

MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. Thursday, September 16, 2021
MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3RD FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM

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
Jonathon Weber, Local Motion (Zoom)
Matt Krajeski, NEMC (Zoom)
David Upson, Jr.
Mike Sullivan, Hardwick Electric (Zoom)
Brooke Dingedine, HED Attorney (Zoom)

Others Present

Nancy Schade
Marilyn Rogers
Bill Chidsey
Chad Hopkins
Earlene Hopkins
Bear Bessette

Regular Meeting

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

6:01 P.M. – 6:02 P.M. Set/Adjust Agenda – Add a second banner application for Hardwick Farmer’s Market under Item #5, Add an Item #9 to discuss parking recommendations from the Hardwick Planning Commission regarding the 2022 AOT paving project and Add an Item #10 for Select Board to consider authorizing the Town Manager to enter a contract with VIS Construction Consultants to be the Owners' Rep/Clerk of the Works for the Yellow Barn construction.

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

6:02 P.M. – 6:03 P.M. Communication from the audience: Earlene Hopkins is here to discuss issues with accessing her property. Jon indicated he plans to talk about this in his manager report and it can be addressed at that time.

6:03 P.M. – Select Board to approve minutes for the Regular Select Board meeting of September 2, 2021, and the Special meeting minutes of September 2, 2021, and September 9, 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 September 2, 2021, and the Special Select Board Meeting Minutes of September 2, 2021, and September 9, 2021, as written. Michael abstained.

6:04 P.M. – 6:33 P.M. Town Manager’s Report– Given by Jon Jewett

Jon updated the Board on a few items including ARPA funds, the sludge measurements at the Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF), a COVID testing option for employees, and a situation with residents trying to keep their longtime access to their property via a bridge that is Town owned. See attachments for full details.

The conclusion was that we need to re-bid the WWTF upgrade project in the Spring with cutting back the project. The cost of the sludge removal would be \$2.6M which is more than the actual project was expected

to be with all the upgrades. The Town needs to start planning to set aside a good chunk of money each year towards more regularly scheduled sludge removal.

Jon mentioned that some Towns are starting to look at not mandating vaccines but instead requiring weekly testing for people who are unvaccinated. Ceilidh requested that we add to the next meeting discussion.

Jon talked about the situation with the Hopkin's residents who indicate they have been told by HED that they cannot use the bridge to access their home any longer. The bridge provides access to HED's storage warehouse. They have been accessing the property for 35+ years. They are concerned about losing access.

Earlene Hopkins and her son Chad spoke about their concerns with the situation and their interactions with the General Manager of Hardwick Electric.

Brooke Dingleline, HED's attorney, spoke that this is not the appropriate forum for this discussion. She suggested that the parties and their attorneys need to discuss and resolve this outside of the meeting.

6:33 P.M. – 6:36 P.M. Hardwick Police Department Report – Given by Jon Jewett

Chief Cochran was unable to attend this evening but provided a memo to the Select Board about department activity. Jon reviewed the memo aloud. See attachments.

6:36 P.M. – 6:40 P.M. Hardwick Electric Department Report - Given by Mike Sullivan

Mike reported that there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony on H-11 around the second week of October. The guest speaker is still being worked out. Then it will go online after.

He reported on some projects that they have been working on. They are slightly under budget for their purchased power and are pleased with the result. He also reported that they are 2% over budget on revenues and 5.5% under budget for expenses.

He also shared that there has been low participation in the Dept of Public Service program for getting current on utility bills. They are still encouraging people to apply to assist them with their past due bills.

6:40 P.M. – 6:43 P.M. Item #1 Select Board to consider offering the position of Town Manager to a candidate

Select Board Chair, Eric Remick, shared that Select Board finished all interviews for the Town Manager position and have decided to offer the position to David Upson, Jr.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to offer the Town Manager position to David Upson, Jr. He accepted!

6:43 P.M. – 6:47 P.M. Item #2 Select Board to consider approving an error and omissions request presented by Matt Krajeski with New England Municipal Consultants (Assessors)

Matt explained the reason for the request which related to the Current Use Program wanting the Town to consolidate two parcels enrolled in the program into one parcel.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the Error and Omissions request for Thomas and Janet Bellavance as presented.

6:47 P.M. – 6:55 P.M. Item #3 Bear Bessette to discuss the need for roadside tree trimming

Bear Bessette expressed concern about the roads in Hardwick and how trees are encroaching into the road and his bus route is affected. He wanted to bring it to the Town's attention that something needs to be done about it.

There was some discussion about what the Town has for funds to do this, and Ceilidh suggested that we treat the roadside trimming like that of our paving and put it on an actual schedule. It was also mentioned that for the FY23 budget we should consider setting more aside.

Bear was disappointed that he had to come and bring this to the Town's attention and felt it should have been managed better so that the roads did not get so out of control to begin with. He appreciated the Board listening to his concerns.

6:55 P.M. – 7:18 P.M. Item #4 Select Board to hear proposal for spending VCF grant funds for bike racks, signage, and kiosks.

The Town received a \$10,000 grant from Vermont Community Foundation (VCF) earlier this year. The funds were to be spent on information kiosks, bike racks and signage to enhance the biker friendliness and safety of the Town. The original proposal for racks and signage did not seem to work well because it only had one type of sign to be purchased and the type of bike racks were not outlined specifically. The Business Manager consulted with Local Motion and Jonathon Weber, the Complete Streets Program Manager from Local Motion, is here to give an overview of the proposed revised budget. A PowerPoint presentation was given. See attachments for the full presentation.

The Board agreed with the overall spending plan but did not need to make a motion on it. They did decide that they would like to see one less kiosk and to add some additional signage that could be posted around the school areas/side streets where a lot of kids are biking to school. They instructed the Business Manager to work on that and proceed with what makes sense and fits into the budget. The Business Manager has to take the revised budget back to VCF for approval and then will purchase the items.

7:18 P.M. – 7:20 P.M. Item #5 Select Board to consider approval of a banner application for the Fall Craft Fair

The request from AWARE is for the Fall Craft Fair taking place October 2 and would be up for a couple of weeks starting this weekend. The second request was from Hardwick Farmer's Market to have a banner up on Wolcott St. for the whole 2022 season. There was brief discussion about if there was more than one space available for banners in case there was another organization wanting space next summer if the Farmer's Market had it for the whole season. There are two spots available.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the banner applications for AWARE from 9/18/2021 – 10/18/2021 and Hardwick Farmer's Market from 5/16/2022 to 10/11/2022.

7:20 P.M. – 7:30 P.M. Item #6 Business Manager to present proposed FY22 Water & Sewer rates

The Business Manager presented the proposed water and sewer rates. See attachments. Water rates are decreasing, and sewer rates are increasing in anticipation of the upcoming Bond for plant improvements.

In 2015, when the Town voted to approve the bond that included funds to install water meters for most residential accounts, part of the rationale was that we could make billing more equitable. Without meters, most water users paid the same flat rate every quarter regardless of water usage. With meters we can make the billing more use-based – the idea being that the more you use the more you pay.

Every summer we form an ad-hoc committee comprised of representatives from the Town Clerk's office, the Town Manager's office, and the Select Board to create a rate structure for the coming year to propose to the Select Board. To move toward a more *use-based* rate structure for residential accounts, this year the committee proposed lowering the quarterly water allotment from 10,000 gallons to 8,000 gallons. This resulted in lowering the base rate from \$288.00 to \$252.00 and increasing the overage rate from \$0.007 to \$0.008 per gallon.

The sewer rates are increasing roughly 6%, to support the Bond payment. The typical residential household will see an increase of \$28.00 a year or \$7.00 per quarter. The base rates increased, and the overage went from \$.0011 to \$.0013.

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Michael Deering, the Select Board voted to approve the FY22 water and sewer rates.

7:30 P.M. – 7:35 P.M. Item #7 Select Board to consider approval of water/wastewater connections for Vermont Natural Coatings

Jon gave background on the request for a new connection for this business.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the water/wastewater connection application for Vermont Natural Coatings subject to the receipt of the connection fees.

7:35 P.M. – 7:38 P.M. Item #8 Select Board to designate a voting delegate for each of the annual VLCT, VERB and PACIF meetings

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to appoint David Upson, Jr, Town Manager. as the voting delegate for the annual VLCT, VERB and PACIF meetings.

7:38 P.M. – 7:49 P.M. Item #9 Select Board to discuss parking recommendations from the Hardwick Planning Commission regarding the 2022 AOT paving project

AOT has asked the Town for recommendations on their paving project happening in 2022. One of Hardwick Planning Commission's (HPC) recommendations is that the handicapped spaces in front of the church on South Main St/Route 14 remain in place. If the spaces remain, there will need to be other adjustments to accommodate this.

There was discussion about taking the spots from the Church and members of the Board do not feel it would be good to take it away. The Board agreed that the handicapped spots in front of the church should stay.

Shari mentioned that there is curiosity about if sidewalks will appear when the pavement is ground down on Mill St. on the Village Market side near Brochu's Garage. Elizabeth is going to be review historic photos to see if they show any sidewalks in an earlier time.

7:49 P.M. – 7:53 P.M. Item #10 Select Board to consider authorizing the Town Manager to enter a contract with VIS Construction Consultants to be the Owners' Rep/Clerk of the Works for the Yellow Barn construction.

Eric gave an update on the Yellow Barn. The funding for the estimated cost is in place. The bid documents are almost complete and will be submitted to Economic Development Authority (EDA) soon. EDA is providing a \$3M grant for the project. After EDA approves, we will bring the Owner's Rep. on board.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to authorize the Town Manager to enter a contract with VIS Construction Consultants to be the Owners' Rep/Clerk of the Works for the Yellow Barn construction.

Select Board Reports: Shari reported that the bulbs in the chandelier at the Town House were replaced and it looks amazing. The Galaxy has a book event there on September 28. She encourages people to check it out.

Ceilidh Galloway-Kane reported that the Recreation Committee is having their first Free Movie night this Saturday, September 18, at Atkins Field at 8:00 p.m. It is a family friendly movie, "Luca."

New Business: Shari would like to see something done to show people that the Industrial Park is full of businesses. It appears that signage is lacking, and people are not aware of all the businesses that are there.

Old Business: Surveyors were at the Pedestrian Bridge today. Jon gave an update on the USDA contracts and AIA contracts for the project. He is working with USDA to get the contracts approved so we can move forward with the design and engineering.

The Business Manager gave an update on the Charter change process.

8:03 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