

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024
HARDWICK MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3rd FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

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

Others Present

David Upson, Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Business Manager
Tom Fadden, Road Foreman
Matt Krajieski, NEMC
Emily Finnegan, CCNRCD

Others Present

Daphne Kalmar
Diane Grenkow
Raymonda Parchment

Regular Meeting

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

6:00 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – Add an Item#7 for the Select Board to accept and sign the Town Manager’s employment contract and an Item #8 to adopt the “Resolution for VCDP Grant Application Authority” for the Heartbeet grant application.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the adjusted agenda as stated.

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

6:01 P.M. – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Bylaw Public Hearing of September 5, 2024, the VCDP Public Hearing of September 5, 2024, and the Regular Select Board meeting of September 5, 2024

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the Bylaw Public Hearing of September 5, 2024, the VCDP Public Hearing of September 5, 2024, and the Regular Select Board meeting of September 5, 2024, as written.

6:02 P.M. – 6:15 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David reported that the Community Development Coordinator is working with the Town’s Energy Coordinator and a representative from NVDA on a Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) grant. There were energy assessments done on most of the town owned buildings a few months ago. We are considered a “high energy burden.” The application for the grant is due on 9/27 and they are putting together the application. We would be eligible for up to \$500,000. Projects such as the furnace for the public safety building and work at the Memorial building, Depot and the Town House will be part of the ask which we expect to be about \$350,000.

David attended the Neighbor to Neighbor community meeting on Monday evening. There was a good turnout and valuable information circulated. Residents of Granite and Cottage Streets want a better system for early flood warning signs, such as the warning siren that we used to have. The Town has pulled out the old siren at the fire

station and brought it to an electrician to see if it can be repaired. Provided that it can be, we will look for another place to put it since it cannot remain at the fire station due to flooding.

David shared that we were granted another extension on the Church St. sidewalk grant as we were unable to get it completed the last two summers due to the flooding. It was extended to September 1, 2025.

David brought up the mandatory Lead Service Inventory project where every water connection in the Town needs to be inventoried to see if there are lead pipes. Unfortunately, we have gotten few responses, so starting in October, we are going to have to go door to door to collect the information. We are currently doing some outreach on Front Porch Forum to try to solicit additional responses.

David reported that the additional flood property buyouts are progressing along. There are now funds for the appraisals to be done.

David also shared that the Riverside bridge will be done in the next couple of days.

6:06 P.M. – 6:10 P.M. Road Foreman Report – Given by Tom Fadden

Tom reported that they installed a new 6' culvert on Nichols Rd. This is slightly upsized from the 4' one that was there and should help with future flooding events.

Other work that was completed recently included:

- Ditch work on Cobb School Rd.
- Redid Stagehouse Rd. using the grant-in-aid funds
- Ditched Kate Brook Rd.
- Upgraded Smith Farm Rd. from 2-3' culvert
- Billings Rd. was ditched
- Fixed two water leaks and the water issue by the rail trail (run off)

Tom also reported that they hauled winter sand all week. The crusher is coming to the Town's pit tomorrow or next week and then they will start hauling gravel when it is available. Eric asked about blasting in the pit. David shared that blasting was just completed last week and they blasted about 5,500 yds of rock. The crushing company is going to do some testing on that material. It is expected that some will stay as large rock material that we will need in the future.

Shari asked if there was any update on the crossing signal on Wolcott St. David said that it was a hit and run incident so it will have to go through an insurance claim.

There was no Hardwick Police Department Report this evening.

David gave a quick update on the two property sale transactions. The buyer of Carey Rd. wants to do their due diligence and currently has an attorney completing a title search. As for VT Huts, he sent back the option agreement with proposed edits from the Town's attorney. We are negotiating the final version of that option agreement.

6:10 P.M. – 6:15 P.M. Hardwick Electric Department Report – Given by Eric Remick as report was sent to him by Myles Kamisher-Koch who was unable to attend

- Customer Projects: Commission approved an updated policy of cost sharing of customer projects. Instead of 100% of the cost of upgraded equipment (think transformers) HED will now cost share (based on the value of the device being removed)
- Technology Projects:
 - Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI) – with new requirements to comply with renewable energy and electrification coming at utilities from Montpelier and with the need to better manage existing issues due to the volume of solar on our system, the Commission voted to advance AMI to be installed on our system. This project will occur in 2026.
 - GIS and Outage Management – HED is building an outage management system that will enable customers to know when power is lost (wherever they are) and when it comes back on. HED will better be able to prioritize and manage big storm events. Finally, once in place, this will also give us the technology we need to get information to customers in new ways (text, email, newsletter, blog, etc.)
- Repairs and Upgrades
 - Two roofs (office and shop) will soon be under contract for repair / replacement
 - Traded in a big pickup (F250) that was not conducive to meter reading for a Ranger. This will immediately increase the efficiency of this work.
- Staffing: After a long journey, the electric line crew is fully staffed. 3 months ago, HED was down to two linemen. Today we are at a full complement of six. Two new first class linemen live in our service territory already and the two apprentices we hired desire to live here and are working themselves in this direction.
- Flood meeting – attended the recent flood meeting. Jackson dam came a lot, and we understand Select Board is considering (or will) an assessment of its future use or viability. HED has no objection to this assessment being made and will participate as may be necessary.
- GM search: we continue to receive and review potential candidates. Will let the Board know when we have final interviews.

6:15 P.M. – 6:20 P.M. Item #1 – Assessor to present two “errors and omissions” requests for Select Board to consider approving – *Action needed*

Matt Krajeski from New England Municipal Consultants (Assessor) presented two properties which had surveys recorded indicating they had less land than we had on record. Therefore, the value of their property should be slightly lower. See attachments.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the errors and omissions requests for LaCasse and Clements, as presented.

6:20 P.M. – 6:49 P.M. Item #2 – Emily Finnegan, District Manager, Caledonia County Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCD) to discuss a study of the Jackson Dam – *Action needed*

Emily gave a brief background about what the NRCD does. They work with towns to find funding for clean water projects, such as removing dams. She was present to talk specifically about the Jackson Dam. The Town has options of doing an alternative analysis or a feasibility study. NRCD wants to know what the Select Board wants to do. Eric said personally speaking and from talking with other residents, the question is if the dam is helping or hurting us during the flood events.

Danny thinks it is low on the priority list of things that need to be addressed to help us with flooding. There are a lot of other issues upstream that need attention.

Emily commented that the Lamoille Regional Planning Commission (RPC) is working with other RPC's to study a few areas for lowering flood levels. The study has money for 3-5 analysis' which could include the Jackson dam.

David asked if NRCD had talked to HED because they own the dam. They should be involved in the discussion. HED has indicated they are open to discussion. Emily is aware of their role. Danny thinks we need to be more concerned with flood mitigation. He wonders if removing the dam would help control floods.

Eric asked if the Wolcott Hydro Dam was considered in all of this, as it produces electricity for the electric department. It has a fair amount of sediment buildup behind it. He wonders if the Jackson Dam were removed, what that would do to that sediment. Emily said it would be a part of any study.

David said that four other studies have been done – how would this one be different? Emily said that those studies were more focused on process and measuring effects. There were no cost estimates or hydraulic modeling (remove all or partial dam) done in those studies. Past studies were more informative, but a new study would provide more detailed information about the effects of removing all or some of the dam and the estimated cost.

Emily said that she would want to see how far the Lamoille RPC is going with their study. They will include part of Cooper Brook. Lamoille RPC put in a congressionally delegated spending (CDS) request for the Lamoille River study. She plans to communicate more with them about the scope of their work, so they are not duplicating efforts.

Eric said that the biggest thing for us to know is what repairs might do to help with flood control. If we commission a study and it says to remove the dam, is there funding for dam removal? Emily said yes. There are a lot of federal funds for clean water projects. The NRCD would help with locating funding if we needed to remove or repair the dam after the study.

Emily explained the difference between an alternatives analysis and feasibility study (which would have a cost associated with it). The study would answer questions about flood effects and is less expensive than the alternatives analysis.

She plans to communicate with Seth at the Lamoille RPC to get a sense of what their focus is. The NRCD would also work with an engineering firm about what it would cost and what funding sources would be available.

She would need a letter of support from the Town. She asked with whom she should communicate. David suggested a working group to include a Select Board member, Conservation Commission member, Zoning, etc.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted unanimously to sign a letter of support to have CCNRCD move forward with a feasibility study about the Jackson Dam and authorize the Town Manager to sign the letter.

6:49 P.M. – 6:59 P.M. Item #3 Representatives from Jeudevine Library to give an update on library expansion project

Daphne Kalmar, Trustee Chair, came to update the Select Board on the library expansion project. She explained that they did the construction in two phases. Phase 1 is the exterior and rough-in of interior and this will be done in the first week of October. A small punch list of items remains in this phase, such as copper on the gables and paving of the parking lot. The sprinkler, HVAC and electrical rough-in on the interior has also been completed, and the elevator is almost complete. Finishes such as flooring, sheetrock, trim, etc. are part of phase two.

Daphne said that the library received a \$75k donation for the outside landscaping. They are expecting to receive a grant from the Vermont Department of Libraries, but they have not made any formal awards yet. It is promising but no word yet.

Since everything is weather tight and they are waiting for the funding, it makes sense to shut project down after the punch list items are done due to general conditions being \$800-\$900/day.

Eric asked about drainage onto the flat roof where the others are all pitched. Daphne reported that they have done some mitigation efforts.

6:59 P.M. – 7:16 P.M. Item #4 Follow up discussion on the LVRT connector loop recommendations and So. Main Street bike lane discussed at the last meeting – *Possible action needed*

David said that we have reached out to painting companies for painting the lines. Feedback received indicates that the green bike path paint used for bike lanes gets slippery. The white "hash mark" paint is recommended but is more expensive. We are continuing to obtain estimates on both types of paint.

Tom mentioned that the water main is under the sidewalk that is being referenced on S Main St. This needs to be remembered when considering any stormwater drainage.

For the N. Main St. bike lane that was discussed last time, we would have to remove the parking places in front of the Legion and the bridge. There are regulations about the width of each lane and there is not enough room to do this without removing those parking spaces.

It was suggested that the Town put sharrows on the pavement up N Main St., which is essentially a decal indicating to "share the road" and has a bike and arrow symbol. We would need to order a template for this. Shari said that the USDA grant for the bridge has money in for the connector loop. Eric thought it made sense to add these items once we rebuilt the pedestrian bridge.

There was discussion about crosswalks at the intersection of N. Main/Church & W. Church Streets. Tom explained that we cannot just paint crosswalks. They have to be ADA compliant which means we have to redo the sidewalks. There will likely be additional information on this at the next meeting since we are still getting estimates for the paint for S Main St.

7:16 P.M. – 7:21 P.M. Item #5 Follow up discussion on a project manager position discussed at the last meeting

At the last meeting, there was discussion about the need for another staff person to facilitate the numerous projects we have to complete. It would still need a job description and title. The term project manager was a starting point. Danny wants it to be a "public works director." This was all preliminary just to get an idea of the cost. We will need to revisit this during the budget season. Ultimately, the total *salary and benefits* for this person would be around \$100,000, as it would need to be someone experienced.

7:21 P.M. – 7:39 P.M. Item #6 Business Manager to present the proposed FY25 water and sewer rates to Select Board for consideration of approval – *Action needed*

The Business Manager presented the proposed water and sewer rates. The water base rates will increase by \$3/quarter for *residential* and \$15/quarter for sewer. The average usage rate went from \$.0085 to \$.0115 for water and from \$.0135 to \$.018 for sewer. See the attachments for complete details. There was some discussion about unmetered accounts and making it a bigger priority to get all properties metered. The remaining unmetered accounts are all mobile homes.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the FY25 water/sewer rates, as presented.

7:39 P.M. – 7:42 P.M. Item#7 for Select Board to accept and sign the Town Manager's employment contract

Upon motion by Danny Hale, and seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve and sign a 3-year employment contract for David Upson, Town Manager. Eric explained that the contract calls for an annual increase each year, a mileage stipend, and the standard benefits other full-time employees receive.

7:42 P.M. – 7:43 P.M. Item #8 Select Board to adopt the Resolution for VCDP Grant Application Authority

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Danny Hale, the Select Board voted to approve and sign the Resolution for VCDP Grant Application Authority.

Select Board Reports: Danny attended the Woodbury Rail Trail meeting. There is an interest in getting the committee back together. Woodbury is applying for FEMA money to fix the Woodbury Rail trail. Danny reminded the committee that it used to be the *Hardwick/Woodbury* Rail Trail committee, and it would be good to revitalize the committee. Danny is asking for someone from Hardwick to step up to represent bike and pedestrian interests on the trail.

Danny said that as part of this trail discussion, he thinks the Town should look at the structure of their trails and recreation committees and maybe consider combining them. Eric wanted to point out that the Hardwick Trails has a long standing group that is very committed to the Trail system.

Danny commented that with the upcoming budget season, the Town will need to talk about where cuts can be made so that we can put funds where they are needed more. For example, funding a public works director or project manager that was discussed earlier in the meeting. The Business Manager piggybacked on this to say that the budget season will be a time to start looking at all areas very carefully and it may mean making some tough decisions about where money is best spent.

Shari mentioned that she went to the Downtown Retreat in Grand Isle for a 3-day retreat. It was a valuable event. One exciting thing that she learned was that we could apply for downtown transportation funds for the pedestrian bridge project. We already have a \$200K grant for this, but we can apply again in the next year's round. This would help to close the funding gap.

New Business: Casey reported that the auditors were here this week working on both the regular FY24 audit and the single audit.

Old Business: *None*

7:59 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