

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING  
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2022  
MEMORIAL BUILDING  
20 CHURCH ST. 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

**Select Board**

Eric Remick, Chair  
Ceilidh Galloway-Kane  
Elizabeth Dow  
Shari Cornish  
Danny Hale

**Others Present**

David Upson, Town Manager  
Casey Rowell, Business Manager  
Mike Henry, Interim Police Chief  
Tom Fadden – Road Foreman  
Roger Prevot – Hardwick Electric - *Zoom*

**Others Present**

**Regular Meeting**

**6:01 P.M.** – Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, called the meeting to order.

**6:01 P.M.** – Set/Adjust Agenda – Eric requested to swap the order of Items 7 & 8 and Shari indicated that in Item #2, it should be for the “Hardwick Downtown Partnership” and not the Downtown Commission (noted)

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted unanimously to adjust the agenda as stated.*

**6:02 P.M.** – Communication from the audience – *none*

**6:03 P.M.** – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of November 3, 2022.

*Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of November 3, 2022, as written. Ceilidh abstained.*

**6:04 P.M. – 6:16 P.M.** Town Manager’s Report – Given by David Upson Jr.

David updated the group on the wastewater project, reporting that the new lagoon liner has been installed. The project is going well overall and on time.

David shared that we purchased four mobile homes at the recent tax sale. Owners have a year and a day to redeem them before they become town owned. David also mentioned that the Pedestrian Bridge design survey is available until Monday, November 21. They have already received 70+ responses.

David discussed a grant opportunity through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development called “Community Recovery and Revitalization Program.” Tracy, Community Development Coordinator, plans to complete an application to help us get the add alternates done for the Wastewater project. These are the items that we didn’t have enough funding to complete. There is \$40 million available, and we are looking to apply for about \$700,000.

The Town has received our 2<sup>nd</sup> Opioid settlement payment in the amount of \$2,786.00. We have now received \$5,400. David would like to use some of the money to revitalize the Senior side of the Public Safety building, so that it can be used as a community center.

See attachments for the full report.

Ceilidh asked for an update on the bridge project. After the surveys are complete, the final design will be selected and then permitting work will begin.

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

Tom is plowing this evening and not present. David reported that the crew completed a grant-in-aid project on Bunker Hill Rd. last week.

**6:17 P.M. – 6:22 P.M. Hardwick Police Department Report - Given by Interim Police Chief Mike Henry**

Mike reported that the new Explorer is outfitted and on the road. The older sedan is stripped and is for sale. Contact the Police department at 472-5475 if you are interested in the car. They plan to list it on Facebook Marketplace as well.

Steve Mitchell completed the Taser Instructor course, so the Police department now has an in-house trainer. The Officers need to retrain for tasers annually, so this will be very helpful to the department, as they have relied on other departments for the training recently.

Mike shared that a couple of the part-time officers went to a drug detection course to learn how to detect impaired drivers.

Mike wanted to thank the Hazen staff who have worked with struggling students. They have endured some challenging situations and handled them with grace. There are high school and middle schoolers using the community center regularly now as a safe space. This is all a part of the relationship that the Police department has formed with the schools to assist them with students that are struggling.

**6:22 P.M. – 6:41 P.M. Hardwick Electric Department (HED) Report - Given by Roger Prevot**

Roger shared that HED has been depleting their cash reserves at a rate of about \$50,000 a month due to the increased cost of purchased power. This is mostly money from the embezzlement settlement that they received. They are working toward a rate increase to help mitigate this drawdown.

HED is also exploring battery storage to save heat from their system to offset their peak demand. There is technology available for this. They are gathering proposals. The battery backup is to store the energy that is made for later use.

Roger shared that HED continues to look at Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI), which a lot of the larger power companies already have. Features include automated meter reading and automated outage reporting. They are partnering with other VPPSA utilities, as this isn't something that they can do all on their own. They would need others to come on as well for cost savings.

Roger gave a brief update on the Richardson lawsuit regarding stray voltage at a farm, in which the Richardson's allege that HED contributed to. They are still in the fact collecting stage of the process. They are working closely with their legal counsel and feel confident that HED will be found not at fault.

The Wolcott Hydro production is down due to the water levels. However, the H-11 solar project generated about 1.9M Kwh hours in a month, which is very good. Wolcott Hydro and the H-11 combined generate about 68% of HED's energy needs.

Regarding the September financials, HED is over budget on purchased power by about \$163,000. It is estimated they will be \$220,000 over for the year as their year ends December 31. Revenues are 1.5% (\$69,000) under budget. Expenses are 6% over budget or \$308,000, due to the increased cost of purchased power.

Ceilidh asked if another solar project would be in the future. Roger indicated that it's not on the table at this time, but they won't rule it out in the future.

Ceilidh asked about getting a written bullet point report ahead of the meeting. Roger said that Mike Sullivan does a one-page summary that might be useful. He will share the feedback with the other Commissioners, and we can circle back around next time.

Eric asked if the rate structure was also being reviewed in the process of increasing rates. Roger said the focus right now is increasing revenue and that the process of changing rate structure is a much bigger project. Therefore, the focus is the rates, not the structure.

**6:41 P.M. – 6:49 P.M.** Item #1 Select Board to discuss the potential sale of property we acquired via tax collector's deed on Caspian Avenue

David said that we have an offer of \$15,000 from the Mercier's (neighboring property owners) and that they would assume the clean-up of the property. The Town has about \$5,600 into the property in expenses.

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted unanimously to accept the offer of \$15,000 from the Mercier's subject to the statutory requirement of the sale.*

The Town Manager's office will work on preparing and posting the Notice of Sale.

Tom Fadden joined the meeting.

**6:49 P.M. – 6:50 P.M.** Item #2 Select Board to consider appointing David Upson as the Town Staff Liaison and Shari Cornish as the Select Board Liaison for the Hardwick Downtown Partnership

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted unanimously to appoint David Upson as the Town Staff Liaison and Shari Cornish as the Select Board Liaison for the Hardwick Downtown Partnership.*

**6:50 P.M. – 6:51 P.M.** Item #3 Select Board to consider a new road name "Ural Hill Pvt."

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the new road name "Ural Hill Pvt."*

**6:51 P.M. – 6:52 P.M.** Item #4 Select Board to consider appointing Kathy Hemmens to the Hardwick Conservation Commission for a 3-yr term with 2.5 years remaining expiring 5/31/2025

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted unanimously to appoint Kathy Hemmens to the Hardwick Conservation Commission for a 3-yr term with 2.5 years remaining expiring 5/31/2025.*

**6:52 P.M. – 6:57 P.M.** Item #5 Equity Committee Chair, Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, to present Equity Assessment Tool

Ceilidh shared an equity assessment tool. The goal is to help Boards, Committees and Town government make sure that decisions are equitable. She would like to see a couple of committees try it out before a final draft is developed.

She wants feedback from the Board and then the Equity Committee will provide additional feedback once some of the Town committees have tried it out.

**6:57 P.M. – 7:02 P.M.** Item #6 Select Board to consider adopting a resolution to apply for a Municipal Planning Grant to hire a consultant to do a feasibility study for a Highway garage at Carey Rd. property

The Board wants to include Creamery Rd. as a potential location too, as well as incorporating the Fire Station, as part of the study.

*Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted unanimously to adopt a resolution to apply for a Municipal Planning Grant to hire a consultant to do a feasibility study on Town owned property for the Highway garage and Fire department.*

**7:02 P.M. – 8:28 P.M.** Item #7 Business Manager to present the first drafts of the FY24 budget for: Highway, Fire & Line Items, Office/Payroll, and Capital Budgets

The Business Manager presented draft budgets of the departments listed above. She shared a memo with the board about the driving factors of the large increase, which includes diesel fuel and heating oil costs doubling, health insurance going up about 20%, salaries compared to the cost of living (8.7%), and the cost of salt increasing by \$20/ton, which amounts to roughly an additional cost of \$20-\$25K.

The group talked about the capital budgets and the board generally agreed that even when times are tough, it's important not to stop reserving capital. They don't want to see us reduce the amount that we are setting aside for capital equipment, buildings, etc.

There was discussion about establishing a sidewalk schedule like the paving schedule we have. There was discussion about the gravel pit. The Town's current gravel pit has 1-2 years left. We have an opportunity to purchase Ken Davis' pit on Route 14N which has 30+ years of material we can use. We plan to have this purchase as an item on the Town meeting ballot for voters to decide. See attachments for the drafts.

**8:28 P.M. – 8:37 P.M.** Item #8 Follow up discussion on equipment purchases from the last meeting (need to order equipment that takes 6+ months to get - prices only good for 30 days)

At the last meeting, there was discussion about the FY24 planned purchases of a new excavator, loader, and grader. These have reached their scheduled replacement time. Tom gathered quotes from John Deere and Caterpillar dealerships. However, the lead time on getting these types of equipment is anywhere from 6 months to 1 year and we have been told that as of January 1, the prices that were quoted were likely to increase \$10-\$20,000 each. We would pay for the excavator outright from the capital equipment fund and the grader and loader would be a “lease to own” program for 10 years with an estimated annual payment of \$55,000. We plan to adjust the equipment schedule so that the next loader/grader purchase in 15 years (2039) can be paid for outright without a debt payment.

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted unanimously to purchase the CAT 140 Grader, 930 Loader, and 310 Excavator.*

Note, *these are being ordered* due to lead time and potential price increases, but delivery would not be until at least July 1, 2023 (FY24). See attachments for the breakdown of the costs.

**Select Board Reports:** Elizabeth shared that she has been working on establishing rules and specifications for the Town managed cemeteries. It is not a simple task, as it has several complexities.

Shari reported that the Town House is closed for the season. NEKArts is working on their annual fundraising campaign mailing, which has grown to a list of 1,100 people.

**New Business:** David mentioned that he has been communicating with the Bellavance family on bringing a section of Buffalo Mountain Rd. up to a Class 3 road.

**Old Business:** David also reported that he is working with Ken Davis and the Town’s attorney to finalize a purchase and sales contract for the gravel pit we hope to purchase in 2023.

No need for Executive Session after discussion on Item #1.

**8:42 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