

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2024
MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3RD FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

Eric Remick, Chair
Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Vice Chair
Shari Cornish
Tim Ricciardello
Danny Hale

Others Present

David Upson, Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Business Manager - *Zoom*
Mike Henry, Police Chief
Maya McCoy, Hardwick Rescue (HRS)
RJ Thompson, VT Huts - *Zoom*
Dan Hallberg, VT Huts - *Zoom*
Patrick Kane
Tyler Molleur (HRS)

Others Present

Jim Kelty - *Zoom*
Jan Mueller
Tara Reese - *Zoom*
Rose Friedman - *Zoom*
Nancy Kellogg
Todd
Brent McCoy (HRS)

Regular Meeting

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

6:01 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – Add an Executive session per 1 V.S.A. § 313 for personnel matter to include the Town Manager and Police Chief.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to adjust the agenda as stated.

6:02 P.M. Maya McCoy from Hardwick Rescue Squad (HRS) came to talk about the Town providing a letter of support for Hardwick Rescue, who is applying for congressionally delegated spending (CDS) through Bernie Sanders' office. The Town is also applying for CDS funds through Peter Welch's office. The Town is seeking the funds for relocating our fire dept and town garage funding. David talked about the process of applying for the CDS funds. One concern he has is that the Town needs to focus on our own projects.

Danny said that we need to get back to the discussion of the location of HRS building and that the land that it is on belongs to the Town. Maya explained that HRS is asking for general support for their application. Ceilidh said that she is a little concerned about us not having a plan for Creamery Rd. With the CDS funds, we would be on the hook for completing it in 18-20 months. She feels that HRS is further along in the process.

Tim does not think there is harm in applying for all of the projects through the various channels. That it's okay if both the Town and HRS apply for CDS funds.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to sign a letter of support for the CDS application for HRS.

6:18 P.M. – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of March 21, 2024

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of March 21, 2024, as written.

6:03 P.M. – 6:15 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David shared that we have a fully executed grant agreement for the Environmental Watershed Protection (EWP) program to fix three properties that were damaged during the flood. The work is to repair and secure eroding riverbanks. There will be a Request for Proposal (RFP) released soon for an engineer. The Town will handle finding an engineer and contractor to perform the work, but the sponsor portion has been 100% covered and there is no town match or contribution to these projects.

David reported that the East Main Street bridge in East Hardwick has been removed. The contractor is demobilizing their equipment. This expense will be submitted to FEMA for reimbursement. We do not have an estimate for a replacement cost at this time. The biggest concern was removing it before it fell into the river.

David mentioned that we are beginning work on three demolitions for the flood buy out properties. There is one on School St. in East Hardwick, the Inn by the River, and Ron Sanville's property on Carey Rd. We are almost ready to release an RFP for these demolitions. These spaces need to be turned into "green space" perpetually.

David provided an eclipse update from a call he participated in this week. Vermont Emergency Management and the Department of Tourism anticipate a large influx of travelers. They have been watching the weather and the national news says the best view will be in the Northeast. There will be another briefing on Sunday. There is an app that shows traffic backups, and it sends people to secondary roads. Some towns are closing roads all together. He also mentioned that people need to watch out for counterfeit glasses because they are out there.

Eric asked about the demo on the three flood buyout properties and if the Town Manager's office handles that. Yes, they will handle coordinating those efforts, but the project itself is grant funded.

There was no Road Foreman report since Tom is busy plowing. David mentioned that they were able to spot grade here and there last week, but then the snow came unfortunately. The CV International truck we have is problematic with no four wheel drive and power issues. Unfortunately, this has been an ongoing issue.

6:30 P.M. – 6:32 P.M. Hardwick Police Department (HPD) Report – Given by Mike Henry

Mike reported that the Town received a grant for new body cameras. The system they have now for downloading has become obsolete and they will be transitioning to a cloud based system. He expects the cameras will be ordered in the next week or so. They are also looking at new in car camera systems, as they need to be updated as well.

Mike mentioned that HPD has one officer starting the part-time academy in June. He is hopeful for another one soon. Unfortunately, they have yet to fill the full-time officer role, which has proved to be challenging in covering shifts.

6:32 P.M. – 6:39 P.M. Item #1 Town Manager to update Select Board on pedestrian bridge progress and funding

David went over the budget including the funding sources, what's been spent, and what is remaining. See the meeting attachments for the details. The project is just about ready to go out to bid. We have \$790,000 left to get the bridge completed. The existing conditions changed because the retaining wall on the Main Street side was damaged in the flood. In the bid documents, there will be FEMA work for that wall to be repaired. The bid documents state that the repair of the retaining wall needs to be broken out to reflect that repair since that will be paid for by FEMA. Bids might come back higher due to the extra work, and we could have to pay that bill until the FEMA reimbursement comes.

6:39 P.M. – 7:07 P.M. Item #2 Select Board to hear from VT Huts for the development of lot next to the Clip Joint

RJ Thompson with VT Huts Association was present. He gave some background on the organization. VT Huts is a 501c3 statewide organization that has huts and hostels throughout the state that are linked via trails. They have been around for about 8 years now. The Velomont trail for mountain biking and trail users runs from Canada to Massachusetts and it conveniently overlaps the LVRT through Hardwick. They have been looking at Towns to host a hostel. Hardwick is a prime location. They are interested in the lot next to the Clip Joint. They have some CDS funds for the project. The conceptual design is for a 32-bed hostel with 2 long term units on the second floor (studio style). The ground level would have a common space, with potential for the Downtown Partnership to have office space and possibly public bathroom access. Eric thinks it's great to have a place for rail travelers to stay. However, his two concerns are parking and the property's contribution, if any, to the Town's grand list.

Patrick Kane talked about the design plan. He showed a picture of it to the Select Board. The building would have a sprinkler system and handicapped accessible with an elevator. RJ talked about parking options through contacts with Dwayne Wells and Isaac Jacobs, who own nearby properties and may have accommodating space. They would come to the DRB with a proposal for parking when they get further into the process. Danny commented that downtown parking is already at capacity, and we would be losing the parking there. There are not a lot of options right around the building itself. One point that was made is that some of the travelers are on bikes, so they would not need parking.

Eric asked if they would be seeking a tax exemption. RJ said that they haven't gotten that far with their real estate attorney, but likely yes. However, they would be open to discussion for a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) so the project is also beneficial to the town. Ceilidh doesn't think that's a deal breaking point for the project. Eric asked about the budget and if they have the funds to complete it now. RJ explained that they have a \$3.8 million CDS request in to be used for across multiple projects. They originally carved off \$600,000 for Hardwick. The plan that Patrick presented is probably closer to \$1.2-\$1.5 million. There is further feasibility work to be done and campaign fundraising. RJ said that they reached out to Lamoille Housing Partnership about the 2 units on the 3rd floor but haven't heard back.

Ceilidh asked about the timeline. RJ indicated that ideally, they would like to have permits in hand by the end of summer. He is unsure if they would break ground before winter. They do have contractors interested in the project. Realistically, it would likely be next spring to break ground.

Tim asked about the rental prices for the hostels. VT Huts like to make things accessible for people. While it is not finalized, he anticipates that a bunk room with one twin bed would be around \$50-\$60/night and a private room that sleeps 4 would be in the \$120-\$140 range.

RJ asked about the process of buying land from a town. David and Eric explained that the Select Board has authority to sell town property, but they have to go through a public posting process where voters have the right to petition if they object. If someone contests and gets the signatures they need, it would then need to go to a town vote instead.

7:07 P.M. – 7:10 P.M. Item #3 Town Manager to discuss potential paths forward for the replacement of the Hardwick Farms Rd. bridge – *Possible Action needed*

David reported that his meeting with Vtrans today was canceled, so he only has a brief update on this. The Secretary of Transportation reached out to him and offered a 2-lane bridge. However, this comes with no technical support and the cost to install would be about \$125,000, and not reimbursed by FEMA because we already did the temporary repairs. If we did the work ourselves, it would be less expensive. The most cost-effective method would be to install two eight foot culverts side by side and cover them with gravel. This method would provide plenty of width to the roadway and no live weight load on the crossing. He added, this method would need to be approved by ANR.

7:10 P.M. – 7:15 P.M. Item #4 Select Board to consider providing a letter of support for Civic Standard grant application – *Action needed*

Tara and Rose from Civic Standard were present on Zoom. Rose explained the Better Places program through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. This is a matching grant where Civic would raise \$5,000 and they would match it with \$10,000. They hope to do a free concert series, preferably as outdoor events. The concerts would run from May-September. The plan is to do three different concerts in different places downtown. The funds would be for paying musicians, food, and staff time, as well as equipment for ongoing concerts and events.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to provide a letter of support for the Civic Standard's grant application and have the Town Manager write the letter on their behalf.

7:15 P.M. – 7:19 P.M. Item #5 Business Manager to present FY24 Quarter 3 budget update

The Business Manager gave a budget update on revenues and expenses for the 3rd quarter of fiscal year 2024. See attachments for the detailed report.

Select Board Reports: Shari is planning to go to Recreation Committee with the park plans to see if they want to be involved and help with the project.

New Business: Shari wants to discuss letters of support. She asked what our parameters should be and if we should even supply these letters. She suggested that maybe we do an application or a policy. David's opinion is

that private for-profit entities should not seek letters of support from towns. He felt it was okay for non-profit organizations, Danny agreed. David said we could also say no to all letters of support because if we said no to a certain one, we have to be able to justify it. He mentioned having an equity process, so we are getting the same information. Ceilidh offered to look into a policy/checklist.

7:29 P.M. *Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to enter Executive Session per 1 V.S.A. § 313 for a personnel matter to include Town Manager and Police Chief.*

8:05 P.M. Exited Executive Session. *No action taken.*

8:06 P.M. *Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to enter Executive Session per 1 V.S.A. § 313 for real estate negotiation contract discussion to include the Town Manager.*

8:32 P.M. Exited Executive Session. The Select Board directed the Town Manager to reach back out to RJ at VT Huts to find out what a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) might look like and also more details on their plan for parking. In addition, they asked David to talk with a realtor about the Carey Rd. property that the Town owns to discuss the marketability of that property.

8:34 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