

MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. Thursday, July 15, 2021
MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3RD FLOOR

Select Board

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

Others Present

Jon Jewett, Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Business Manager
Aaron Cochran, Police Chief
Tom Fadden, Road Foreman
Alberta Miller, Clerk/Treasurer
Nat Smith, HED Commissioner
Diane Grenkow
Harry Snyder
Kathryn Mahurin-Volk
Sally Anstey
Ross Connelly

Others Present

Jodi Lew-Smith
Lisa Sammet
Patrick Kane
Joseph Rossi
Doug McClure
Brendan Buckley
Myles Tandy
Andrea Brightenbach
Katherine Mitchell
Rob Alcusky

Regular Meeting

6:00 P.M. – Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Select Board Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order.

6:01 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – Move Item #10 to Item # 1 Add an item after that for the Select Board to sign the final documents for the Library Bond and shift all other items down thereafter.

Select Board Chair, Eric Remick, took control of the meeting from here.

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

6:03 P.M. – Select Board to approve minutes for the Regular Select Board meeting of June 17, 2021, and the Burn Ordinance Public Hearing minutes of June 17, 2021.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of June 17, 2021, and the Burn Ordinance Public Hearing minutes of June 17, 2021, as written. Michael abstained.

6:04 P.M. – 6:13 P.M. Communication from the Audience – Patrick Kane passed out a photo of a new electric panel that was installed downtown and he asked if the Town has a policy on these types of services. He indicated that it violates ADA and feels that the location of it is a general hazard. He suggested that if the Town does not have a policy now that they might consider implementing something to prevent building owners from doing things like this in the downtown. It was suggested to talk to our Zoning Administrator and to Hardwick Electric.

6:13 P.M. – 6:22 P.M. Town Manager’s Report– Given by Jon Jewett

Jon shared about some of the issues that he has been dealing with that including health officer issues, cemetery vandalism, a mailbox issue, and he gave an update on delinquent taxes, water & sewer. He mentioned a painting project on Main St. that involved lead paint removal. There were some people expressing concern about the removal process, but he had already checked it out and it was being managed properly by a Contractor that was certified in lead paint removal. See full report in the attachments.

6:22 P.M. – 6:27 P.M. Road Foreman Report– Given by Tom Fadden

They are continuing work on Bridgman Hill. They also delivered 60+ water/sewer shut off notices but did not have to shut anyone off since they either paid or set up a contract to pay. They have also been installing meter pits on Glenside Ave.

The turbo in the loader went and that was gone for repair for about a week, but it is back now. Tom reported that the Chassis for the new dump truck is on its way to Clark's and then the body still must be installed.

We will be putting the sidewalks out to bid soon for Church St. and Maple St., which is a grant funded project.

6:27 P.M. – 6:41 P.M. Hardwick Police Department Report – Given by Aaron Cochran

Aaron reported that there were 196 incidents in June. After some research into the incident reports, he learned that 7:00 p.m. is the busiest time for calls over the last several years (excluding 2020) There was some discussion about the reports that he has access to about call volume and activity.

The replacement of the roof of the Public Safety building began and is moving along quickly. They did not find any damage to the plywood, so they did not need to replace any sheets.

The concrete base for the Lisa Fecteau Memorial bench was installed. The bench has been ordered.

Aaron reported that he met with the Woodbury Select Board, and they are looking for hourly patrol. Aaron also shared that one of the Officers gave his resignation today. Considering this, Aaron indicated that we do not have the workforce to offer this service at this time.

The PD did not sign off on any fireworks permits due to the latest Supreme Court ruling. The ruling indicated that it should be the Fire Chief or the Select Board to approve these. It requires a site visit and 15-day notice. Aaron indicated that he does not intend to sign off on any permits until the Board decides what direction they want to go with fireworks permits. Put on future agenda meeting.

Ceilidh mentioned that there seems to be a lot of reports of vandalism recently. The Police Chief encouraged people to reach out to them if they see suspicious activity. They will go check them out. It is more challenging to investigate these incidents when they do not know about them until well after they have occurred.

6:41 P.M. – 6:45 P.M. Hardwick Electric Department Report – Given by Nat Smith

Nat reported that the issue with Craftsbury Academy unbilled charges has been resolved. He also shared that the H-11 Solar is planning to come online the first week of August.

Revenues are 11% over budget and expenses are over budget by .6%. He let everyone know that all the HED staff is participating in training all week.

6:45 P.M. – 6:48 P.M. Item #1 Select Board to review and consider appointment of part-time Police Officer Joseph Rossi

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board appointed Joseph Rossi as a part-time Police Officer.

6:48 P.M. - 6:49 P.M. Select Board to sign the final Library Bond documents.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to sign the resolution and certificate of General obligation for the Library Bond.

6:49 P.M. – 6:54 P.M. Item #3 FY22 Tax Rate presented by Alberta Miller, Town Clerk/Treasurer

Alberta reported that the grand list went up to about \$191,000,000. The local agreement rate is going down. The homestead education tax decreased and the non-homestead went up only slightly.

We are proposing a tax rate of 1.2988 plus local agreement rate for a total of 1.3092.

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the tax rate of 1.3092.

6:54 P.M. – 7:39 P.M. Item #4 Select Board to consider additional loan guarantee for Library expansion project [Jodi Lew-Smith presenting]

A grant for \$157,000 is part of the funding sources for the overall project. USDA will not issue a Notice to Proceed until there is a commitment for the entire amount including a 10% contingency. This has created an additional shortfall for the project in addition to the \$250,000 that was presented in May. They do not expect to use all the contingency, but they cannot move forward unless there is a commitment for all funds including the contingency.

The Business Manager presented a document showing the current funding sources and the remaining expenses that include the required USDA 10% contingency. See attachments. There is an earmark of \$600,000 recommended by Senator Leahy; however, those funds are not guaranteed at this time. They would make the project whole, but there may not be a final award on that until December.

Jodi talked about a capital projects fund that she learned about recently. The application has not opened yet. She also brought up that the library is a crucial place for internet access, and she hopes that maybe some broadband funds could assist given the access they provide to so many people in the community.

Michael asked if there are contingency plans if the earmark does not come through. Jodi shared that the Plan B is that more broadband infrastructure money coming which may help support the project. Plan C is applying for capital funds project money.

There was discussion about having a tangible project that would generate additional fundraising efforts. There was concern expressed about people who have supported the project and see that it is not happening, that they will not necessarily continue their support if they feel the project is not coming to fruition after all this time.

Elizabeth Dow made a motion to back the library expansion project up to \$2,249,388. Shari Cornish seconded it.

After further discussion to clarify that the Town would not be providing the whole \$2M, only the additional shortfall, the motion was amended to support the Library Expansion project in the amount of \$249,388 (beyond what was already committed in May)

Shari - yea

Elizabeth - yea

Michael - nay

Eric - nay

Ceilidh – nay

Motion did not pass.

There was discussion about making a half a million-dollar additional commitment of Town funds, when voters already approved a \$550,000 bond, and where this money could feasibly come from. While the Board is incredibly supportive of this project and wants to see it happen, they cannot commit the requested funds under the current circumstances.

7:39 P.M. – 8:28 P.M. Item #5 Select Board to discuss Police Department direction with regional policing.

This is meant to be a general discussion about what the staffing would look like if the service were just within Hardwick and if 24-hour coverage would continue. One scenario would be to not provide coverage from midnight to 8:00 a.m.

Bringing down the cost and numbers of officers does decrease levels of service. Eric pointed out that the difference in cost between a full staff of seven full-time and going down to four full-time in Hardwick only is almost the amount of a previous contract that they Town had with Greensboro.

The Board needs to consider if they want 24-hour coverage. Aaron said that he would like to see the Board decide what direction they want to go in as far as regional policing.

With another officer giving their notice, if they do not fill that role, they will not be able to offer 24-hour coverage. That Officer leaves in 2 weeks.

The Select Board agrees that it does not make sense to take on Woodbury, so we are not going to pursue that.

Jon indicated that an immediate question is how we are going to manage the shifts now. Aaron indicated that if we eliminate the third shift, the State police would need to cover that time. He shared that the State Police is currently down forty-four positions.

There was some discussion about the police academy and that retirement rates in law enforcement outweigh the graduates from the Academy. It is particularly challenging to find any qualified officers at this point.

Ceilidh said that it would be helpful to know what the residents want in terms of coverage. Do they want to have 24-hour coverage with more officers and regional policing or less of a budget with less service?

Aaron expressed concern about losing additional officers due to uncertainty with the Police Dept. Eric and Ceilidh pointed out that we are at the lowest number of Officers we would want at this point now, so it should not really be a concern that we would be looking to downsize further.

There was discussion about holding a Community Forum and maybe even a Town vote to see what the community wants. The Board also asked about any consultants that might be available to assist with the research of the Police Dept. structure.

Aaron wants to know if he should fill the position for the Officer that just resigned. Given the time and length of this meeting, the Board would like to either revisit this at the next meeting or have a Special meeting in between.

8:29 P.M. – 8:30 P.M. Item # 6 Select Board to authorize purchase of new Bobcat 5600 from Champlain Valley Equipment in the amount of \$42,394.00 (in capital plan)

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to authorize the purchase of a new Bobcat 5600 from Champlain Valley Equipment in the amount of \$42,394.00.

8:30 P.M. – 8:39 P.M. Item # 7 Discussion about changes in the Town's charter for some elected positions (making them appointed instead) and elimination of the Lister role.

Jean and Jan, our current Listers are retiring as of December 31, 2021. We currently contract with New England Municipal Consultants (NEMC) for Assessor services. A lot of Towns are going in the direction of using an outside Assessor instead of Listers. This would require a Charter change. We have the figures for what it will cost the Town to cover Jan-Mar 2022 for additional services after the Listers leave until our next contract with NEMC is up for renewal. They have also gave us an idea of what the cost will be for them to do all the services with no listers.

Shari mentioned that there are other positions in the charter that are not necessarily needed. Jon reviewed some examples of positions that could be eliminated or made an appointed instead of elected position. See attachments for the notes about these. In addition to those listed on the attachments, it was also discussed about whether we needed to keep Trustees of Public Funds and the Surveyor of Wood, Bark & Lumber.

8:39 P.M. – 8:45 P.M. Item #8 Presentation of *revised* FY22 Water and Sewer Budgets

The Business Manager explained that we recently learned that the Wastewater Bond cannot go out to a 30-yr term due to it being mostly equipment replacement. Therefore, the annual payment is going from \$59,000 to \$80,000. We had to review the previously approved budget and figure out how to ease the additional payment into the budget without a huge burden to the rate payers. One of the major things that was changed is that we have reduced the amount of money transferred to the General Fund Public Works/Office salaries by \$5,000 in each category. We also plan to gradually reduce this over the next few years until it is half what it is now. We also removed the Town Equipment charge. Considering this change, we needed to also revise the water budget that has similar transfers to the general fund. In the end, the new sewer budget has an increase of 5.44%, but the water budget is *decreasing* by 4.44%.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the revised FY22 Water/Sewer budgets, as presented.

8:45 P.M. – 8:46 P.M. Item # 9 Select Board to consider signing letter of support for official naming of Buffalo Mountain.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to sign the letter of support for official naming of Buffalo Mountain.

8:46 P.M. – 8:48 P.M. Item #10 Select Board to select an “Authorized Representative” and “Contact Person” for the ARPA funds

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to appoint the Town Manager to serve as Hardwick’s “Authorized Representative” as required by the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funding (CLFRF) from the US Treasury, and to sign the Award Terms & Conditions and Assurances of Compliance with the Civil Rights Requirements

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to name the Business Manager to be the “Contact Person” for Hardwick’s CLFRF Award from the U.S. Treasury.

8:48 P.M. – 8:49 P.M. Item #11 Select Board to review and consider approval of the recommended 2021 paving bid contractor and authorize Town Manager to sign the contract.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board authorized a paving contract with Gray’s Paving in the amount of \$131,408 and authorized the Town Manager to sign the contract.

8:49 P.M. – 8:50 P.M. Item #11 Select Board to review and consider reappointment of HED Commissioners Lynne Gedanken (2-year ending 06/30/2023) and Nat Smith (3-year ending 06/30/2024)

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to reappoint HED Commissioners Lynne Gedanken (2-year ending 06/30/2023) and Nat Smith (3-year ending 06/30/2024)

8:50 P.M. – 8:51 P.M. Item #12 Select Board to review and consider approval of the 2022 Coin Drop Request

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the 2022 Coin Drop Requests as presented. See attachments for details.

Select Board Reports: Shari reminded everyone about the Community Engagement workshop for the Bridge Design that is happening this Saturday, July 17 at the Daniels parking lot. Thank you to Price Chopper Golub Corporation for their generous donation of \$500 to help with this event. The food is being donated by Jasper Hill and the Buffalo Mountain Co-op. Thank you to them as well. If you are unable to attend, but would like to provide input, a survey is available on the Town’s website.

Share also reported that the Open House Saturdays for the Town House has been happening and there has been some foot traffic. It takes place on Saturdays from 10-2 in July and August.

Elizabeth shared that the Town's grand list in 1868 was \$5,000. With an amazing vote of faith in the future, the Town bonded for \$60,000 (12 times their grand list) to support a railroad through the Town.

New Business: none

Old Business: Eric wants us to reconsider offering virtual options for attending the Select Board meetings, in addition to in-person. Hardwick Electric is currently researching this option as well, so he suggested that we see what they find out because we may be able to do something similar.

Eric reported that the Town Manager search committee is moving along. Applications are coming in. One member of the committee stepped down and Eric has asked Danny Hale to come back to the committee. He is willing to do this, so he is going to share the information with him. The next meeting is June 22.

8:58 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