

MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, May 16, 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
Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator
Tom Fadden, Road Foreman

Others Present

Roger Prevot (HED)
Tobin Porter-Brown

Regular Meeting

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

6:00 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – Add item #5 Select Board to consider signing Banner Application for Hardwick Farmer’s Market. Add an executive session per 1 V.S.A. § 313 Select Board to discuss personnel matter to include the Town Manager.

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

6:02 P.M. Communication from the audience- None

6:02 P.M. – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of May 2, 2024

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of May 2, 2024, as written.

6:03 P.M. – 6:14 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David reported that the Town Assessors sent out a batch of letters stating that the 2025 reappraisal is beginning. They are going in sections and will continue to send out letters as they get to the different parts of Town. Employees from New England Municipal Consultant (NEMC) will be doing the site visits. On the letter, it will state a phone number. It is recommended that you call and make an appointment. If no appointment is set, they might just show up. It is also recommended, but not mandated, to allow them inside in order to get accurate data.

There was a preconstruction meeting that happened last week at the Town House for the new fire escape project.

The Town Manager’s Office is in the middle of Union Negotiations for the Police Department. The goal is to sign a three-year contract.

The long-term recovery projects have been established. These are projects that will be managed by local officials and not covered by FEMA. David has recently met with Helen from the Neighbor-to-Neighbor organization and will continue to collaborate with her on a path forward for the recovery. David also stated that the Town of Hardwick has been assigned its third new FEMA representative recently.

The Town attorney drafted an agreement for the Hardwick Farms bridge. David will present this to the Laggis Farm soon.

David attended a Northern Forest Outdoor Recreation Symposium earlier this week. Recreation is the second highest gross intake. Representatives from neighboring states also attended and they are doing a great job promoting their outdoor activities, but their brands as well, such as L.L. Bean. This information will help Hardwick's Recreation program, but hopefully intensifies Vermont as a whole.

Pedestrian Bridge bids went out yesterday, May 15, 2024. The Town Manager's Office has received communication from various companies requesting more information. Eric asked about the clerk of the works for the Pedestrian Bridge and would like a staff member to be assigned to this project.

Danny asked about the bid for flood clean up and the removal of the properties that FEMA has purchased. David stated that he and Kristen are meeting with contractors at each of these locations tomorrow, May 17, 2024, starting at noon. All properties will be part of the same bid, which will cover asbestos removal if the property tested positive, demolition, and seeding and mulching the property. The bids are due by the end of the month.

6:14 P.M. – 6:19 P.M. Road Foreman Report – Given by Tom Fadden

Tom reported that one of the trucks needed the front spring and oil pin replaced. The work has been completed and they have received the truck back.

They have replaced culverts on Center Road and Dusty Swamp recently.

They have and will continue to paint crosswalks, weather permitting. They are also trying to catch up on the mowing, and grading, which are both weather permitting as well.

There was a wash out and culverts plugged on Tucker Brook Road. They have ripped the culverts out and replaced them with two new ones, and fixed the road where there was damage from the wash out. They will continue to work on Tucker Brook next week to finish the project.

Tom also reported that they have worked on Porter Brook Road, hauling sand for the wastewater treatment plant project, and unplugging a sewer issue at the Memorial Building.

Hardwick Police Department (HPD) Report – No Hardwick Police Department Report

6:19 P.M. – 6:29 P.M. Hardwick Electric Report (HED)- Given by Roger Prevot

Roger reported that HED has hired a part-time Interim General Manager. They appreciate Jim Fontaine helping the department out.

There are numerous linemen positions open. The lack of lineman is leaving a burden on the few that are remaining. Therefore, HED has signed a three-month agreement to have VPPSA's linemen help with HED.

VPPSA is also assigning an employee to help with the Wolcott Hydro Plant. This employee is gathering information and will help HED move forward.

Roger also stated that Mike used to sit down with office staff and review the invoices, and then sign the checks. Since Mike left, the Commissioners have stepped in to help. Lynne specifically will carefully review the invoices and will sign. Lynne and Beth have been working with the other office staff to keep things moving in the right direction.

There is a meeting on Monday to discuss and start the recruitment process for a new general manager.

Eric mentioned that Wright and Morrissey, the contractor for the Yellow Barn, stated that they were impressed with how smoothly things are going with HED.

Ceilidh Galloway-Kane joined the meeting.

6:29 P.M. – 6:36 P.M. Item #1 Select Board to discuss conveying Town owned real estate that is located on Carey Rd. & Main Street.

Danny stated that the Town needs a policy in place which outlines the process if other Town owned properties will be for sale.

Currently, the Town is looking to sell two properties. One on Carey Road, and one on Main Street. The Select Board discussed going through a real estate agent; however, they are concerned with the additional fees. It's important to the Select Board that everyone gets the opportunity to know and have a chance to place an offer on the properties.

The Select Board talked about placing it in the newspaper of record for thirty days and seeing what offers the Town receives. Once under contract, the Town follows the Vermont Statue to convey real estate by posting for proposed conveyance for 30-days. The Town also reserves the right to reject offers and will revisit selling the property in the future. The Select Board also talked about a two-week timeline for the paper.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve posting Carey Road and Main Street property for sale on the Town's Website and in the newspaper of record. Bids will be accepted until June 6, 2024.

6:36 P.M. – 6:41 P.M. Item #2 Select Board to discuss changing the newspaper of record.

The Select Board discussed various newspapers that are in the area and that print physical copies of the paper. The options that were discussed were Times Argus, Caledonian Record, and News & Citizen. Currently, the Town of Hardwick uses the News & Citizen instead of the Hardwick Gazette as the Hardwick Gazette doesn't print physical copies, and the News & Citizen is free to readers. After some discussion, the Select Board is leaving the newspaper of record with News & Citizen.

6:41 P.M. – 6:59 P.M. Item #3 Select Board to discuss LVRT Trailhead developments, and Connector Loop

The Town received a grant previously to purchase supplies for the LVRT trailheads. These items include signage, kiosks, and trash & recycling receptacles. The Town has purchased these items, but they're currently sitting in storage, and Shari asked if they could be placed onto our Rail Trail. There was a discussion on who would take care of the trash and recycling. Currently the Town Crew picks up the trash from Main Street on Thursdays. It was mentioned that possibly the Recreation Committee might be able to help on the rail trail.

There's some general ideas of where the items will be placed. As the discussion progressed about who would maintain the supplies, it was asked if the Town could atleast put out the kiosks.

The Board wanted more time. At the next Select Board meeting Shari suggested maybe the LVRT committee and the Recreation Committee join the conversation and have a plan put into place.

Shari also brought up the Connector Loop and asked that some of the lines, such as North Main Street, which is part of the loop, not have a center line this year. North Main Street will be getting all grinded up in preparation for paving soon. This discussion has also been tabled for a future meeting.

6:59 P.M. – 7:07 P.M. Item #4 Select Board to discuss potential Economic Development Loan for Front Seat Coffee

Tobin Porter- Brown, owner of Front Seat Coffee, started the business in 2019 and originally applied for an economic development loan. Front Seat Coffee made it through the pandemic and in the past five years they have grown quite a bit. Recently their neighbors, Birdsong closed. Tobin is hoping to expand into that area as they need more room for kitchen equipment and seating. The expansion will double or triple their sales. One third of the original loan has been paid off; however, in order to move forward with the expansion, Tobin is hoping to apply for another economic development loan, or to refinance his existing loan for more money.

Shari asked if he would have the same hours. He stated that its to be determined, depending on the impact of labor, and the specific sales. He wants to start off by participating in the first Friday events.

He stated that he also wants to have custom cakes, and more options.

7:07 P.M. – 7:09 P.M. Item #5 Select Board to consider signing Banner Application for Hardwick Farmer's Market.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish the Select Board voted to approve the banner application for the Hardwick Farmer's Market, and to authorize Shari Cornish to sign the application.

Select Board Reports:

Eric reported that the Yellow Barn project is coming together. Cabot's target date to move in is July 15, 2024.

New/ Old Business: None

The Select Board will not be having an executive session about real estate as there was a motion made on item #1.

7:10 P.M. *Upon motion by Danny Hale seconded by Shari Cornish the Select Board voted to enter Executive Session per 1 V.S.A. § 313 for a loan contract discussion to include the Town Manager and Tobin Porter- Brown.*

7:27 P.M. Exited Executive Session.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish seconded by Tim Ricciardello the Select Board voted to proceed with refinancing Front Seat Coffee's Economic Development Loan to include additional \$41,000, for a total of \$71,000 loan.

7:27 P.M. *Upon motion by Danny Hale seconded by Tim Ricciardello the Select Board voted to enter Executive Session per 1 V.S.A. § 313 for personnel matters to include the Town Manager.*

7:48 P.M. Exited Executive Session. No action taken.

7:48 P.M. Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, adjourned the meeting.

Minutes taken by: _____
Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator

Minutes approved by: _____
Eric Remick, Select Board Chair