

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2024
HARDWICK MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3rd FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

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

Others Present

David Upson, Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Business Manager
Mike Henry, Police Chief
Tom Fadden, Road Foreman
Mike Southworth
Scott Johnstone, HED

Others Present

Daphne Kalmar
Diane Grenkow
Abrah Griggs
Andrea Brightenbach
Todd Lindenstruth

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 item for the Select Board to consider approving a current expense line of credit for Hardwick Electric Department in the amount of \$300,000 issued by Union Bank. Make this #1 and move the other items down.

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

6:02 P.M. – Communication from the audience – Mike Southworth wants to use the Select meetings and/or minutes as a means to communicate a legislative report to the residents in the towns he represents. He would submit a report monthly once the legislative season starts up. We can put them in our meeting attachments. He wants to keep residents informed. He will communicate with the Town Manager to figure out the logistics.

6:04 P.M. – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Public Hearing of November 7, 2024, the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of November 7, 2024, and the minutes of the Special Select Board meeting of November 18, 2024

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Public Hearing of November 7, 2024, the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of November 7, 2024, and the minutes of the Special Select Board meeting of November 18, 2024, as written. Ceilidh abstained.

6:05 P.M. – 6:11 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David gave an update on several items including the Act 250 permit for the gravel pit, the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the School Street slope stabilization project, the sale of the Carey Rd. property, a new Municipal Energy Resiliency Program (MERP) grant, work being done on the lift stations, and the rebidding of the pedestrian bridge. See attachments for the details.

Ceilidh asked about a property on Brush Street where a garage is close to the edge of the river. David explained that buyout paperwork has been done and a structural engineer has looked at the property. They are looking at doing a bank stabilization after the other house is removed. There is ongoing communication.

6:11 P.M. – 6:15 P.M. Road Foreman Report – Given by Tom Fadden

Tom reported that they have finished doing spot grading in various spots. They also did some ditch work on Bridgman Hill as well as a section of West Hill.

Tom said that the downtown area is picked up in preparation for winter. The Christmas lights are ready to be turned on anytime. They had to replace one of the outlets on the poles when they were hanging lights.

Tom said that they moved one of the streetlights that is further away from Main St. over to where the one that was missing near Positive Pie. The light has been ordered but has an 8-10 week lead time.

Tom shared that they got Truck #3 back yesterday from the repair shop and prepared it for winter. Truck #4 should be back soon and then they will prep that one as well.

They have also dealt with a couple of minor sewer issues. Tom also mentioned that paving was completed on Belfry Rd., Center Rd., and the underpass on Stannard Mountain Rd.

6:15 P.M. – 6:17 P.M. Hardwick Police Department (HPD) Report – Given by Mike Henry

Mike shared that the officers have carried automatic defibrillators in the cruisers for a long time as first responders. Officer Gagnon had to use it today and he was able to bring someone in cardiac arrest back.

Robin French graduates from the police academy next Wednesday. She will then start her field training.

Mike wanted to bring it to everyone's attention that with artificial intelligence voices can be altered to sound like anyone, including your loved ones. For example, the calls where a grandchild claims that they need help can seem very real because the scammers are very convincing with the artificial voices, they are using that sound like your relative. It is always a good idea to make separate calls to them on their own phone and never give money or personal information over the phone.

6:17 P.M. – 6:30 P.M. Hardwick Electric Department (HED) Report – Given by Scott Johnstone

Sarah Braese of Danville was recently appointed as the new General Manager of HED. She will start on January 6. She is currently the Assistant General Manager at Vermont Public Power Supply Authority. Scott will help with the transition and mentoring her.

Scott reported that after a long time, they finally have a full line crew, so they have been able to release the contract crew. Groton Electric helped for 8 months as well as three other local companies (Stowe, Orleans, and Morrisville). They helped with on call and other projects. It was helpful to have the region come together to get them through a rough patch. They appreciate the help these other companies provided.

Scott said that they have been working on deferred maintenance projects, including fixing roof leaks at the shop on 15 South and the main office. They are also in the process of making the office building handicapped accessible with a ramp.

Scott mentioned that HED might need to acquire a new line truck in the next year or two. The current trucks are old and not in great condition. A new one is costly, so they will need to borrow money.

Scott reported that realistically it will be 18-24 months before Wolcott Dam is back to full capacity. They continue to talk with FEMA about mitigation efforts. He suspects it is \$2-3M project.

Scott shared that he thinks that HED has really turned a page in helping the communities they serve. They have been focusing on customer service. Ceilidh said they have been hearing good things about Scott's interim role and appreciate the work that Scott has done to move HED forward.

6:25 P.M. – 6:30 P.M. Item #1 — Select Board to consider approving a current expense line of credit for Hardwick Electric Department in the amount of \$300,000 issued by Union Bank – *Action needed*

Scott explained why they need this line of credit to supplement cash flow, especially with all of the money they have been paying the contracted crew for several months.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the note and adopt the resolution for the current expense line of credit for Hardwick Electric Department in the amount of \$300,000 issued by Union Bank.

6:30 P.M. – 6:32 P.M. Item #2 — Select Board to consider appointing Gillian D' Acierno to the Hardwick Development Review Board (DRB) - *Action needed*

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted unanimously to appoint Gillian D' Acierno to the Hardwick Development Review Board (DRB) for a 3-yr term expiring 6/30/2027.

6:32 P.M. – 6:34 P.M. Item #3 — Select Board to appoint a Deputy Health Officer for the Town - *Action needed*

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted unanimously to appoint David Upton as the Deputy Health Officer.

6:34 P.M. – 8:25 P.M. Item #4 — Business Manager to present the FY26 DRAFT budgets for Line Items, Office & Payroll, and the Revenue and Budget Summary – Trails and Library to present their DRAFT budget

The detailed drafts can be found in the meeting attachments. There was not a person present from the trails committee besides Eric Remick. Casey explained that the Trails department proposed budget is basically flat year over year with a decrease of \$28.

Shari asked about the trailhead expenses going into Recreation or Trails budgets. We have trash and recycling bins that need to be emptied. Shari thinks that the expenses associated with the trailheads should be built into our budget. There was discussion about which budget [Trails or Recreation or Highway] these expenses should go in.

Danny brought up that we should have a public works department that oversees Parks & Recreation, Highway, and Water & Sewer. Ceilidh asked about getting a quote for the trash/recycling receptacles at two trailheads and downtown. The Town Manager's office will get a quote for trash pickup.

Daphne Kalmar, Trustee Chair for the Library, went over the library's proposed budget. With the expansion, they expect to increase the services offered. Their proposed budget includes some increased hours for both of the part-time positions. Andrea and Daphne both echoed that it is a safety issue with only one person in the building – they need building coverage. Children and youth area need supervision. There will be more bathrooms and overall space, and they expect to have some increased cleaning expenses as well. The proposed increase is \$27,598 (17%).

Danny brought up that over the years as the expansion was discussed it was communicated to the Board that there would not be a need for additional staff or costs associated with the expansion. He feels like this proposed budget contradicts that message.

Ceilidh mentioned that she did a tour of the building last week. She discussed with Diane the increased hours for existing staff, and she thinks that they are handling the staff increase very conservatively. They want to offer fair compensation for an employee who has taken on a lot of responsibility. They discussed volunteer work and a push for support for their additional space.

Daphne said that the library already has successful programs for kids and that they will grow the teen area as well. This is a valuable resource for the kids in the community. The community room is likely to get a lot of use after it opens. The library provides a wide array of services to the community. David commented that the library is a safe space for kids, and he has witnessed many children utilizing the library.

Eric asked about the Friends contributing to the operating budget. Diane explained that they currently pay for the programming as there is no line item in the budget for programming.

Ceilidh mentioned that we may not see all of the revenue such as grants that the library receives that may help to reduce the Town's contribution to their budget. She also suggested that the Library might go back through their budget to see if they can get the percentage a little lower.

The group went through the line items (increase 11%). The increase is primarily due to capital set aside, the library increase, and auditing expenses. Office & payroll expenses proposed an increase of 28% due to health insurance premiums, and salary and benefits for a new project manager position that we would like to add to the existing staff. We also put on a \$20,000 increase for managed IT services for our network/server. This is something we would like to implement and have received a quote for. We feel it is important. We took the first steps already of getting firewalls in place and upgrading our cyber security measures.

There was discussion about setting aside capital vs. a debt payment for the dump trucks. The goal should be to save money for the trucks to buy them outright and see if we can find a way to lower the costs. There was also discussion about how often we should replace the trucks and that we could keep them longer if they were maintained. He said that we should have a solid maintenance schedule and records of the repairs. Danny asked if we looked into refurbishing the bodies on the trucks to save money. Danny would like to see us look into this.

The revenue shows an increase of about 8%. After tonight, we have gone through all departments except Recreation who will come to the next meeting. As of now, the first draft shows a 12% increase in the overall budget.

There was discussion about the new staff position wanted to manage projects. We have talked at other meetings about a "project manager" and a "public works director." We have a vision about what we think this person will do and want to create a dollar place holder for a new position. Ceilidh said that as we prepare to present the budget to voters, we should have a job description and firm the new position up so we can help the voters to understand the role and why we need it.

Ceilidh asked about having something in the town report to show the overall grant revenue that the town receives across all departments, as she does not think that people really understand how much grant money we have obtained.

Casey would like to see the next meeting be a "working meeting" where we actually make changes here and there and see how it affects the overall total. We have now had a run through of all departments except Recreation, so we should be able to start working with the numbers we have to make priority decisions.

Shari had made some suggestions to Casey and David after the last meeting, and she wanted to know where those stood with the budget. Casey indicated that while the suggestions were noted, the changes had not been put in yet. One suggestion was removing the "Downtown Beauty" line item from the Highway budget. The proposed \$3,500 could be reallocated and split (based on actual cost of materials) to Conservation Commission and/or Tree Warden to mulch the trees, and to the cost associated with contracting trash & recycling pickups downtown. The HDP could work with Claudia and Jane/Sally to find resources for annual plantings downtown.

She also suggested removing Bike Path (all phases) under Public Works in Town Capital Improvements Three-Year Plan- whatever that \$7,331 deficit is from should be written off somehow- maybe it could be cancelled through the accrued interest balance. Another idea was to allocate funds from Recreation capital fund balance to pay for kiosk assembly at the two Trailheads. Any remainder needed could maybe come from accrued interest.

The last thought was to change the Recruitment - Police in General Government to LVRT Trail Heads and reallocate the \$6,061 to cover costs related to HPD bikes for trail patrols and maintaining "amenities".

Select Board Reports /New Business: *none*

Old Business:

Casey requested that the Board members sign the grants policy that was approved at the last meeting. They approved it subject to one change. She made the change and brought it this evening for signatures.

8:35 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