

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING**

**6:00 P.M. Thursday, May 20, 2021  
VIA ZOOM MEETING PLATFORM**

**Select Board**

Eric Remick, Chair  
Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Vice Chair  
Elizabeth Dow  
Shari Cornish  
Michael Deering

**Others Present**

Shaun Fielder, Town Manager  
Casey Rowell, Business Manager  
Aaron Cochran, Police Chief  
Tom Fadden, Road Foreman

**Others Present**

Emily Rosenbaum  
Greg Stefanski  
Minty Conant

**Regular Meeting**

**6:03 P.M.** – Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, called the meeting to order.

**6:03 P.M.** – Set/Adjust Agenda – Add an Item # 9 for a Liquor License approval

*Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to adjust the agenda as stated.*

**6:04 P.M. – 6:05 P.M.** – Select Board to approve minutes for the Regular Select Board meeting of May 6, 2021 and the Special Meeting of May 11, 2021

*Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the May 6 Regular meeting minutes and the May 11 Special meeting minutes, as written.*

**6:05 P.M.** – Communication from the Audience - none

**6:05 P.M. – 6:19 P.M.** Town Manager’s Report– Given by Shaun Fielder

Shaun has been working with Jon Jewett on the transition. He has been getting his notes in order and working with the Business Manager and department heads to ensure a smooth transition. The middle of next week, he and Jon will meet and debrief on key items in process.

Shaun shared that the Lister’s have indicated that they want to step out of the role at the end of the year. Shaun has had some planning meetings with them about this. This topic will be further addressed at the June 3 meeting. For consideration would be changing the Town’s listers to a subcontractor role. It would require a charter change, so this is something that would need to take place over the next 6-8 months. Shaun suggests maybe forming a task force like the one that was formed for the Assessor services a couple of years ago.

Shaun shared that the Northern Forest Center awarded the Town a \$10,000 grant to improve the Hardwick Trails. Geoff Sewake worked with the Recreation Coordinator, Jason Bahner, and others to help secure this grant.

Shaun mentioned that the Town continues to follow the universal guidance and we are still asking people to mask when entering our buildings. We will not and cannot ask anyone if they are vaccinated, so we are choosing to continue with masking. We are open for normal business.

Shaun thanked the Town for the opportunity to work with them the last 2.5 years. He is happy about the positive things that have happened in Town while he was here. He looks forward to hearing about the Town's continued progress moving forward.

Eric indicated that they are grateful to have had Shaun for this 2.5-year period. Eric thanked him for the work on several projects he has worked on during his time.

Shari asked about LVRT plans for signage and when this might happen. Shaun reported that there are bids out for the signage, but he does not believe that it will be this season. Eric said that VTrans is moving forward with the bridges first. LVRT has collaborated with Ken at VAST for some temporary signs.

Ceilidh asked about the grant for bike racks and information kiosks and if those would be put in this season. This funding was from the VT Outdoor Recreation Economy Grant. It is anticipated to happen in Summer/Fall.

**6:19 P.M. – 6:26 P.M. Road Foreman Report– Given by Tom Fadden**

Tom reported that they have done most of the crosswalk painting and parking lines. They have been cleaning up the parks and will be able to finish the crosswalks when the red paint comes in. There has been a water issue on Glenside loop. There is still an issue with the pumphouse. Wellhouse #1 is back online after the refurbishment project as of Tuesday morning. He also reported that they have completed the second round of grading.

The crew has been working on ditching for the upper part of Town Farm Rd. and Bridgman Hill. Tom also met with Doug Morton and got the green light to work on Bridgman Hill.

Ceilidh asked about our water supply in general given the dry weather. Tom indicated that our wells are in good shape and we are not having any challenges with water supply. Shaun commented that our area is considered “abnormally dry” and not in an actual drought.

There is a meeting with VTrans next week about the large paving project scheduled for 2022. Shari asked if this was a public meeting because the Planning Commission is interested in knowing more about the project. Eric indicated that essentially yes; however, Tom, Jon, and Eric, as well as Doug Morton, will all be there as well as several VTrans and outside engineers. It is not necessary for all Board members to attend, but she can if she would like to. Eric will share the details with Shari.

Tom mentioned that the East Hardwick crosswalks have also been painted.

**6:26 P.M. – 6:32 P.M. Hardwick Police Department Report – Given by Aaron Cochran**

Aaron wanted to thank Tom and the crew for cleaning up around the Public Safety building and he appreciates their efforts to make it look nice.

Aaron met with Lisa Fecteau's mother about the memorial bench that is planned for Lisa at the Public Safety building. Ken LaCasse has been helping with the flagpole search. He is hoping to have the bench and flagpole in place by July 4.

Aaron reported that they are utilizing the Distracted Driving grant funds. Cell phone violations continue to be an issue.

Officer Marcoux is finishing up his firearms instructor certification at the Academy. This will assist them with future trainings, rather than relying on other agencies.

The officers have completed the CPR and First Aid annual trainings. One of the officers is leaving in July for roughly six months for military basic training.

Aaron mentioned that the Gazette stated that there was no change in the PD budget after the lost revenue, but Aaron mentioned that they have been working on changes and these will be presented to the Select Board.

Hardwick Electric Department Report – no report this evening

**6:32 P.M. – 6:58 P.M. Item #1 Emily Rosenbaum with Lamoille Area Health and Human Services Response Command Center to present about the collaboration among area health and human services organizations.**

Emily Rosenbaum and Greg Stefanski came to share about the resources that are available through their organization in partnership with the Lamoille County United Way. The website is: [uwlamoille.org](http://uwlamoille.org). They encouraged the Town to have a direct link to the website from the Town's website, as well as Law Enforcement to have access to share these services with people as they need them.

Shari asked about the Lamoille reference when we are Caledonia County. Email explained that it is the Morrisville Health area, which also serves Hardwick.

Ceilidh asked if there has been any collaboration with the Hardwick Neighbor to Neighbor group. Emily showed that they have a direct link to the group on the webpage. Emily indicated that Hardwick has showed less need for them because of the great work of the neighbor-to-neighbor group.

Elizabeth asked about what percentage of households have reliable internet access. Emily indicated that there is

a map that she can share with her. Greg indicated that only 50-70% of people in the Hardwick have a reliable connection whereas Lamoille County is closer to 85%.

Eric mentioned that Larry Hamel our Town Service officer would be a good person to share this information with.

**6:58 P.M. – 7:03 P.M.** Item #2 Select Board to review and consider appointing Kevin Moore to the OCSUED School Board

*Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to appoint Kevin Moore to the OCSUED School Board to serve out the remainder of Orise Ainsworth's term.*

**7:03 P.M. – 7:37 P.M.** Item # 3 Select Board to discuss Police Department budget FY22.

A proposed revised budget was presented. It proposes a decrease of roughly \$170,000 in expenses. This proposed budget adjustment fills all but \$75,000 of the decrease in revenue from Greensboro.

Eric said that the Board can decide that we work with this for the FY22, but we need to think about to do when we are ready to budget for the following year 's budget. Eric mentioned that the Board may want to consider if the town wants to continue doing regional police services or not. The Business Manager is looking to see if there are any additional grant opportunities to fill in the gap.

Aaron brought up that Barton has contacted us about doing patrols in their Town, but he does not recommend this at this time. Given the geographic location and the need to utilize a part-time officer to fill any hours there. There was some brief discussion about the pros and cons of this. The cons outweigh the benefits.

Elizabeth would like to see us be conservative when we are preparing the next budget and not necessarily plan on having revenue from regional policing.

Shaun shared that after the Business Manager researched the COPS grant further earlier in the day, it does not look like it will fit into the parameters that we need. However, ARPA funds may be eligible for first responder pay during the state of emergency. Shaun commented that sometimes we are over and sometimes we are under. Shaun said that the ask is that we maintain our human capital (Officers).

Shari would like to see us have a community discussion about policing in Hardwick when we get to the FY23 budget. Eric said that we should find a way to gauge what the community wants. Elizabeth pointed out that we have the money in our Fund balance to fill the gap. Shari feels that our next budget should focus on a Hardwick only police department and not necessarily regional policing.

Aaron reminded the group about what crime was like back in the 60's and 70's in Hardwick and why the Town decided to go to a full-time department originally. He feels there is a lot to consider and reflect on with where we are now with crime and where we were at one time before making any drastic changes.

The Select Board generally agrees that the Town does not want to pursue police services with Barton/Orleans.

The Select Board generally agrees that moving forward with the planned revised budget as proposed and we will work towards a policy decision at some point in the future about pursuing regional policing. We will try to gather community input. Shari asked if we were considering reducing 24/7 coverage by using another agency. Aaron commented that information sharing can become challenging. He also feels that the cost would outweigh the benefit. He would like to see us continue the 24/.7 coverage and keep that as the goal.

Ceilidh asked about the staffing breakdown and looking at the cost for an outside agency to provide coverage for some hours. Having it on paper would be helpful. This would be helpful to make decisions in the Fall.

**7:37 P.M. – 7:50 P.M. Item # 4 Update on Yellow Barn Project**

Eric provided a brief update on the project. As a reminder, the Town will own the property but will lease to Northeast Kingdom Development Corporation (NEKDC), who will manage the tenants. The Town gets grant funds, NEKDC is taking out the loans and the tenants are contributing some to the fit-up. There is enough funding committed so that we can move ahead with the bidding process. Bids are expected to go out in July/August with hopes for an October groundbreaking.

Minty Conant with NEKDC was present to talk about the project. She is confident in the project and would like to see the Board support the lease agreement that they are being asked to Caledonia Spirits. Shaun took a minute to recognize all the time and effort that Minty is putting into the Yellow Barn project. He thanked her.

Eric reported that he has joined the Board of NEKDC. He does not see it as a conflict of interest. However, he will abstain from voting on Yellow Barn matter. This evening, he would like the Board to consider authorizing the Town Manager to sign the ground lease to keep the project moving forward.

*Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to authorize the acting Town Manager to execute all documents regarding the ground lease as well as for the loan closing of Vermont Community Loan Fund.*

*Eric abstained, all others yea.*

**7:50 P.M. – 8:06 P.M. Item #5 Select Board to consider approving the final draft of the Illegal Burning Ordinance**

Aaron mentioned that there is a maximum penalty but no waiver penalty in the document. Article 4 concerned him because the PD would not be able to enter the property without authority. However, after looking into it, they can for a civil matter. He is accustomed to dealing with criminal matters where a search warrant would be needed. He spoke with our Town attorney and it was recommended that the Forest Fire Warden be named as the primary contact and the PD should be the secondary contact. Aaron explained a civil penalty has

a minimum, maximum and a waiver amount.

The Board generally agreed to include a waiver penalty to the draft and to change the primary contact to the Forest Fire Warden and the PD as secondary. The Board would need to decide what the waiver penalty is. These edits can be made and then presented at the next meeting for approval.

**8:06 P.M. – 8:14 P.M. Item #6** Select Board to discuss length of Hardwick Electric Department (HED) Commissioner terms

The Select Board recently met with the HED Commissioners. Due to the technical nature of the Commissioner position, HED Commissioners think that all terms should be 3-year terms. There was some discussion about this, but it did not need to be decided this evening. It would not require a charter change.

**8:14 P.M. – 8:20 P.M. Item # 7** Select Board to consider approval of the new “Relocation Costs of Employees” Policy and the revised Conflict of Interest Policy (to meet Federal guidelines)

The Business Manager explained that in recent audit reports, it was identified that the Town had some policies in place that did not meet the Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG) needed for Federal awards. Since the Town receives a fair number of federal awards, it is necessary to fix the ones that need to be fixed and add ones that we did not have.

We have added a new Relocation Costs of Employees policy, which would rarely be used since we are in one location, but still need to have it. There have been some changes in the Conflict-of-Interest Policy mostly to reference specific UGG areas.

*Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the new Relocation Costs of Employees Policy and the Conflict-of-Interest Policy.*

**8:20 P.M. – 8:30 P.M. Item # 8** Update on the Pedestrian bridge/conversation about community input

Shaun indicated that he received notification that the Pedestrian Bridge is an “eligible project” for the USDA RBDG grant that we applied for. This does not mean that we have received an award. It means that it moves onto the next step, which is a competitive process to actually obtain an award. We can start the project but with some risk if we do not get funding. The community input part was not written into the grant and would not be reimbursable. Shari went over the plan for community engagement (see attachments).

Ceilidh would like to know where the money is coming from for the costs associated with the community workshop that is being proposed. Shaun mentioned that the Board previously authorized up to \$100,000 from the Fund Balance if necessary.

*Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway- Kane, the Select Board voted to approve the proposal for the community engagement project.*

**8:30 P.M. – 8:31 P.M.** Select Board to consider approval of First- & Third-Class Liquor License

*Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve a First Class and Third-Class license for 41 South Main Street, LLC d/b/a The Scale House.*

**Select Board Reports:** Shari reported that NEKArts folks opened and cleaned the Town House this week. They plan to have it open for some use by June 1. In addition, they plan to offer some open house hours in July & August.

**Old Business:** Shaun shared the costs for a porta-potty to be used in the downtown area. No action was taken on this matter.

Resuming in-person Select Board meetings was discussed last meeting and was agreed to be talked about again at this meeting. The consensus is that meetings will resume in person starting June 3. Masks and social distancing will remain in effect for the meetings.

**New Business:** None

**8:40 P.M.** Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, adjourned the meeting.

Minutes approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Eric Remick, Select Board Chair

Minutes taken by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Casey Rowell, Business Manager