

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2023
MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3RD 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, Police Chief
Tonia Chase, Clerk/Treasurer - *Zoom*

Others Present

Regular Meeting

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

6:00 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – *none*

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

6:01 P.M. – Select Board to approve the minutes of the regular Select Board meeting of September 7, 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 September 7, 2023, as written.

David is planning to join the meeting in a bit, so we moved on to the other reports first.

No Road Foreman report this evening.

6:02 P.M. – 6:12 P.M. Hardwick Police Report – Given by Mike Henry

Mike reported that they finally got the flood damaged cruiser back and returned the loaner to VT State Police. They appreciated the use of that loaner.

Mike shared some quarterly statistics to show crimes year over year comparing the period of July to September 2022 to the same period in 2023. This data showed a decrease in crimes. Incidents have gone down as well with 760 last year for that quarter and 530 incidents in 2023. See attachments for these graphs.

Elizabeth mentioned that she was asked recently how many officers are on the police force. Mike said that we have 4 full-time and 3 part-time officers, excluding the Chief. This is to provide 24/7 coverage.

Ceilidh asked about having a conversation about parking in Town. She would like to see us have a discussion at a future meeting. Shari mentioned that the Planning Commission is discussing this and plans to present recommendations. Mike has not had a chance to work on the parking ordinance and Shari said that he shouldn't have to take that task on alone. There was brief discussion about forming a task force, but no action taken.

No Hardwick Electric Report this evening.

6:12 P.M. – 6:19 P.M. Item #1 Business Manager to present proposed water and sewer rates for FY24 – *Action needed*

The Business Manager presented the proposed water and sewer rates for FY24. Water base rates will stay the same and the usage rate will go from \$.008 to \$.0085.

Sewer base rates will increase by about 3% for most users (\$14/annually for a residential user). The usage rate will increase from \$.013 to \$.0135. See attachments for details.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the FY24 water and sewer rates as presented.

Ceilidh asked about the remaining unmetered accounts and having a goal of completing a certain number each year. David indicated that we had hoped to get some of those done this year, but then the flood happened. We do have some capital funds that would assist in making this happen.

6:19 P.M. – 6:30 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson Jr.

David reported that he and Amanda met with the Police Union representative to start discussions on the next contract. The most recent contract was done as a one-year contract, so that will expire 06.30.2024. This was just an initial meeting.

David shared that the boring for the pedestrian bridge will be happening next Tuesday and Wednesday. They will start on the Daniels side and then do Main Street side after.

David reported that FEMA mitigation was here on Wednesday to collect information on the wastewater plant. We provided information given to us by Aldrich & Elliot about the cost to rebuild the plant where it is or to relocate it. They will consider how many times the plant has been flooded when they perform their cost benefit analysis.

David let everyone know that the Town's damage inventory has been submitted to FEMA. The recent bridge in East Hardwick that is falling in was included in this inventory. We have inspection reports that can demonstrate that the damage was caused by the recent flood. On that note, we have received one quote to demo that East Main St. bridge near Greensboro Bend. The estimate was about \$102,000 just to remove the bridge.

David mentioned that work on the Fisher Folly Bridge has started. Austin Construction will be putting the temporary bridge together tomorrow and early next week. David said that we requested 4 temporary bridges, but we only got one because there was a resident on the other side of this one.

David talked about the Watershed Management program, which is a federal program focused on evaluating properties that have potential of further damage due to erosion of the river. He visited 7 properties in town with this group last week.

Ceilidh asked if there was any follow up on the SBA panel from last meeting. David said that it doesn't seem necessary at this point.

Lastly, David reported that the new grader is here.

6:31 P.M. – 6:38 P.M. Item #2 Select Board to discuss methods of borrowing for the purchase of the loader and grader – *Possible Action needed*

The Business Manager investigated three borrowing options for the loader and grader and our local bank, Union Bank, offered the most favorable rate. CAT financing was 5.99%, Tax Exempt Leasing was 5.69% and we were offered 5.39% by Union Bank.

Eric asked how we can borrow without a town vote. David explained that he researched this with two different attorneys and was advised that the Select Board has authority to finance highway equipment without voter authorization as long as the term does not exceed the useful life of the asset. *This does not apply to other borrowings, just highway equipment.* The annual payment for the equipment was approved in the FY24 budget, estimated to be \$55,000 annually. Interest rates are a little higher than we expected, so the payment will be about \$57,000/annually.

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted unanimously to accept the Union Bank's bid on the purchase of the loader and grader for \$432,000 for 10-yrs with a rate of 5.39%.

6:38 P.M. – 6:43 P.M. Item #3 Select Board to review and discuss the East Hardwick bridge near post office

David provided the most recent inspection report completed by the State. See attachments. The bridge is in fair condition. Based on its current condition, it is inspected every 2 years. If the rating was less than a 5, it would be inspected every year. Bridge inspection reports are all available on the State's Agency of Transportation page. It is currently recommended to replace in 2029 for an estimated cost of \$523,000. Clearly, this price will increase by the time it's ready to be replaced. The Town is currently saving funds annually in capital for this replacement.

6:43 P.M. – 6:48 P.M. Item #4 Select Board to review and consider supporting a statement provided by the Equity Committee – *Action needed*

The statement was read by Ceilidh. There was a recent incident at a queer poetry event. The purpose of this is to reaffirm the Town's commitment to their initial equity resolution.

“In light of the incident at a queer poetry event in Lyndonville, the Hardwick Equity Committee and Select Board affirm the right of all artists and performers in our midst to personal safety. We value the contributions of the Queer and BIPOC members of our community. We appeal to our fellow community members to join us in actively working to keep us all safe, thriving, and able to freely contribute our diverse gifts and perspectives to the world without threat. We call on the town and other institution and organizations to bring appropriate resources to bear to ensure that individuals who are being harassed or threatened are safe.”

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to adopt said statement. Danny abstained. All others yea.

Select Board Reports:

Shari reported that she and Gary Michaels from the Downtown Partnership attended a Downtown Retreat at the Grand Isle Lake House. She will have a more comprehensive report at the next meeting.

Elizabeth reminded everyone that the Hardwick Historical Society will be closing their regular weekly hours for the season next Thursday. People can make appointments by going to their website and sending an email.

Eric gave an update on the Yellow Barn project. The barn has been lowered with brand new concrete footings. There was new framing to replace rotting sills. Gravel Construction is the site sub-contractor. They are working through the contaminated soil that is on the property. The Town has applied for Brownfield funding to pay for the disposal of the contaminated soil. The soil will go to Coventry landfill as daily fill to cover the trash.

David mentioned that a lot of people have been reaching out about the Yellow Barn since construction started. He would like to clear some things up as there seems to be some misconceptions that the Town is paying for this project. The property was originally purchased with grant funds and a loan from the Town's economic development fund, which will be paid back with interest. The financial burden on the town is very minimal. The project is almost entirely grant funded. In addition, the project will create jobs and bring visitors to town, which benefits the community. Eric explained that the Town will continue to own the property but has partnered with a non-profit to run it and lease space to tenants. While there won't be tax revenue, there will be future PILOT (payment in lieu of tax) payments.

New Business: none

Old Business: Shari said that last night a young man was looking for an EV charger because the ones at Lamoille Valley Ford are not working. She wanted to ask Hardwick Electric when theirs will be working. It is not shown on the public map. According to others, it is available for use. Shari said it would be nice if the appropriate agencies were notified so that it can be put on the public map for travelers.

Ceilidh said it would be great to talk further about the Hardwick Rescue Squad building expansion. David said they are planning to come back to the board once they get further along in their planning and design.

Mike wanted to thank Hardwick Rescue for donating two Automated External Defibrillators (AED) for their cruisers.

Danny brought up the library. He asked about a redesign and where that was at. David said he is scheduled to attend another construction meeting soon and will likely know more after that meeting.

The documents for the Union Bank highway equipment note were passed around to be signed by the SB members.

7:04 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