Village of Northport
Village Council Work Session Meeting Minutes
Thursday, December 4, 2025 | 2:00 P.M. | Hybrid In-Person/Zoom Meeting

1. Call to Order / Roll Call:

President Christopher McCann called the meeting to order at 2:00 P.M. with the following members present: President McCann, Trustees Cook, Ager, Cavendish, Harper.
Trustee Ruble and Dean attended via Zoom.
Absent: None
Staff present: Village Clerk Joni Scott, Village Manager Jered Ottenwess, Treasurer Elizabeth Rutila, Harbor Master Bill Rosemurgy

2. Approval of Agenda:

The Council agreed by Consensus to approve the agenda as presented.

3. Public Comment:

No Public Comment was offered

4. Liaison Reports

a. Waterfront & Marina

- None

b. Infrastructure

- Trustee Cavendish reported that work continues on the water main project, with pricing being gathered for the section between Fifth and Sixth Streets. She noted that staff are assembling the necessary information for the water leak repairs, with the goal of having those projects ready for spring construction. She also highlighted substantial progress on the Rose Street culvert project as staff prepare materials for an upcoming grant application.

c. Planning Commission

- Trustee Cavendish reported that the Planning Commission has not met since the last council meeting. She noted that the Commission will resume work on zoning matters at its meeting next Wednesday and that the draft Master Plan is nearing completion. However, additional revisions are still required before it is finalized.

d. NLTUA

- President McCann reported that the NLTUA will meet on Tuesday to review the draft budget, which will be brought back to the Village Council once finalized. He also noted that the upcoming winter tax bill will be the final year of billing for property owners who financed their sewer assessment through their taxes.

5. Discussion Items (Final Action Not Anticipated at this Meeting)

a. Marina

2026 Rates:

The Council discussed adjusting marina rates for the 2026 season. There was consensus to increase the seasonal slip rate to *rate two* ($112 per foot), a change projected to generate approximately $48,000 in additional revenue and intended as a step toward a potential move to *rate one* in a future year, allowing slip holders time to adjust. Transient rates will remain largely unchanged to maintain competitiveness and avoid discouraging visiting boaters; the Village will continue using a variable transient rate schedule with different rates for peak and shoulder periods, including higher pricing during July 4th and other high-demand weekends.

Policy Updates:

The Council discussed safety concerns related to e-bikes and bicycles on the docks and break wall. Given limited enforcement tools, the consensus was to begin with an educational approach by installing signage encouraging slow, respectful riding and noting that further restrictions may follow if unsafe behavior continues. The Council emphasized positive reinforcement—promoting courteous behavior and community expectations rather than immediately resorting to penalties. Members also expressed a strong preference to allow local kids to continue fishing and enjoying the marina, encouraging youth activity as long as it remains respectful and safe, particularly around bike and e-bike use near other marina users. Trash concerns were also discussed, with interest in signage reminding visitors to clean up after themselves.

Engineering Services Proposal:

The Council held an in-depth discussion on the engineering proposal to study the feasibility of expanding the marina. The proposed study—estimated at approximately $86,000—would evaluate site conditions and develop up to three conceptual expansion options. The discussion noted that the expansion is driven by the lengthy slip waiting list and the potential for increased village revenue and broader economic benefits. Council members emphasized the importance of public input and community visioning before proceeding, as well as updating the Village Recreation Plan to maintain eligibility for grant funding. Concerns were raised about the cost and complexity of expansion, including deep-water engineering challenges, integration with existing infrastructure, and impacts on parking and restroom capacity. Preliminary discussions suggested that 80–100 additional slips might be feasible, but the final scale will depend on the engineering study and community feedback.

Jerry Spears Slip Agreement:

The Council held an extended discussion regarding the long-standing arrangement under which Jerry Spears received a marina slip in exchange for services performed for the Village. Trustees expressed frustration that the value of this barter arrangement had been inconsistently applied and lacked proper contractual documentation. Several members, including Trustee Harper, stressed that the original intent was for Spears to be charged double the commercial rate and opposed any discounted valuation. The Council agreed that future commercial slip agreements must require full business compliance—such as proper licenses, insurance, captain's certification, and tax documentation—and that no barter or service-credit arrangements will be allowed going forward. The Village Manager was directed to prepare a formal settlement agreement reflecting the true amount owed and to bring it forward at the next regular meeting, with the goal of ending the informal arrangement and ensuring fair, consistent treatment of all commercial slip holders.

b. Village Legal Counsel Request for Qualifications

The Council reviewed the draft Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for village legal counsel and expressed general approval of the document as prepared by the Village Manager. One key recommendation was to include a contractual cap or other guardrails on future fee increases to prevent out-of-market rate hikes after the first year of service.

c. Audit Firm Request for Proposal

The Council briefly discussed the need to seek a new auditing firm due to ongoing issues with the prior auditor and agreed to move forward with issuing an RFP. Members recommended that the new contract include safeguards to prevent substantial fee increases in subsequent years. With the next audit scheduled for 2026, the Council expressed support for beginning the RFP process promptly.

d. Rules of Procedure

The Council reviewed potential updates to the Village Council Rules of Procedure, including clarifying which meetings require liaison reports to avoid duplicative reporting between work sessions and regular meetings. Members also discussed whether Zoom attendance should count as official attendance for purposes of compensation, noting limits on remote participation for voting and quorum requirements. Additional questions were raised regarding how excused and unexcused absences should be defined and applied. The Council agreed that legal clarification is needed, and Village Manager Jered Ottenwess was directed to consult with the village attorney and prepare draft revisions to the Rules of Procedure for future consideration.

e. 2026 Village Council Meeting Schedule

The Council briefly reviewed the draft 2026 meeting schedule, which reflects recognized village holidays. Members confirmed that the schedule will be formally adopted at the first regular meeting in December.

5. Public Comment

None

6. Council Comment

None

8. Adjournment

President McCann Moved, Supported by Trustee Harper, to adjourn the meeting at 3:35 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Submitted by:

Joni L. Scott, Village Clerk