

MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING

6:00 P.M. Thursday, May 6, 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
Alberta Miller, Town Clerk

Others Present

Doug McClure
Ranny Bledsoe
Jodi Lew-Smith
Lisa Sammet
Lynne Gedanken
Danny Hale
Amy Rosenthal

6:04 P.M. – Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, called the meeting to order.

6:04 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda - none

6:04 P.M. – 6:06 P.M. Select Board to approve minutes for the Regular Select Board meeting of April 15, 2021 and the minutes of the Special meeting of April 27, 2021

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of April 15, 2021 and the minutes of the Special meeting of April 27, 2021, as written. Elizabeth abstained. All others voted yea.

6:06 P.M. – Communication from the Audience - none

6:06 P.M. – 6:13 P.M. Town Manager’s Report– Given by Shaun Fielder

Shaun reported that we have moved forward with processing the contract for the roof replacement projects for the Public Safety Building and Historic Depot. A start date has not been determined yet by Contractor.

Shaun assisted with the scheduling of a project meeting for the Jeudevine Library project with VT USDA, NBF Architects, and Jodi Lew-Smith. He indicated that we would receive a report from Jodi later in the meeting and then there would be a follow up call with above noted group tomorrow.

Shaun assisted with getting the Public Notice of Sale posted for a 0.12-acre parcel in East Hardwick to be sold by Town, which is anticipated to close in early June.

Shaun has continued to monitor any information released regarding American Recovery Plan Act. We do not know at this phase what the funds can be used for. We expect a direct deposit of these funds from the US Treasury around May 10. Guidance on how the monies can be spent is to be published by the US Treasury and should be available soon and no later than May 10. Funds need to be spent by December 31, 2023.

Shaun held a planning meeting with the Lister’s regarding the future approach for Lister duties for the Town. As a next step, he will be researching details further to determine options on listing work scope moving forward. Given policy matters, he will provide a more detailed update next meeting to the Board and will be asking a member to be involved with review of this subject matter.

Shaun has been collaborating with the Caspian Lake Beach Committee and the Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE) on their donation of some granite blocks to be used as benches at Caspian Beach. He is working with Tom on planning to transport the blocks in the next couple of weeks.

Shaun asked everyone to continue to follow the social distancing guidance and if you can get your COVID vaccine, please consider doing so. The Vermont Moving forward plan is changing rapidly.

6:13 P.M. – 6:16 P.M. Road Foreman Report– Given by Tom Fadden

Tom reported that rain and colder weather have presented challenges for painting and some of the other typical Spring tasks. The crew did get some grading done as they could over the last couple of weeks. Street sweeping was done this week.

They did a temporary fix of a culvert on Stage House Rd. The Buffalo St. sewer pumps had to be pulled and cleaned again. They also worked on an issue at the Glenside pumphouse.

Tom reported that paint for the crosswalks has been ordered and it will be a red paint (not the original terracotta that was discussed) with a white outline. It will be 3-4 weeks before we can get the paint.

Ceilidh asked when the trash and recycling bins will be going out downtown. Tom reported that they will be put out on Monday, as well as the bike racks.

6:16 P.M. – 6:28 P.M. Hardwick Police Department Report – Given by Aaron Cochran

April incidents were sent out ahead of time. There were 169 total incidents.

Aaron provided a proposed draft of some budget changes for the Board to review. Aaron mentioned that Ceilidh had some residents who expressed concern that they would have to pay more due to the lost revenue. That is not the case.

Aaron would like the Town to consider looking at the fund balance (rainy day fund) for the fiscal year. Aaron talked briefly about Officer coverage and he would like to see us maintain the coverage we have.

Eric thinks this should have a separate agenda item at the next meeting when we can go through the details of the coverage and the budget. What Aaron put forth is what he thinks is the leanest budget that the department can do while still maintaining 24-hour coverage in the Town. Covering this at the next meeting would allow the Board additional time to review Aaron's proposal of the budget reductions and allow the Board to speak to him individually if they have questions.

Aaron expressed concern about losing Officers if they were put in the position of working shifts alone. These factors need to be considered when we discuss it next time.

Ceilidh mentioned that she spoke with Aaron about the cannabis retail locations and that if these were to come about over the next couple of years, it could change the demand for Officers. Shaun mentioned that Towns would need to conduct a vote by Town Meeting 2023 about retail cannabis locations, so they still have time to decide on this.

6:28 P.M. – 6:30 P.M. Hardwick Town Clerk's Report – Given by Alberta Miller

Alberta wants to remind everyone that Property taxes are due next Monday, May 10. The Town Clerk's office is open Monday-Thursday 8-4, closed 12-12:30. They will also be open 7:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. on Monday, May 10 to accept payments. A postmark of May 10 is acceptable. There is also a Drop box outside the office for after hours.

Alberta also reminded everyone that credit card payment and e-checks are available to pay your taxes, as well as other fees such as dog licenses, recordings, etc. Visit our website www.hardwickvt.org for information about these options. They are not processing credit card payments over the phone currently. You can process cards online or come into the office.

6:30 P.M. – 6:56 P.M. Item #1 Jeudevine Library Expansion update given by Jodi Lew-Smith

Jodi shared that the Library received bids for the expansion project in early April. The bids were 50% more than expected. The new plan is a 2-phase plan. They are trying to be able to sign a contract to start construction because they need to use certain Federal grants in this year. There is also the concern of building material prices rising even more.

\$1.54M is already accounted for through the Bond, and fundraising efforts. They were able to get a private donation of \$200,000 since the bid came in and that still leaves them about \$200,000 short. They are looking at leaving the lower level unfinished, which brings the total to \$1.95M. They have been working to “value engineer” paving, walkways, non-essentials, etc. They would not do these items until they can get the remaining funding.

Phase 1 is to get a signed contract to start building. Phase 2 is to finish raising the funds to finish everything. Taking out everything that is possible to take out, gets them to the \$1.95M. They are going to ask donors for additional funds and are applying for additional grant funds and the Leahy funds. They are in a time crunch as the construction bid is only good for 60 days.

Jodi asked what the Town can offer for guidance or support to get them through this time so that they can get a contract signed and start the project while they continue to raise funds. Shari asked about the COVID funds and Shaun explained that we are still waiting for guidance on how it can be used.

Jodi said that what would be extremely helpful is if the Town would sign the contract on the premise that the rest of the money needed would come in by January when they need it. They feel confident that they will be able to raise those funds by the time it is needed, especially given all that they have raised so far and the donor base they have established.

Eric recapped the ask. Basically, the Town needs to sign the construction contract for \$1.95M, knowing that the money on hand is about \$200,000 short. The worst-case scenario is that the Library does not raise all the funds and the Town must pay the bill. Jodi indicated that is certainly not the intention. They feel optimistic that they will be able to raise the money by the time that it is needed. A commitment is needed for all the money before signing the contract.

Ceilidh asked what specific money we are committing. Jodi said that we are not actually providing upfront money but committing to the project for the shortage. Eric explained that the construction bills will come in over time and we already have \$1.7M and the Town would need to step in only if the Library is not able to raise the remaining funds, which they do not anticipate happening.

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to have the Town Manager sign the construction contract with Breadloaf Construction for the Jeudevine Library, not to exceed \$2.0M.

6:56 P.M. – 7:02 P.M. Item # 2 Business Manager to give quarterly budget report

The Business Manager presented the budget summary for the third quarter of FY21 (ending March 31). Revenues are about where expected. Expenses should be around 75%, but are slightly under at 67%. See attachments.

7:02 P.M. – 7:08 P.M. Item # 3 Select Board to consider letter of support for Craftsbury Community Care Center grant application

Ranny Bledsoe reported that the Craftsbury Community Care Center is applying to the Northern Border Regional Commission for a \$350,000 grant to support a major infrastructure upgrade at the facility. This would partially be to replace insulation for energy efficiency and cost savings, but the focus is the ventilation system. Especially during COVID, it became apparent that it needed to be a priority to upgrade the current ventilation system. The total project is about \$450,000 with the remaining money coming from the Center's reserve budget.

Ranny is here because the Center is looking for letters of support from all the Towns that currently support the Center. Ranny provided a sample letter to the Board in advance. They can use that or modify it to their preference.

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board authorized the Town Manager to sign a letter of support on behalf of the Select Board.

7:08 P.M. – 7:27 P.M. Item # 4 Select Board to discuss Town Manager search

Ceilidh reported that they are trying to form a Town Manager Hiring Committee and that there are several people in the community who would like to be on the committee. The people interested that were present include Lynne Gedanken, Danny Hale, and Amy Rosenthal. Ceilidh indicated that there were three other people interested, but not able to attend this evening. Eric mentioned that the time commitment is extensive with night meetings sometimes two times per week. There are typically phone interviews initially followed by some in person interviews.

Jon Jewett is going to be able to serve as an interim manager until we find a permanent Manager. There was some discussion about who would be on the committee, and handling some of the advertising in house, as well as what materials the Select Board has from the last search.

Eric said that we need to decide if we are going to handle it mostly in house, contract with VLCT or the NH agency that VLCT mentioned.

Ceilidh Galloway-Kane nominated, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the following people for the Town Manager Search Committee: Danny Hale, Amy Rosenthal, Lynne Gedanken, Lucian Avery, Jen McLean, and Ross Connelly. All Select Board members would also be on the Committee.

Ceilidh will reach out to the nominees who were unable to attend to confirm that they still want to participate.

Eric shared that he had sent out a proposed contract to the Board for Jon Jewett to be the Interim Manager and asked if anyone had feedback.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to have Eric move forward and sign a contract with the interim Town Manager.

7:27 P.M. – 7:35 P.M. Item # 5 Select Board to discuss “illegal burning” in Town and discuss the DRAFT of a possible ordinance

Shari drafted an ordinance for this. Eric feels that we should not have to create an ordinance for something that is already illegal, and people can call the Police to report it. However, people do not seem to be following the laws.

The Business Manager suggested that our Town attorney should review this first. Then it can be voted on at the next meeting and go through the process of implementing an ordinance. There is a waiting period and time for comments, etc. before it goes into effect. The Town Manager’s office will reach out to Bill Davies to review the ordinance.

7:35 P.M. – 7:39 P.M. Item #6 Select Board to review Downtown Designation DRAFT Resolution

Shari prepared a draft resolution for the Board to consider adopting to form a Downtown Commission which would then work to apply to the Vermont Downtown Program.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted unanimously to resolve the following:

WHEREAS the Town of Hardwick has had a Village Center Designation since February of 2003 with the most recent renewal in March of 2016; and

WHEREAS the Hardwick Planning Commission has established a strong commitment to the pursuit of Downtown Designation by including the goal/priority in the Hardwick Town Plan; and

WHEREAS the 2016 Hardwick Community Visit process identified enhancing Hardwick’s Downtown and building a business and economic development network as a priority.

Downtown Designation creates this network to further support civic, cultural, and economic activities alongside downtown revitalization; and

NOWTHEREFORE, be it resolved that the Hardwick Select Board hereby approves of the intention to submit an application to the Vermont Downtown Program and further resolves to establish a Downtown Commission and appoint a minimum of 5 with up to 7 individuals who will serve to complete the initial application and further serve in two-year appointments as the governing body that will partner with all local and regional allies needed to realize the full potential of downtown Hardwick.

7:39 P.M. – 7:42 P.M. Item #7 Update on Springfest and Memorial Day weekend fireworks

There is no Springfest or parade this year. The Board already indicated at a prior meeting that they want to move forward with the fireworks if Hazen will allow them on the grounds on Memorial Day weekend. The School Board has their next meeting May 10. Casey will let everyone know what they decide. The Board hopes that we can move forward with that weekend as the Community needs this type of event after such a challenging year.

7:42 P.M. – 7:52 P.M. Item #8 Select Board to discuss Portable Toilets in Village for Summer months

Eric said that with COVID last summer, a lot of businesses were not open, and people did not have access to restrooms. He thinks it will be different this summer with businesses and restaurants being open. Shari indicated that people regularly go into the downtown businesses asking to use their restrooms.

Eric expressed concern that a downtown porta-potty would generate a fair amount of traffic and would likely need to be serviced more frequently than weekly. Eric would like estimates on cost before considering it further. Elizabeth suggested near the Rail Trail as another location in addition to the downtown area. There was some discussion and concern about sanitation and cleanliness during the summer months.

Shaun will look more into prices and servicing schedules and report back at the next meeting.

7:52 P.M. – 8:02 P.M. Item #9 Select Board to confirm equity committee terms and approval of policy change

Ceilidh shared that the Equity Committee approved a change in their formation documents for 1-, 2- and 3-year terms of the members. The Equity Committee is requesting an Amendment to Article III Section 1 in their formation documents, specifically “Article III – Membership, Section 1: The Select Board has the authority to appoint all members of the Equity Committee. The minimum numbers of active members shall be three and the maximum shall be nine. The committee has three 1-year seats, three 2- year seats and three 3-year seats. Terms shall expire on 1-, 2-, and 3-year rotations and be considered for reappointment at the Select Board’s Organizational meeting in March.”

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted unanimously to accept the amendment as presented.

Ceilidh nominated the following individuals:

Ceilidh Galloway Kane	3-year (Chair)
Lucian Avery	3-year (Vice Chair)
David O’Brien	3-year
Chip Troiano	2-year
Rutu Shah	2-year
Audrey Grant	1-year (Treasurer)
Beth Cate	1-year (Secretary)

No further nominations. All voted in favor of nominations.

The Committee has the following open seat terms: one 1-year and one 2-year.

Select Board Reports: Shari shared that she participated in the Vermont Creative Economy Action event. She also attended a webinar hosted by the Rural Tourism Academy sponsored by the Northern Forest Center.

Elizabeth reported that the Hardwick Historical Society is having their Annual meeting on Monday, May 17 on the third floor of the Memorial Building. Professor Emeritus Tim Breen will speak after the business portion of

their meeting. This is a non-food event due to COVID and social distancing and masks will be required. Elizabeth also reported that last night someone tried to force entry into the Depot. They were not successful in entering, other than damaging the locks. She has let the Police Dept. know about this. Elizabeth shared some history about land lots in the late 1700's.

Ceilidh wanted to thank everyone for a great Green-Up Day. There was a great deal of trash and tires collected. Though we indicated that we were not accepting tires. Someone did leave many tires at the Fire Station and they had to be moved. We ask that people stop littering and dumping tires.

New Business: Eric brought up meeting in person or continuing to do Zoom for the meetings. Some of the Board would like to start meeting in person. Shaun suggested that Town employees also be consulted about their preference. Since not everyone will be fully vaccinated yet, it was decided that the next meeting will also be via Zoom, and it will be discussed again at the May 20 meeting about resuming in-person meetings in June.

Old Business: none

8:19 P.M. *Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to enter Executive Session for loan contract discussions pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A) to include Town Manger and Business Manager.*

8:31 P.M. Exited Executive Session. *No action taken.*

8:31 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