

**MINUTES PUBLIC HEARING  
GRAVEL PIT BOND INFORMATIONAL MEETING  
AND PRE TOWN-MEETING  
5:30 P.M. THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2023  
HARDWICK MEMORIAL BUILDING  
3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR MEETING ROOM AND VIA ZOOM**

**Select Board**

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

**Others Present**

Casey Rowell, Business Manager  
Orise Ainsworth  
Michael Brochu  
Tonia Chase, Town Clerk  
Steve Jenne

**Others Present**

Ken Davis - *Zoom*  
Teresa Davis - *Zoom*

**5:30 P.M.** Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, called the Informational Meeting to order.

**5:30 P.M. – 5:51 P.M.** Item #1 Select Board to summarize and discuss the Gravel Pit Bond

Eric summarized a one-page document about why the Town wants to purchase a gravel pit. See the minute attachments for the summary document.

Orise asked how long the term of the note was and how long the materials would last. The bond is for 20 years with the first year being interest only. Subsequent years would start out at about \$47,000 and decrease each year thereafter. The estimated material would last for 30+ years.

Michael Brochu expressed concern about additional costs beyond the loan that are associated with operating the gravel pit. He thinks that we should just purchase the materials from another local pit. He's also concerned that this will create a need for additional equipment purchases.

Danny indicated that there won't be additional cost beyond what we have now with the existing gravel pit. We also recently made plans to go from 2 loaders to 1 loader, so we are not anticipating additional equipment needs. The road crew would be doing the same thing as now in terms of hauling materials back to the town garage and we would still have a crusher come in each year for the gravel.

Eric explained that a few years ago we did an analysis of the costs of running the existing pit. He believes that our costs were about 60% of what we could buy it from somewhere else.

Orise asked what happens to the existing pit when it is done. It just stays as it is because we cannot get any more material out of it. There are solar panels currently set up there owned by Hardwick Electric Dept.

Steve Jenne asked about the Act 250 permit that is tied to the gravel pit. It was just renewed in 2021 for 20 years. The permits generally follow the property. Eric said that we can get the consultant report and put it in the minute attachments and can have it available at Town meeting.

**5:54 P.M. – 5:59 P.M.** Item #2 Select Board to summarize the FY24 Town Budget and highlight any significant events and projects happening in Hardwick.

Eric summarized the budget. The overall budget increase is 4.80%. Revenues are increasing a little less than that at 3.78%. The primary driving factors for cost increases are diesel and heating fuel costs, salt increased by \$20/ton, health insurance premiums increased by 20%, and employee salaries. The Town negotiated 2 new union contracts and feel we need to increase salaries towards the market wage to retain valuable employees.

We are continuing to set money aside for capital improvements to buildings, roads, and equipment upgrades. In line items, we are putting all the debt payments as individual line items, rather than transferring money to capital for the payments to be made from there. This way everyone can see all the debt payments, including the proposed gravel pit bond payment.

Orise questioned the CLA from the Assessor report in the Town report. That figure of 88% is from 2022 because the report is data from fiscal year 2022 ending 6/30/2022. She expressed concern that the school has a different CLA. Theirs is the current figure, so she gathered that we are going to need a reappraisal and that residents are not aware of that. We were recently notified that we will need to do a reassessment. She would like to see us better communicate that a reappraisal is going to happen soon.

Steve asked about the decrease in sand costs in the budget. That is because if the bond passes there is existing sand in the pit that we can use.

Orise asked about all the vacant positions for the Town Meeting. She is concerned that there are so many vacancies. The Town Manager and Town Clerk's offices have advertised on Front Porch Forum a few times this last year trying to find people to fill the positions, but no one stepped up.

**6:11 P.M.** With no further comments from anyone, Select Board Chair, Eric Remick, adjourned the Public Hearing.

Minutes taken by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Casey Rowell, Business Manager

Minutes approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Eric Remick, Select Board Chair