

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING  
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2023  
MEMORIAL BUILDING  
20 CHURCH ST. 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

**Select Board**

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

**Others Present**

David Upson, Town Manager  
Casey Rowell, Business Manager  
Tonia Chase, Town Clerk  
Michael Henry, Police Chief  
Mike Sullivan, HED - *Zoom*

**Others Present**

Rick Welcome  
Brooke Dingedine - *Zoom*  
Bill Richardson  
Lucy Zendzian - *Zoom*

**Regular Meeting**

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

**6:00 P.M.** – Set/Adjust Agenda – Item #6 will be tabled until a future meeting.

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

**6:01 P.M.** – Communication from the audience - *None*

**6:02 P.M.** – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of January 5, 2023

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of January 5, 2023, as written.*

**6:02 P.M. – 6:09 P.M.** Town Manager’s Report – Given by David Upson

David updated us on the Downtown Designation application; some meetings he attended, improvements made to Town buildings, and followed up on the network hardware previously approved for purchase. See attachments for full report. In a prior meeting, the Board authorized the Town Manager to purchase network hardware up to \$14,000, but the final estimate came in at just under \$15,000.

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Board authorized the Town Manager to spend up to \$15,000 for network hardware.*

Danny asked if there has been any discussion about maintenance of LVRT. David said that VAST takes care of things in the winter. David explained that the District will handle maintenance, or it will be someone they hire. This is what is in their management plan. It will not be the Town’s responsibility to take care of the trail.

**6:09 P.M.** Road Foreman Report - *none*

**6:10 P.M. – 6:16 P.M.** Hardwick Police Department Report - Given by Police Chief Mike Henry

Mike provided the Board with the annual report of calls which will also be available in the town report.

Mike mentioned that they have been receiving complaints about parking in handicap spots. The State fine for this offense is \$306 and the Town fine is significantly less at just \$25. He recommends that the Town increase their fee to \$50 in the Town's ordinance.

Since the Senior Center has been utilized more frequently, Mike has developed a schedule to prevent any scheduling conflicts.

**6:16 P.M. – 6:29 P.M. Hardwick Electric Department (HED) Report - Given by Mike Sullivan**

Mike brought up the rate increase that is expected to happen soon at HED. Danny commented that he has seen that several other utilities are also seeking rate increases. Some of them are already planning their next rate increase before this one even takes place.

Mike talked about the storm of December 23, which created over 100 events causing 2,200 people with outages. The crew worked until 1:30 Saturday morning and by the end of the day, there were only 58 outages remaining. They finished up all but 12 by Sunday morning and those were handled on Monday due to being seasonal residents. He is very proud of the crew. He did mention that the outage center was overwhelmed. It did create communication issues with customers.

There has been a question asked regularly to HED about how they are doing with renewable energy standard requirements. Mike shared that the requirement is a 75% renewable portfolio by 2032. HED is currently at 63%. They have the next 10 years to increase this by 12%.

The Wolcott hydro has produced 2.9 million Kwh as of November and the Billings Solar produced 2.3 million. HED's purchased power budget is 4% (\$129K) over budget. The natural gas market drives this cost. Mike also shared that HED's average coverage rate is 100%, meaning they have very few outages.

On the financial side, revenues are 2.5% under budget while expenses are 5.2% over budget. This is exactly why a rate increase is warranted.

Mike brought up the joint meeting with the Commissioners and Select Board. Both groups have talked about this happening soon. Eric suggested that the scheduling of the meeting wait until after Town meeting since three of the Select Board members are up for re-election.

Ceilidh asked for an update on EV chargers. Mike reported that their charger is prepped and ready to go, but it must wait until their retaining wall is replaced. They foresee it being more of a test station to see the actual usage and interest from rate payers as well as trail users passing through. The PUC must approve a tariff for the chargers. HED will charge a break-even fee, but they must have approval because a fee (tariff) will be charged. Ceilidh would like to see it discussed at the joint meeting.

**6:29 P.M. – 6:30 P.M. Item #1 Select Board to consider appointing Lucy Zendzian to the Hardwick Conservation Commission for the remainder of a 3-year term expiring 5/31/2025**

*This was tabled until next meeting. They would like more information and to meet her in person.*

\*\*Lucy joined the meeting at 6:50 p.m. so we came back to this item. She shared her background and that she has attended a Conservation Commission meeting. Her career is with USDA and centers around conservation.

*Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to appoint Lucy Zendzian to the Hardwick Conservation Commission for the remainder of a 3-year term expiring 5/31/2025.*

**6:30 P.M. – 6:50 P.M.** Item #2 Select Board to discuss potential sale of property the Town owns off Treatment Plant Road

Rick Welcome and Bill Richardson with Lamoille Valley Ford were present to discuss the dealerships desire to acquire a .4 acre partial owned by the Town to create a parking lot with EV chargers. A map is in the attachments showing the location of the parcel. Ford is requiring them to add additional chargers. The parcel they are interested in borders Treatment Plant Rd. and the Rail Trail.

Ceilidh asked about owning vs. a long term lease. She also mentioned creating a Memorandum of Understanding for the use of the parcel regardless of whether it was owned or leased. Rick explained that Ford has said that it has to be owned and adjoining to the dealership. Therefore, leasing is not an option.

There was some discussion about permitting. Rick said that there could be an agreement with certain clauses to see the project through. There was discussion about the EV chargers currently located at their dealership. They did a rate study and they are competitive with other places in the state excluding the municipalities.

The Board generally agrees that we can explore this further. They instructed the Town Manager to move forward with figuring out the details.

**6:50 P.M. – 6:56 P.M.** Lucy Zendzian joined the meeting via Zoom at 6:50 p.m. so we went back to Item #1 at this time.

**6:56 P.M. – 6:58 P.M.** Item #3 Select Board to review and consider approving the gravel pit Bond documents

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve and sign the Warning for the purchase of the gravel pit.*

**6:58 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.** Item #4 Select Board to discuss RFP for Town reappraisal and consider approving a vendor and authorizing the Town Manager to execute a contract for the project

After advertising the reappraisal, we only received one bid from New England Municipal Consultants. They are also our current Town Assessor.

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted unanimously to have NEMC do the reappraisal and authorized the Town Manager to execute a contract on the Town's behalf.*

**7:00 P.M. – 7:10 P.M.** Item #5 Select Board to consider approving the final draft of the FY24 Budget

The Business Manager presented the most recent version of the FY24 budget. Since the last meeting, actual figures were received for dispatch services and the county tax. Fire capital was increased by \$5,000 and Equity committee was increased from \$1,500 to \$2,000 per their request. Also, now that we know the health insurance for the library, their budget has decreased by about \$6,000. The total budget presented is a 4.80% increase for a total budget of \$3,736,029.

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the FY24 budget as presented.*

Shari Cornish mentioned that NEKarts did not get enough signatures this year for their appropriations.

Ceilidh asked when we would know about \$ amount for appropriations. Casey said that Tonia has already given her the figure since some organizations did not get in their petitions. The total is \$37,261 which is a few thousand less than we originally thought. Danny commented that he thinks it's a good exercise for the organizations to have to gather signatures every 3 years.

**7:10 P.M. – 7:12 P.M.** Item #6 Select Board to set date and time for Special meeting for next week to approve the Town meeting warning

The Board picked January 24 @ 8:00 am. Casey will issue the Special meeting warning tomorrow.

**Select Board Reports:** Eric reported that Yellow Barn bids were due today, but they had to push it back to Tuesday afternoon. They are still anticipating two bids. They are optimistic for a spring groundbreaking.

**Old and New Business:** none

*7:15 P.M. Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Board voted to enter an Executive Session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313 to include Town Manager, HED General Manager, and legal counsel of Town and HED to discuss potential litigation.*

**9:00 P.M.** Exited Executive Session. No action taken.

**9:00 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