

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2023
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
Mike Henry, Police Chief
Tonia Chase, Town Clerk
Norma Spaulding

Others Present

Deborah Hartt
Jan Mueller
Kate Scarlott
Caitlin Strong
Helen Beattie

Regular Meeting

6:01 P.M. – Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, called the meeting to order.

6:01 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – Remove Item #2 from agenda and move others up accordingly

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

6:02 P.M. – 6:13 P.M. Communication from the audience –

Jan Mueller wanted to talk about the community safety meetings that have been happening over the last couple of months. He has learned a lot from these meetings and thought it would be good to touch base with the Select Board from time to time about them.

Kate Scarlott stated that the meetings started back in August when residents felt there was a spike in what they considered drug-related crimes. The focus of these meetings was to give individuals a place to speak and share their questions and concerns. They hope to better understand each other. After understanding, they can move to ideas. The intention is for a democratic process, where the group focuses on listening and providing a safe and respectful place to express concerns. Kate said that she was grateful that the Town Manager and Police Chief have attended several of the meetings, as well as some of the Select Board members.

Eliabeth asked that someone write something up about the meetings, such as a monthly summary and submit to *The Gazette*. Speaking of newspapers, David contacted the News & Citizen, and they are working on adding East Hardwick to their distribution list.

Caitlin Strong shared that she started a neighborhood watch group over 3 years ago and that these meetings sparked from that concept. She added that these meetings are designed to cultivate an environment where people can talk about these nerve-wracking topics. They also want to look at the circumstances of how our community got to this point. She asked about creating a resolution for town meeting about committing to community safety and what that is going to look like.

Jan debriefed the Monday night meeting.

Caitlin asked about the process for getting a resolution into the Town Meeting warning. Tonia will research this. Ceilidh mentioned that the Equity Committee made a resolution a couple of years ago that likely addresses some of what she has in mind. She indicated that the committee is willing to review it and make changes that would meet the ideas of this new proposed resolution.

6:13 P.M. – 6:14 P.M. Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of November 16, 2023

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of November 16, 2023, as written. Ceilidh abstained.

6:14 P.M. – 6:24 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David updated us on several items including the completion of the sludge cleanout at the wastewater plant, the pedestrian bridge progress, insurance claims from the flooding, and the community public safety meetings. See attachments for full details.

Shari asked about replacement lights downtown and also about plowing in front of the school. She wanted to confirm that the parking ban was in effect, so wondered why there is still snow along there if cars are not parking overnight. The lights have been ordered. David will inquire with the road crew about the plowing.

6:24 P.M. – 6:33 P.M. Hardwick Police Department Report (HPD)– Given by Michael Henry

Mike reported that one of our part-time officers, Bill Morley, will not be returning to HPD for personal reasons. Mike wants to thank him for the time he gave us in the last year. Mike also shared that full-time officer Andrew Force will be leaving in January to further his career at the federal level. We will be advertising for positions.

Mike shared that HPD collaborated with other local departments, such as Stowe, Morrisville, and Vermont State Police to pick up four individuals last night that had outstanding warrants or were suspects of illegal activities.

HPD continues to issue parking tickets as time allows, primarily in the handicapped zone and area in front of Front Seat Coffee.

Shari asked about the handicapped sign and if was determined what direction the sign is supposed to face. Mike has spoken with different people and is getting conflicting answers.

6:33 P.M. – 6:38 P.M. Item #1 Town Clerk/Treasurer Tonia Chase to discuss the vault door (follow up from the last meeting)

At the last meeting, when we were talking about capital savings, the vault door was brought up. Tonia indicated that she and Alberta are going to be organizing the vault first because it is very full. They will be working with the Secretary of State archives to ensure they are keeping what they need to. Anything they don't need to keep will be reviewed by the Historical Society.

She got an estimate for the door, has contacted a concrete place and is waiting to hear back. We will need to find someone to install the door and it's possible that the concrete place will know of a contractor who can do this.

6:38 P.M. – 7:36 P.M. Item #2 Business Manager to present FY25 Budget First Drafts of Trails (presented by Norma & Helen), Office & Payroll, and Revenues/Summary

Norma went over the Trails budget. They had a nominal increase for programs/activities, equipment maintenance, and insurance.

The Business Manager went over Office & Payroll. The biggest changes here come from salaries and health insurance benefits. We are still working to gradually bring up salaries that are significantly below the market average. We are proposing that the part-time Zoning Administrator increase her hours to 35 hrs./week and will be eligible for benefits with the change in status. She will take on some additional duties in addition to the zoning work. Since the duties are changing, the position title and job description are going to need to change, as she will not be just the Zoning Administrator.

One idea that was up for discussion was selling the Carey Road property and putting those proceeds into our budget as revenue. There was a good deal of opposition from the Board about this idea. Eric doesn't like the idea of a one-time "windfall" and others didn't think we should anticipate the sale without really knowing if it could happen.

Our PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) revenue is anticipated to decrease by about \$20,000 due to a revised agreement between the Select Board and the HED Board of Commissioners. This agreement closely aligns with the current state statute for taxing electrical utilities.

This is a working draft and cuts are likely still needed. The plan is to wait for the next meeting when more info is available, as figures continue to come in. We only have Library and Recreation left to go over and then we can go through the entire budget again at the December 21 meeting and look at where cuts can be made.

Danny asked about a library update. He would like an update on the financial aspect of the expansion project, specifically if the Town is going to have to put in any additional funds to complete the project. David indicated they are working on applying for a grant from the VT Dept. of Libraries and that they have not asked the Town to put in additional money at this point. He said that he can have Jodi or another Trustee come to discuss this at the next meeting.

Ceilidh left the meeting at 7:30.

7:36 P.M. – 7:40 P.M. Item #3 Select Board to approve the amendment to the SE Group Contract that includes the engineering and design of the pedestrian bridge structure and authorize the Town Manager to sign the amendment – *Action needed*

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the amendment to the SE Group Contract that includes the engineering and design of the pedestrian bridge structure and authorize the Town Manager to sign the amendment.

7:40 P.M. – 7:43 P.M. Item #4 Select Board to consider adopting the Town's updated All-Hazards Mitigation Plan - *Action needed*

A motion was made by Danny Hale and seconded by Elizabeth Dow to adopt the Town's updated All-Hazards Mitigation Plan.

Eric mentioned that in his review of the document there are many typos and grammar errors, as well as some inconsistencies in the number of dams listed in the report in different spots. *Danny withdrew his motion.*

It seems that it needs to be cleaned up before it is adopted. David indicated that we could move to the next meeting, provided that it has been updated appropriately.

Select Board Reports:

Shari mentioned that the Invitation to Bid for the Town House project is out and is due December 19. She also shared that the Downtown Partnership is getting ready to interview candidates for the Executive Director position. They received four applications.

Eric reported that the Yellow Barn construction is ongoing. He offered to show the other Board members the progress in person if they wanted to see.

No Old or New Business.

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to enter an Executive Session pursuant to 1 VSA §313 for personnel matter and include the Town Manager.

8:10 P.M. Exited Executive Session. *No action taken.*

8:11 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