Building Maintenance, Contractual Services. She noted that Director Nystrand has been getting fire personnel to do more and more maintenance while they are in the building. The Village will be doing away with uniform laundering and window washing. Fire-Rescue personnel have already taken over most of the basic building maintenance activities and will try to get public works to do the larger jobs like washing windows, floor polishing and rug shampooing.

Trustee Chapin also asked about the public relations/diversity decrease of about 50%.

Manager Sigman responded that that item is part of our Police Department accounts with the majority of it being in the Officer Friendly program where they have a lot of giveaways. Officer Friendly is at the 4<sup>th</sup> of July event, in the schools; they do a Halloween

program and give away or do special promotional posters. Some money has been left in the account but the types of items being given will have to change substantially.

Trustee Chapin also noted that under “health fitness training”. He asked why it dropped.

Manager Sigman responded that some fitness training is required. There are State requirements for testing and certifications of fire-fighters. There is a fitness for duty test they have to do to keep our firefighters.

Trustee Frazier asked if they also need that for Public Works employees.

Manager Sigman responded “no” but if they are firefighters, they do. Most of our public works employees are also firefighters.

### **ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

There being no further discussion, Trustee Gottlieb made a motion, seconded by Trustee Teichert to adjourn to closed session to discuss personnel issues.

By voice vote all approved.

### **RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

Manager Sigman noted that she and Director Noble have the information they need from the Board and can now go back to the regular budget process. She noted that they want to start working on a plan going forward to address the more fundamental problems. She asked if the Board members want to wait until after the budget cycle and hold special committee meetings like the CIP meetings. She noted that there was a desire by the Board to begin actively working on the larger picture. It would encompass the next five budget years.

President Candidate Gougler offered that the Board and staff should finish this budget process and then revisit the longer range plan.

Trustee Gottlieb noted that it was important to communicate to employees and staff now regarding going forward to give them a more in-depth appreciation of where the Village is now and will be in the future.

Trustee Frazier asked that the Board take a closer look at pay increases because this year it seemed like a series of ultimatums. “A” gets an increase or they form a union. “B” gets an increase because “A” got an increase. She asked that the Board explore better ways to handle this subject.

Trustee Gottlieb added that it is one of the areas the Board wanted to address now so they are not operating from a reactionary point.

Manager Sigman agreed with their comments and added that if they are

going to review this matter don't just look at the five surrounding towns, also look at benefits and look at the other things to compare those with the market and how we stack up. We need to find a consultant with this level of expertise, she noted and we may need to put something in the budget for this.

Another comment from the Board was that everything discussed tonight was on the expense side. We also need to explore the income side including development, home rule, etc.

Trustee Chapin responded that home rule is going to be a tough sell. It was noted that about a year ago, it was explored through the Caucus and it did not go over very well with Northfield residents.

President Birkinbine added that we could not convince the Caucus to consider home rule and got no positive feedback from them. It was noted that Caucus members broke into two strong camps with two people being very strong in opposing it who were very influential.

Trustee Gottlieb stated that maybe the Board should take another crack at the home rule issue especially with the new Board members coming on after the April election. It was noted that the Caucus has also changed its officers so it might be a good time to reach out to them.

There was further discussion on changes to pay plans. Manager Sigman noted that she felt there would be some major decisions coming out of collective bargaining groups that might help give the Village some leverage to make some changes to our plan.

President Birkinbine offered that a former Village Board member Mike Chance is in that line of work and we may want to call on him for help. He is now working on the township Board.

It was noted that some groups still don't get the severity of the economy and there are programs in the legislature being passed giving firefighters credit for their military service and while they have to pay their share to get into the program, the unfunded liability falls to municipalities.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Following discussion and there being no further business to come before the Board, Trustee Gottlieb made a motion, seconded by Trustee Chapin to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m. Upon a voice vote, the motion was approved.