

MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING

**6:00 P.M. Thursday, April 15, 2021
VIA ZOOM MEETING PLATFORM**

Select Board

Eric Remick, Chair
Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Vice Chair
Gary Bellavance -Absent
Shari Cornish
Michael Deering

Others Present

Shaun Fielder, Town Manager
Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator
Aaron Cochran, Police Chief
Tom Fadden, Road Foreman
Kristen Leahy, Zoning Administrator

Others Present

Doug McClure
Nathaniel Smith
Gary Holloway
Dave Gross
Tobin Porter-Brown

6:00 P.M. –Select Board Chair, Eric Remick, called the regular meeting to order

6:01 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – Shaun requested to add an item, item number 8, to discuss the Purchase and Sales Agreement for a piece of property located in East Hardwick that is currently owned by the Town.

Ceilidh requested to add another item, item number 9, to have the Select Board discuss and approve a statement made by the Equity Committee in regards to the Anti- Asian Sentiment & Violence.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to approve the adjusted agenda as stated.

6:03 P.M. Communication from the Audience – None

6:03 P.M. – Select Board to approve minutes for the Regular Select Board meeting of April 1, 2021

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Michael Deering, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the April 1, 2021 regular meeting, as written.

6:04 P.M. – 6:19 P.M. - Town Manager’s Report– Given by Shaun Fielder

Shaun reported that there will be a complete public water system flush beginning next Monday, April 19, and going through the week. The Town has been advertising ongoing via Hardwick Gazette, Town website, and Front Porch Forum. There may be instances of lower pressure and/or dirty water. For dirty water situations, you should run your cold water for 5 to 10 minutes, and this should clear the line.

The Town has received an update that there will be another round of Vermont COVID-19 Arrearage Assistance Program (VCAAP) for water and sewer bills. Please keep an eye on the Town’s website for more information.

Shaun and Casey attended a Wastewater Treatment Facility 60% completion design meeting today (April 15) with Aldrich & Elliot. So far everything is in order at this phase. On another note, there is currently a contractor onsite to complete the well rehabilitation work that was initiated the beginning of the year. Supply chain / scheduling issues due to COVID led to rescheduling for the completion of work until this week.

The Town has been reviewing and coming up with projects that need to be done for this summer such as; road improvements, Water and Wastewater system improvements, other projects due to recent grant awards; Recreational grant projects via Vermont Community Foundation & VT Small Scale Grant Awards. Shaun is also reviewing information with Tom for downtown parking, crosswalks, and other related projects. Shaun has

confirmed with Tom that the garbage cans will be placed downtown next week. Both Shaun and Tom will need the board's input on blocking the entrance to The Village Diner parking lot as done last year.

Effective Monday, April 19, 2021, the Hardwick Town Clerk's Office will be reopening to the public. All other offices in the Memorial Building will continue to be by appointment only for the time being.

The Town Clerk's Office hours will be Monday – Thursday 8:00 am – 12:00 pm and 12:30 pm – 4:00 pm. The office will remain closed to the public on Friday's. The use of the Land Records will continue to be by appointment only.

In order to reopen, the Town will be following strict guidelines for entrance into the Memorial Building. Masks are required (regardless of vaccination status of the visitor), social distancing is required and no more than two customers will be allowed in the office at a time. Those experiencing any symptoms of the Coronavirus will not be allowed in the building.

Town Manager's Office is planning to allow visitors to the office on limited basis also starting next Monday, April 19. They will still be requesting business by phone and or email if possible, until the office is open full time, which will be at the beginning of May.

The Lister's and Zoning office will continue to conduct business on appointment basis and you can schedule appointments with those offices direct; no unannounced appointments. Contact information for Town Offices are shown on the Town's website.

The Town continues to monitor the state's guidance and the Covid19 case numbers. The Town will adjust office operations if / as needed moving forward. If any changes occur, the Town will update the Town's website.

Lastly, please continue to practice recommended social distancing guidance and please do consider obtaining your vaccination when able.

Ceilidh asked if the Town has more water sources other than the Bridgman Hill Reservoir in case of a drastic event. Shaun stated that the Town is currently, and will continue to look for similar sources. One area specifically is near Renaud Road. This will be an on-going investigation moving forward.

Eric stated that the State is planning to repave the (State's) highways in the Summer of 2022, however the planning phase will occur during the Summer of 2021. Eric asked if Hardwick was involved in that planning phase. Shaun stated that he and Tom have already been in contact with VTRANS, but he will continue to check further into the process.

Shari asked if the Town would like to order Porta Potty's since a lot of businesses are not allowing public use of their restrooms. This will be discussed later in the meeting.

6:19 P.M. – 6:21 P.M. Road Foreman Report– Given by Tom Fadden

Tom reported that the Highway Department has been busy grading, hauling material in, repairing/cleaning pumps from the Buffalo Street pumphouse, installing the speed bumps in The Village Diner parking lot, installing the Spring banners, and street sweeping. Tom also reported that the street sweeper will be arriving at the end of the month, so there will be more street sweeping being accomplished at the beginning of May.

6:21 P.M. – 6:32 P.M. Police Report– Given by Aaron Cochran

Aaron reported that the Police Department has been awarded up to \$10,000 for the Governors Highway Safety

Program. This program will focus on Distracted Driving and DUI cases.

During the April 1 meeting, Shari asked about who should be contacted for open burns. Aaron said that he would investigate. Aaron reported that the Department did some research, and there are multiple options of who could be contacted, one being the Police Department. Aaron and Shari have been in communication, and Shari wants to pursue an ordinance that states who someone should call to report open burns. Shari will continue to work on this, and bring this up in a future meeting.

Next, Aaron reported that ATVs are not allowed on the Rail Trail. There have already been complaints, and he recommends that if you see one to please report it to the Police Department. Shaun stated that there was one exception, and that was the area between Wright Farm Road and Kate Brook Rd. Shaun also stated that he has been in contact with VAST to order signs to put onto the trail.

There will be a state-wide drug take back campaign on Saturday, April 24. Hardwick Police has a station at their office; however, they only accept pills. Please do not bring liquids or needles.

Before the April 1 meeting, Aaron provided the Select Board a variety of graphs to show the number of incidents within a given month. Tonight, Aaron asked which graph the board wanted him to use in the future. The board will follow up on this so that Aaron can properly report the number of incidents in April during the first meeting in May.

Lastly, Aaron stated that the Town of Hardwick is liable for Caspian Beach in Greensboro, and starting July 1, Hardwick will no longer be patrolling that beach, or any particular area in Greensboro. Aaron has seen multiple issues in the past, including underage drinking, and fatal car accidents. He is asking the Board to think about how the Town wants to control the incidents at the beach as he is worried the number of incidents will increase and causes problems for the Town. Ceilidh confirmed with Aaron that Hardwick will not be patrolling that area.

6:33 P.M. – 6:36 P.M. Item # 3 Select Board to discuss and appoint a new part-time Police Officer

*This was moved up due to Aaron needing to leave the meeting. *

Eric read the oath out loud, and the appointment is for Zachary Willey to become a part-time officer for the Town of Hardwick.

Shari asked if Zachary Willey is a new officer, or if he has experience. She also asked if he lived in the area. Aaron stated that Zach lives in the Lyndonville area, and that yes, he has experience. He's been working part-time for the Caledonia County Sheriff's Department for about a year now, and he plans to continue to work for them.

Upon motion by Michael Deering, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to appoint Zachary Willey as a new Hardwick Police Department part-time officer.

6:36 P.M. - 6:38 P.M. HED Report- Nat Smith

Nat Smith reported that the revenues are up, and the expenses are down. There are still customers that have outstanding balances due to financial hardships with COVID-19. HED will continue to work with customers on their balances. Nat also reported that some of the capital projects have been pushed back, due to COVID-19. The H11 project is looking good, and the plan is still to start in the late Summer. Lastly, he reported that the

Wolcott Hydro is running well.

6:39 P.M. – 7:20 P.M. Item #1 Downtown Designation Program Presentation by VT ACCD

Gary Holloway who works in the Community Planning & Revitalization Division of the Agency of Commerce & Community Development's Downtown Program presented an overview of the Downtown Designation program. Gary said he was excited of the possibility of Hardwick moving on to Downtown Designation from the current Village Center Designation. He remembered that Hardwick appointed a commission following the VCRD Community Visit process in 2015 to focus on revitalization initiatives for the downtown area. Gary stated that many think this program could be a good fit for Hardwick and he provided a brief overview of the program and what it means. The full overview presentation was provided previously to Shaun, Geoff, Kristen & Shari earlier and that is posted to the Hardwick website and/or available from the Town Managers Office.

Essentially the State has different designation programs and Hardwick has a "Village Center" designation which allows certain benefits such as the historic state tax credit benefit. Downtown Designation is an "opt in" program that adds on some additional benefits. One of the most popular is the downtown transportation funds which allows designated downtowns to apply for grants up to \$100,000 that municipalities can apply to annually and rather than competing against every town in the state they are only competing with the other 23 designated downtowns. They are state funded 1:1 match grants that allow for state funded grants that allow for streetscape improvements, sidewalk extensions, lighting, way finding, signage, safety enhancements among the variety of projects.

Eric asked if it was state money that could be matched with federal money or other non-state money and Gary replied that it is and explained in further detail. The annual amount varies but this year there is an increase of \$100,000 taking the usual amount up to \$500,000. Some other benefits include additional Tax Credit opportunities, sales tax reallocation and some Act250 relief and other programs that directly serve the downtown area.

Gary noted that Hardwick is well on its way to having many of the requirements already.

This program is to preserve the character, enhance the future, and build stronger communities. Specific benefits that this program provides could be improving transportation methods, street lighting, attract new businesses, and support/build up existing businesses, marketing the downtown, and attract more visitors. This program offers a variety of different opportunities.

There are different state grant priorities, and different tax credit opportunities to go along this program as well.

Gary talked about the process of this program. The following is what the program requires:

- The Town needs to initially decide if they want to move forward
- The Town will need to fill out an application
- There would be a separate Downtown Commission/organization that is formed that is willing to work with the Town on this project. There are no requirements to form a 501C3 or to have specific number of members on the board.
- The Town has to contribute some sort of funding. However, there isn't a specific amount. This is to just help with the project, and prove that the Town is dedicated.
- The Select Board will have to formally approve/adopt a resolution.

- Gary will then review all of the above pieces. He will help the Town with any missing pieces/improvements that need to be done, and he will move it along to the review team to decide how much (if any) Hardwick will be awarded.

There are other requirements that Towns need to follow once they receive the award:

- There would need to be a Downtown renewal every 8 years
- There would be a review every 4 years
- There would need to be statistics annually, which would describe how many businesses the Town has gained/lost within the year. It could also describe how many employees the Town has brought in/lost.

Eric asked if Hardwick would be the smallest Town to do/have this program. Gary said no, but it would be one of the smaller towns. Bristol and Wilmington are two other towns that are similar to Hardwick's size.

Eric asked if there are plans for UV charging stations within the Hardwick area. Gary mentioned that the State has been looking at areas/gaps where they could add the charging stations. He stated that there is a proposal for six spots to install the stations, and Hardwick is one of the areas. He stated that if there were companies that would like to bid on this project of installing the charging stations, to please pass them along to him. To further this discussion, Ceilidh asked that this be placed on a future agenda to discuss a specific location; to include Mike Sullivan.

The Select Board generally agreed to move forward with this project and will continue to have this on the agenda to discuss forming a commission and a resolution.

7:20 P.M. – 7:56 P.M. Item # 2 Select Board to discuss downtown walkways and parking spaces

The Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Task Force, and the Hardwick Planning Commission have come up with several recommendations for the Town to do to make specifically the downtown a safer area. Some of the items include; adjust sight lines, repaint the crosswalks, remove handicap parking spots adjacent to the Post Office parking area and to designate a nearby parking spot of handicap parking, install speed signs, install flashing crosswalk signs, and more!

Michael stated that he agrees that taking away parking spots near the crosswalks would make it so that cars could see pedestrians better. However, on the flip side of things, taking away parking spots would drive people away due to the lack of parking in the downtown area. He suggests the Town look into an area to build a parking garage. This task will be difficult due to the lack of space.

Ceilidh wanted clarification on the budget and where items were paid from/ will be coming out of in the future. After some discussion, she requested a check list as to what items have been purchased, what line/department it came out of, and what fiscal year it affected. She would also like the same done for upcoming projects.

The Select Board needed to make a decide on the color of the crosswalks, as Tom needed to order paint, and it takes some time to come in. They also wanted to focus on parking spots within the downtown, so those could be painted.

The Select Board generally agreed to paint the crosswalks in the downtown area a white border with a rust color on the inside. The other crosswalks, such as those on Wolcott St. can be all white.

As stated previously in the minutes, VTRANS will give the Town and opportunity to have a concersation prior

to the repaving project that will come in 2022. That discussion will also help implement some of the sidewalk improvements.

The Select Board also agreed to remove two parking spots in front of the Clip Joint for better visibility. There will be lines drawn or barriers put up to indicate no parking. Shari also suggested lines or barriers in the parking spot that the Town removed last year near the Post Office in front of The ReHair Shop. She has seen people use that space even though there isn't a designated parking spot.

At the May 6 Select Board meeting, the Select Board will discuss the Village Diner lot barriers, tables, and parking spaces. The porta potties within Town will also be discussed.

7:56 P.M. – 7:59 P.M. Item #9 Select Board to discuss and approve a statement made by the Equity Committee in regards to the Anti- Asian Sentiment & Violence

*This was moved up due to Ceilidh needing to leave. *

The Statement read:

Due to the recent climate of anti-Asian violence, the Town of Hardwick Select Board is taking this moment to intentionally and deliberately stand by our Asian and Pacific Islander communities and reaffirm our commitment to the Hardwick Equity resolution. The Hardwick Select Board condemns and denounces any and all racist sentiment or aggression towards these communities, including microaggressions related to COVID.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Michael Deering, the Select Board voted to approve the Anti-Asian Sentiment & Violence statement as stated above.

7:59 P.M. – 8:01 P.M. Item # 4 Select Board to authorize the annual update of Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP)

Shaun had provided the Local Emergency Management Plan to the Board. This plan states where and who the residents should contact in case of an emergency.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Michael Deering, the Select Board voted to approve the annual update for the Local Emergency Management Plan.

8:01 P.M. – 8:04 P.M. Item # 5 Select Board to discuss the Memorial Day fireworks given the current pandemic

Michael suggested the Town reach out to the Fire Wardens to see if Fireworks are permitted due to the drought.

The Board generally agrees to move forward with the Fireworks for Memorial Day, unless Hazen didn't want to do it on their property, or if there was a red flag/concern due to the drought.

8:04 P.M. – 8:05 P.M. Item #6 Select Board to discuss and review any updates provided by VLCT on hiring a new Town Manager.

Eric doesn't have any updates from VLCT; however, he did email Jon Jewett a draft contract. When Jon returns it, Eric will pass it along to the Board.

8:05 P.M. – 8:08 P.M. Item #7 Select Board to review contractor for PSB and Hardwick Depot roof replacement and authorize Town Manager to enter contract.

Eric stated that the Town received two bids. Eric read off specs from the two companies that sent in bids. The companies are:

- Laraway Mountain Construction’s bid for the PSB was \$23,000. Their bid for the Depot was \$22,400, and the plywood replacement is \$60/sheet.
- Roof Tech LLC’s bid for the PSB was \$25,500. Their bid for the Depot was \$27,120 and the plywood replacement was \$130/sheet (which includes labor).

Shaun and Casey recommend Laraway Mountain Construction.

Shari stated that Michael Bean owns Laraway Mountain Construction and he’s done a lot of work for the Town House. She would also recommend that company.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Michael Deering, the Select Board voted to approve Laraway Mountain Construction to replace to roof for the PSB and the Depot.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Michael Deering, the Select Board voted to have the Town Manager enter into and sign a contract with Laraway Mountain Construction for the roof replacements.

8:08 P.M. – 8:10 P.M. Item #8 Select Board to discuss the sale of property located in East Hardwick to the O’Briens

There is a piece of property that the Town currently owns, that the O’Briens would like to purchase. Shaun now has a Purchase and Sales Agreement and is looking for the Select Board’s approval to move forward. The closing date is planned for June 1.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Michael Deering, the Select Board voted to have the Town Manager enter into and sign the Purchase Sale Agreement for this property.

Select Board Reports:

- Shari reported that the Town House will be opening in June. Currently she is talking to the Chamber Players who plan to have two performances in the late summer. Other activities may occur after July 4. As events are planned, she will update the Town House’s website. All groups will follow CDC guidelines.
- Michael asked who was in charge of the water structure at the community gardens located at Atkins Field. The structure is underground. Shaun stated it would be Bethany Dunbar,

New Business: None

Old Business: None

8:12 P.M. Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, adjourned the meeting.

Minutes approved by: _____
Eric Remick, Select Board Chair

Minutes taken by: _____
Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator