

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

Select Board

Eric Remick, Chair
Ceilidh Galloway-Kane
Elizabeth Dow
Shari Cornish
Michael Deering – *Zoom*

Others Present

David Upson, Jr. Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Business Manager
Alberta Miller, Town Clerk
Aaron Cochran, Police Chief
Tom Fadden, Road Foreman

Others Present

Rachel Kane
Jason Bahner - *Zoom*

Regular Meeting

6:05 P.M. – Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, called the meeting to order.

6:05 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – Add an Executive Session to discuss the Town Report dedication

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

6:06 P.M. – Communication from the audience – none

6:06 P.M. – Select Board to approve minutes for the Regular Select Board meeting of December 3, 2021

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the Regular meeting minutes of December 3, 2021.

6:07 P.M. – 6:13 P.M. Town Manager’s Report– Given by David Upson

David updated everyone on what he has been working on which including the Act 164 Task Force, the USDA grant for the pedestrian bridge, and getting fiber internet at the Police Station. See attachments for the full report.

6:13 P.M. – 6:15 P.M. Road Foreman Report– Given by Tom Fadden

Tom reported that it is quiet. They are plowing and sanding, doing light maintenance work on the trucks, and fixing potholes. Ceilidh asked about ice buildup in the front of the Elementary School. He will look at it.

6:15 P.M. – 6:24 P.M. Hardwick Police Department Report - Given by Aaron Cochran

Aaron presented reports for the last two weeks that showed the volume of calls during shifts as well as the areas with the most complaints. See attachments for these reports. He mentioned that juvenile problems have been common lately, including BB gun incidents.

Aaron commented that they are charging the batteries on the speed signs and will put them back out once they are

charged. The speed sign that was by the Inn by the River coming into Town seemed to be effective at slowing people down where it changes to 25 MPH.

There was discussion about the benefit of having a more permanent speed sign in that location. The Planning Commission has requested that one be placed there.

Aaron mentioned that there are email scams going around. He reminded everyone not to open the links that come in these emails. Law enforcement emails have been a target recently.

The Police Academy will have an earlier than expected session in 2022, so we will be sending 1 or 2 officers.

*There was no Hardwick Electric Department report this evening. *

6:25 P.M. – 6:30 P.M. Item #1 Town Clerk, Alberta Miller, to discuss the fees for Dog Licenses

Current dog license fees are as follows: \$8.00 spayed/neutered and \$12.00 non-spayed/neutered

The State receives \$5 of each license. Tonia researched other area towns, and most are getting \$9 & \$13, respectively. Alberta and Tonia would like the Board to authorize an increase of \$1.00 for each category. We could review annually.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to implement the fees as presented effective January 1, 2022. \$9 spayed/neutered and \$13 for non-spayed/neutered.

We were running ahead of schedule, so we will come back to Item #2 when Rachel Kane arrives.

6:31 P.M. – 6:34 P.M. Item #3 Select Board to consider the Town providing two letters of support (one for the Northeast Kingdom Development Corp. and one for Jasper Hill Farm) for Capital Investment Grants they are applying for from ACCD for Hardwick's Yellow Barn project

Eric explained that both agencies are applying for Capital Investment grants through the Agency of Commerce & Community Development (ACCD), and it would be beneficial to them if the Town provided letters of support for their applications.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to provide letters of support for NEKDC and Jasper Hill Farm for the grants they are applying for through ACCD. The Town Manager will prepare these on behalf of the Board.

Ceilidh asked for a Yellow Barn update. Eric reported that going out to bid has been stalled because they are trying to satisfy EDA (Economic Development Authority) requirements, who is providing the largest funding source with a \$3M grant. There is a meeting scheduled with EDA on December 21 and they are hoping that they will be able to be put out to bid in January after resolving all their requests.

6:34 P.M. – 6:44 P.M. Item #4 Select Board to discuss and approve the statement made by the Equity Committee

Ceilidh read a proposed resolution that the Board can make to show that they stand by the Hardwick Equity Resolution.

“The Town of Hardwick Selectboard stands by our Jewish community. Due to a recently publicized use of an anti-Semitic slur, we are taking this moment to reaffirm our commitment to the Hardwick Equity resolution. The Selectboard wants to point out that using hate related speech and prejudicial slurs transitions a personal conflict into an attack on an individual and ultimately a whole community. Prejudicial Slurs are used to remind people about violence their group has experienced in the past and are a veiled threat of future violence. The Selectboard condemns anti-Semitism and recognizes the important contributions Jewish community members make to our town. Moving forward, the Hardwick Community will not stand for any forms of bigotry & hate to any of our community groups.”

Elizabeth asked that we clarify that last sentence because she is concerned that it is not enforceable to say we will not stand for it.

Amend the last sentence to be: “Moving forward, the Hardwick Community condemns any forms of bigotry & hate to any of our community groups.”

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the statement with the change to the last sentence.

Ceilidh shared what the Equity Committee is working on, which includes recommended training and education for Select Board and Town employees.

6:44 P.M. – 6:59 P.M. Item #2 Conservation Commission to make a request for increased funding in the FY23 budget

Rachel Kane came on behalf of the Conservation Commission to ask if they could get additional funds from the Town to do a natural resource inventory, which is part of the Town Plan. They need to build up money to do the project which could cost \$15-\$20,000. Fundraising and grants will be necessary, but they would like to ask for additional monies from the Town to build up the funds they need. The additional funds could also be matching funds for a grant if they are able to get one.

They would like to request an additional \$1,000 for a total of \$1,500. There was discussion about the funds in the Conservation Commission staying within that fund from year to year. They currently have a running balance of about \$1,300.

Eric commented that it does not seem unreasonable to increase the amount to \$1,500. It would allow them to add funds over a couple of years towards the inventory they need to do in the future.

David mentioned that if the Conservation Commission was able to tie the inventory into climate change, there may be additional funds available for that. The Business manager mentioned that in NH, current use funds can be used for the Conservation Commission, and it may be the same in Vermont. She will investigate this.

6:59 P.M. – 8:55 P.M. Item #5 Business Manager to recap entire budget FY23 summary and changes since last version was presented and go over individual departments as needed

See attachments for the latest draft. The highlighted topics covered throughout the discussion included:

- Decreased revenue
- Staffing levels of the Police Department

- Town's gravel pit has just a few years of useful life left
- Town Manager's office is developing a pay step system for salaries for the non-union employees to create a uniform system for pay increases
- Great need for maintenance at our Town buildings and how we can make that happen
- Appropriate amount for the Recreation Department Coordinator position
- Adjustments made in various departments for insurance since 2022 premium amounts have been received
- Creating a capital schedule for buildings and the other areas that are a part of the "Three Year capital plan" to outline when specific improvements will be made, like the equipment and road schedules we have currently - this will happen for next year's budget

Select Board Reports: Elizabeth Dow shared that she met with Ray Small from *The Gazette*. The newspaper is looking for local people to do reporting for the paper. Hardwick Historical Society will sponsor a workshop for people who might be interested in reporting and want assistance with learning how to do this. The workshop will be held January 12, 2022, at the Historical Depot. It is free to attend, and the time will be determined soon.

New Business: Eric would like to see us produce a better audio-visual system, preferably one that has two screens. Shari asked about doing a Select Board retreat after Town meeting to prioritize projects and maintenance of Town buildings and property. The Business Manager mentioned that next year, she would like to have a "Budget Day" where the Board meets with the department heads and works on the budget for a day instead of in the evening. This would be an open meeting with the public welcome to attend.

Old Business: none

9:00 P.M. Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to enter Executive Session to discuss the Town Report dedication.

9:07 P.M. Exited Executive Session. The Select Board agreed on a person to dedicate the report to and a picture they would like to use for the cover but will need to get permission from the artist first.

9:07 P.M. Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, adjourned the meeting.

Minutes taken by: _____
Casey Rowell, Business Manager

Minutes approved by: _____
Eric Remick, Select Board Chair