

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2023
MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3RD FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

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

Others Present

David Upson, Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Business Manager
Helm Nottermann
Roger Prevot, HED Commissioner

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 – Add an Item#4 – Select Board to consider providing a letter of support for the Transportation Alternative Grant (draft letter has been provided)

Add an Item #5 Select Board to resolve to authorize the Town Manager to accept the project grant funds for the \$1.2M Brownfields grant for the Yellow Barn soil remediation cleanup

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to adjust the agenda as stated.

6:03 P.M. – 6:19 P.M Communication from the audience

Helm Nottermann was present to talk about the Hardwick Farms Rd. bridge after the flood. He had concerns about the temporary bridge being too narrow for farm equipment to pass through. He wanted to know the schedule for fixing this and expressed how important this is. David explained that the bridge was put in to ensure that the road could be plowed in the winter. The Town is aware that the bridge is essential for the farmers.

David shared that the Town had to have a hydrologic study done after the flood in order to move forward with a replacement bridge. We need to engineer a new bridge, which the City of Burlington has offered municipal assistance to help us with this. Once the design is complete, we do plan to put it out bid as soon as we can. The Town is hoping that it will happen first thing in the Spring. It will be contingent on us finding a contractor who can do the work.

Helm expressed disappointment in the Town’s handling of the bridge and felt that they did not take farmers’ needs into consideration. David indicated that he was very much aware of how the bridge affected farmers and the Town had to take into consideration all residents who may also use that road.

David elaborated on the reason that the Town chose to put in the temporary bridge. He also indicated that he is working on solutions with the approach. The plan is to straighten the approach and then remove the temporary bridge in the spring and the farmers can put the agriculture bridge back and the road would be closed until a permanent bridge can be built by a contractor.

6:19 P.M. – 6:20 P.M. Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of November 2, 2023

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 2, 2023, as written. Danny abstained.

6:20 P.M. – 6:25 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David reported that the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund is offering forgivable loans ranging from \$150,000 - \$325,000 for redesign of wastewater plants affected by the flood. He also shared that there is a wastewater plant task force that has been formed, including the Towns of Johnson and Ludlow, who also had their plants damaged. We are working on a “substantial damage” inspection of our plant to assist with preparing for redesign and/or relocation of the plant.

David shared that there is a Northeast Kingdom Human Services mental health support person located on the third floor at Hardwick Inn. They are there for flood recovery concerns, health, and well-being support.

David mentioned that the Hardwick Neighbor-to-Neighbor group is working on the Town’s Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP) after the flood event. The plan is to update the LEMP to fill in any gaps, so we can be better prepared for any future disasters.

David shared that he attended a Pedestrian Bridge meeting this morning. The focus now is getting the design to bridge manufacturing companies for proposals on the actual bridge.

There was no Road Foreman report; however, David shared what they have been working on such as truck maintenance, grading, putting up banners, and some minor water/sewer fixes. Tom’s truck, the CV International, is currently out of commission until mid-January when the necessary part can be obtained. He will need to plow parts of the village with the F-250 and we will have our new F-550 in another week or so.

6:25 P.M. – 6:30 P.M. Hardwick Police Department Report – Given by David Upson

David shared that there was an early morning drug raid on the corner of Elm and Spring St. It is his understanding that there are people in custody. This was a multi-agency effort led by Federal agents.

6:30 P.M. – 6:41 P.M. Hardwick Electric Department (HED) Report – Given by Roger Prevot, Commissioner

Roger brought up the Wolcott Hydro, which was wiped out by the flood. They are in the process of tearing down, cleaning up and evaluating what is needed to repair it. They don’t know when it will be up and running. Some equipment may be rebuilt, while others may not be salvageable. They are hoping to pin down the schedule and cost in the coming months.

Roger mentioned that they are working closely with the Yellow Barn project as they have specific demand needs and upgrades will be needed to make that happen.

Roger spoke about the overall shortage of transformers with long lead times. Projects can be 26-28 weeks to get transformers. Their recent strategy has been to order transformers in small batches to try to keep a small supply on hand, some for specific projects and a couple of extras. Roger indicated that unfortunately, they don’t see this trend ending.

Roger shared that Grace Johnstone in East Hardwick is working on installing two Level 2 chargers and is working with HED on this.

Roger talked about how earlier in 2023, purchased power was really expensive and caused HED to draw down their cash. They had to stop capital projects temporarily and were even considering using a line of credit for cash flow needs. They have another rate increase in the works for next year.

Sharo asked about an EV charger at HED. Roger said that while it is up and ready to go, it is not operable at the moment they have to go through a regulatory process to set the fees. This is because they are selling their own power, so it's similar to setting public rates.

David asked if HED is looking into grants or low interest loans for the transmission line upgrades. Roger indicated that Eric shared some information with them about USDA and they do have a commissioner who is looking into grant opportunities. They are open to receiving information and/or opportunities that the Town might have to share.

Eric mentioned that the agendas and minutes for the HED Commissioner meetings are not always current on their website. They are supposed to have minutes posted within 5 calendar days. Roger said he would bring that comment back to the Commissioners.

Eric brought up the energy demands for Yellow Barn and that they have been able to downgrade the amount needed, which Roger indicated will be helpful for HED to accommodate a lower demand.

6:41 P.M. – 7:26 P.M. Item #1 Business Manager to present FY25 Budget First Drafts of Capital Funds, Buildings, Fire/Line Items, Police, and Highway

The Business Manager went over the respective drafts of each area. This evening will just be a rundown of each of these and the next meeting will cover other departments. We do not plan to make changes this evening but review these first drafts. Topics of discussion included:

- Need to set aside a lot more funds in the equipment fund to keep the replacement schedule on track because prices have increased drastically
- Consider setting aside some funds for future grant matches
- Consider setting aside funds for the Trailheads (in capital)
- Consider increasing the gravel line so we can crush our own material in our gravel pit (we closed on the Davis gravel pit last Thursday)
- Need to offer competitive wages in order to obtain and retain qualified police officers
- David would like to see us increase the number of police officers, as there is clearly a need.
- Fuel prices have stabilized so we are able to decrease the estimated diesel fuel in highway and the fuel oil cost for our buildings.
- The library bond is on a 20-yr amortization instead of 30-yr, making the payment higher than we expected by roughly \$14-\$16K per year. The intention was for gravel pit to be 20 years and library to be 30 years but both bonds were done at same time and there was miscommunication somewhere along the way and both ended up as 20-year bonds.
- Other departments such as the Library, Trails, Recreation, and Hardwick Rescue are just estimates for now.

See attachments for the drafts.

7:26 P.M. – 7:28 P.M. Item #2 Select Board to consider authorizing the Town Manager to sign an agreement with NEKDC relating to disposal of contaminated soil at the Yellow Barn site – *Action needed*

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to authorize the Town Manager to sign an agreement with NEKDC relating to disposal of contaminated soil at the Yellow Barn site.

7:28 P.M. – 7:29 P.M. Item #3 Select Board to sign an employment contract with the Town Manager – *Action needed*

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to sign an employment contract with the Town Manager.

7:29 P.M. – 7:43 P.M. Item #4 Select Board to consider providing a letter of support for the Transportation Alternatives Program Grant (draft letter has been provided) – *Action needed*

This grant is for a scoping study on the Mill Street/So. Main St. area for walking and pedestrian safety. The total cost is estimated at \$60,000 with \$48,000 coming from the grant and a \$12,000 match. The match could possibly come from the accrued interest in the capital general fund a (currently about \$23,000) or we could plan to budget for it in the FY25 budget we are working on.

Danny was concerned that we would continue to do studies on projects that don't come to fruition, when we could spend our dollars on other projects that are more important. He stressed "less planning and more action."

Shari provided some background on the Planning Commission doing walkability studies in the Village area and that for us to apply for the grant, we have to do the scoping study. We are eligible to apply for this grant because we are a designated downtown.

There was brief discussion about the \$60,000 cost estimate and Shari indicated that it was based on previous scoping studies. David commented that he was not taking any sides on this; but ultimately, as part of ongoing processes, we have to start with a scoping study in order to be able to look at future steps for action including actual funding for the project.

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to provide a letter of support for the Transportation Alternatives Program Grant and have the Chair sign the letter of support.

7:43 P.M. – 7:45 P.M. Item #5 Select Board to resolve to authorize the Town Manager to accept the project grant funds for the \$1.2M Brownfields grant for the Yellow Barn soil remediation cleanup

The Town has been awarded \$1.2M from the Brownfield's Revitalization Fund for cleanup of contaminated soil at the Yellow Barn site. There is no match for the grant.

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board to authorize the Town Manager to accept the project grant funds for the \$1.2M Brownfields grant for the Yellow Barn soil remediation cleanup.

See attachments for the resolution document.

Select Board Reports: Shari reported that she learned at the last CVSWMD meeting, that they are expecting to reopen the ARCC in Barre at the old location the week after Thanksgiving. They will be limiting some of the things they take, but they will be open.

New Business: none

Old Business: Shari mentioned that the Select Board is still supposed to have a joint meeting with Hardwick Rescue Squad (HRS) about the public works facility and the possibility of HRS being a part of a future facility for public works. This should be scheduled soon.

Eric followed up on a question from Ceilidh at the last meeting about FEMA buyout properties and how building removal costs are handled. David indicated that there is grant money for towns to clean up and demo. He also noted that some may go to State buyouts, rather than the Town. Ultimately, there is money for the owner and then money for the Town to clean it up after we acquire the property.

Shari brought up a joint meeting with Hardwick Electric. David indicated that at this time, no agenda items have been presented, so it makes sense to hold tight for now. There was discussion about having two designated Select Board members attend the HED Commissioner meetings. They meet on the 3rd Monday of each month here at the Memorial Building starting at 4:00 p.m. Eric plans to attend the November 20 meeting. The plan will be that at the first Select Board meeting monthly, they will decide who is going to go to the HED meeting that month.

7:57 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