

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2022
MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3RD FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

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

Others Present

David Upson, Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Business Manager
Tonia Chase, Town Clerk - *Zoom*
Jodi Lew-Smith, Library Trustee
Daphne Kalmar, Library Trustee
Nat Smith, HED Commissioner
Heather Carrington, CCDS, LLC – *Zoom*
Nancy Notterman – *Zoom*
Scott Batchelder
Lori Batchelder

Others Present

Norma Spaulding, Trails
Tracy Martin - *Zoom*
Nora Demuth
Gary Michaels
Coco Holton - *Zoom*
Perley Allen
Bethany Dunbar - *Zoom*
Kristine Burke
Jessie Upson

Regular Meeting

6:06 P.M. – Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, called the meeting to order.

6:06 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – Remove Road Foreman and Police report as Tom and Mike cannot be here this evening.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted unanimously to adjust the agenda as stated.

6:08 P.M. – Communication from the audience

6:08 P.M. – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of December 1, 2022

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of December 1, 2022, as written.

6:08 P.M. – 6:35 P.M. Town Manager’s Report – Given by David Upson

David updated the group on what he has been working on including the installation of network hardware.

David shared that one of the fire ladder trucks needs a significant repair estimated to cost \$40,000. There was discussion about making the repair using capital funds. The Select Board would like to see the money come out of the fund balance, rather than take out the of the fire capital fund, as that is being set aside for the purchase of future trucks, so we don’t have to bond for them.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted unanimously to repair the engine ladder truck by overspending the fire equipment repair line.

Tracy spoke about the grants that David mentioned in his report. Details in the meeting attachments. The consensus among the Select Board is that they would like to see us move forward with applying for these grants.

Someone brought up a letter of support for Friends of the Jeudevine Library, who is applying for a Community Recovery and Revitalization Program (CRRP) grant. We will come back to this later when the library is present.

David shared that there is an upcoming pedestrian bridge meeting with SE group. They will provide us options for custom features that will enable the Town to make decisions on the final bridge design so that we can get it ordered. See attachments for full details.

6:35 P.M. – 6:42 P.M. Hardwick Electric Department (HED) Report - Given by Nat Smith

Nat reported that revenues are 1.2% under budget and expenses are over budget by 5.4% due to purchased power costs. The expenses are significantly driven by purchased power expense, which was running an average of 13.25% over budget per month in the first quarter of 2022.

HED has not been immune to supply chain issues. For examples, transformers used to have a lead time of 8-12 weeks for delivery and now quotes are coming in at 44+ weeks. The price of these almost tripled from what they were two years ago.

HED has not had a rate increase request in 13 years. Their filing for rate increase will be finalized in the next few days. It is expected to be about 14%, which they think is appropriate under the circumstances.

Nat reported that the Wolcott Hydro has generated 2.6M megawatt hours in 2022 and the H11 solar field has generated 2.2M megawatt hours this year. These sources combined have supplied about 16% of total customer needs.

Nat followed up on a discussion from last month about automated metering infrastructure (AMI). The Commissioners are still in the process of evaluating this project, which would be a \$1M+ investment. There is regulatory pressure to make the investment and there is also grant money available now that would pay for almost half of the project.

HED is also evaluating a stored energy project which would be built next to the H11 solar on Billings Rd. This would be a 4+ megawatt battery utilized to reduce their system's peak demands and possible generate revenue as well.

Eric asked if there is concern that their revenues are 1% under budget. Nat indicated that is not a big concern.

6:42 P.M. – 6:52 P.M. Item #1 Select Board to discuss time and location of 2023 Town Meeting

There was a discussion about where the Town meeting will be...Elementary School or Townhouse. The pros and cons about both locations were discussed. Ultimately, the Town meeting will be held at the Elementary School this year with the plan for 2024 Town meeting to be held at the Town House. We need to wait until the stage is ADA compliant to accommodate voting behind the curtain when the meeting is in progress, and the new fire egress is completed to allow use of the balcony. The time will be 10:00 for the meeting, with polls open from 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

6:52 P.M. – 6:57 P.M. Item #2 Select Board to discuss and approve of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Hardwick Downtown Partnership

Heather Carrington from Carrington Community Development Services (CCDS) was present via Zoom to go over the MOU between the Town and Hardwick Downtown Partnership. She is the consultant who has been working with the Downtown Commission for Downtown Designation. She has been working on the downtown application. See attachments for the draft agreement.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with the Hardwick Downtown Partnership, Inc. and authorize Town Manager to sign the document. Shari abstained. All others yea.

6:57 P.M. – 7:07 P.M. Item #3 Select Board to discuss and approve of the resolution to allocate a portion of the Town water/wastewater reserves to downtown revitalization

The purpose of this resolution is to demonstrate the Town’s commitment to the downtown revitalization and is required as part of the downtown designation application. Heather explained that it indicates up to a certain amount and this can be reviewed annually if the Board desires. It was decided to remove “of _____ gallons” in the resolution in Items 1 & 2. This language was crossed off and just a percentage was used with the approximate gallons per day.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the resolution with the change to allocate 19% of the Town water/wastewater reserves to downtown revitalization, equating to 46,375 gallons/day. Shari abstained. All others yea.

7:07 P.M. – 7:24 P.M. Item #4 Select Board to approve a request for a variance to tie into the Town’s wastewater collection system

Lori and Scott Batchelder were present to discuss the property that they purchased on Lamoille Ave. and plan to build a home there next summer. They are within the service area (300’) but are requesting that the Town waive the requirement that they hook up to the Town sewer system. They have had a successful perk test and would like to put in a conventional system. The conclusion is that this situation does not meet the requirements for a variance. If they move their house to 300’ or beyond, then they don’t have to hook up to the system. If they are within 300’, which appears the existing plan is, then they would need to hook up to the Town sewer system.

7:24 P.M. – 7:52 P.M. Item #5 Jessie Upson and Kristine Burke to discuss with Select Board the concept of the Community Center being a part of Town operations – become the “Hardwick Community Center”

Jessie Upson and Kristine Burke came to follow up with the Select Board about their Hardwick Community Collaborative concept. The Town already owns the building (Sr. Ctr side of the public safety building), and it has electricity, heat, etc. They presented a proposal for how the Town can help financially support the start-up of this community center.

Elizabeth asked if there is anything tangible such as by-laws to identify the mission of their work. She is unclear as to what the specific ask. Ceilidh provided some insight into her thoughts on the ask. See meeting attachments for their start-up budget. Ceilidh suggested that the Town Manager’s office continues to communicate with Jessie and Kristine about this topic.

David said that he imagines that the next step would be the software purchase (previously approved) and then Jessie and Kristine would work on training the different organizations for the software.

David also reminded the group that the Town has opioid settlement money that can be used to do cosmetic work at the Sr. Center, as well as internet hook up and anything else that may be needed to make the center a comfortable community space. There seems to be a misconception that the opioid money is just police department money, but everyone has been affected by the drug epidemic and creating a safe space like this is part of the effort to reach youth and young adults before they go down that path.

7:52 P.M. – 8:27 P.M. Item #6 Budget Discussion: Library and Trails to present their proposed FY24 budgets and Business Manager to recap entire current draft

Norma Spaulding from the Trails committee came to present the proposed Trails FY24 budget. The overall budget shows an increase of just under \$1,800 or 19.81%. The increases are primarily due to insurance and programs/activities.

Jodi Lew Smith and Daphne Kalmar, Library Trustees, came to present the proposed Library FY24 budget. The library budget is increasing about \$22,000 or 17.5%, due to health insurance costs associated with a new library director. The library plans to use some of their existing fund balance.

Earlier in the meeting, there was a request for a letter of support for the Friends of the Jeudevine Library, Inc. for a grant application. The Board indicated that they would be okay with the Town Manager providing a letter of support on their behalf if the narrative of the grant is reviewed prior.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway- Kane, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to provide a letter of support for the Friends of the Jeudevine Library's CRRP grant application after the Community Development Coordinator and Town Manager have seen the narrative for the grant.

Jodi provided an update on their expansion project. She shared that they have moved to a “construction manager” style project. ReArc is the company they have hired. This will help keep the costs done because the manager will negotiate with sub-contractors to get them the best price. They still expect it will land between \$2.6 and \$2.8M total. They are waiting to hear from the Department of Libraries about \$600,000 they are hoping to receive.

See meeting attachments for the detailed budget drafts.

Select Board Reports: Eric reported that things are looking positive on the Yellow Barn. They have extended the bid deadline to January 19 to bring in more bidders.

Old and New Business: None

8:28 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