

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 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
Mike Henry, Police Chief
Tracy Martin, Community Development Coordinator

Others Present

Kole
Jan Mueller

Regular Meeting

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

6:01 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda - none

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

6:01 P.M. – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of October 17, 2024

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of October 17, 2024, as written.

6:02 P.M. – 6:10 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David gave an update on the property sale of Carey Rd. He has sent a draft deed to the buyer. The buyer is working on asbestos testing and wants to hold off on closing until that is done. They already have their town zoning permit for what they want to do with the property.

David explained that after the GW Tatro contract was approved, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) requested alternate access to the Gilcris property since they cannot use the driveway due to underground utilities. This will create the need for a temporary road and access on the back side of the property. In light of this new information, an addendum to the contract was necessary. It increased the total cost by \$25,000. However, that still keeps the bid lower than the second lowest bidder.

David had a call with SE Group about the pedestrian bridge, and he will go into more detail later in the meeting when we get to that on the agenda.

David mentioned that they are getting three quotes for the radio repeater on West Hill so they can apply for the Homeland Security grant to replace it. There continues to be issues with the existing one not having adequate

coverage for the Police Department. Mike explained that someone came in to do mapping to show coverage area that a repeater could cover. The current repeater is borrowed from Burlington Communications, which was second hand and pulled from another department.

David shared that an engineering report on the Fire Station's foundation was recently done by VLCT. It will be submitted to FEMA for mitigation discussion.

David let everyone know that on November 16 the Hardwick Neighbor to Neighbor is partnering with the Vermont Council on Rural Development and local consultants to lead the development of a sustainable emergency management plan.

David mentioned that there was a kickoff meeting with Vermont Integrated Architecture and their engineering consultants who are doing the Creamery Rd. conceptual design work. We can expect to have some conceptual drawings in March or April maybe to share at Town meeting about what a complex could look like that will house highway, fire & rescue.

David shared that the Town has received a grant agreement for \$700,000 for hazard mitigation to elevate residential properties for flood protection measures. We have not signed the grant agreement yet but do anticipate that we will. This grant will require the Town to do the work of putting out bids and finding contractors to do the work.

6:10 P.M. – 6:15 P.M. Road Foreman Report – Given by Tom Fadden

Tom indicated that they have pretty much finished putting gravel on the roads for the year. They were up on Dusty Swamp Rd. doing ditching work this week. They plan to do a section of ditching on Bridgman Hill next week.

Tom also mentioned that they are doing some spot grading here and there for potholes, as well as getting trucks ready with new tires, plows, etc. There are currently two trucks in the shop getting minor repairs.

Tom shared that they got a small load of hot mix (asphalt) for patching Center Rd. and in some areas in the village. They also repaired a catch basin on West Church St.

Tom shared that a couple of crew members assisted Buffalo Mountain Market with a water leak in their new parking lot as they were having trouble finding anyone to help. The Town has sent a bill for the labor costs associated with the employees who helped them.

Tom also shared that dealerships have been told that the State of VT is pushing to pass a law that they have to sell one electric dump truck to every ten diesel trucks. It is not in effect yet, but it has been introduced and the dealerships are concerned that it could pass. He heard that New York purchased an electric dump truck, and they were able to plow for 45 minutes before it needed a charge.

6:15 P.M. – 6:34 P.M. Hardwick Police Department Report – Given by Mike Henry

Mike reported that The solar sign on Mill Street is finally back in service. There was a lot of back and forth with the company on this. Amanda worked diligently with the company to get the sign repaired. We would not purchase from that company again given all of the issues we have had. The Police Department got new batteries for the portable signs, which are currently on Main St. in East Hardwick and Center Rd. The other two solar signs (near Tops Market and coming in from So. Main St.) are working well. Mike said they plan to get another portable sign with grant funds that would be placed on the snowmobile trail.

The Police Department continues to work with the company on issues with their new body cameras. The company has been helpful working through the issues. It continues to be a work in progress.

Mike shared some statistics about call volume. They tend to be busier in the afternoons from 2-8 p.m. and first thing in the morning. Friday is the busiest day for calls. He ran a report on total incidents since January 1 and reported that there is a steady increase in the number of calls. He did note that crash calls have decreased – one-third of last year. Motor vehicle complaints are up significantly. (141 YTD) Fingerprinting services have increased significantly as well. (190 YTD) The number of incidents now is about what it was when the PD covered Greensboro and Hardwick at the same time.

Eric asked about the radio system and if it is different from fire and rescue. Mike said that the Police Department uses a VHF or UHF system. Danny said that it has been a long time problem with that repeater not working, and we need to figure out what needs to be done to replace it so our officers can have radio coverage. A new system will be \$120,000.

Tracy said that we had made an application with Homeland Security last year for a new repeater, but we did not have enough information (specifically multiple quotes); therefore, did not get the grant. We expect to be better prepared for the next round. The next round of applications is due in December, but we will not know until March if we will receive an award. Mike said that even if we get the grant and commit to a communications company, it would be an additional 8-12 months before they could even complete the project.

David talked about a temporary solution which would be to hook one of the repeaters up to fiber and purchase the equipment that is needed to do that. However, this would only be for one unit.

6:34 P.M. – 6:37 P.M. Item #1 — Business Manager to present the FY25 Qtr. 1 budget update

The Business Manager gave an update of the current fiscal year budget through the first quarter (9/30). Both revenues and expenses are on track at close to 25%. Flood expenses have been factored in separately. See attachments for the detailed report.

6:37 P.M. – 6:43 P.M. Item #2 — Select Board to consider approving the annual municipal attestation for the Downtown Vibrancy Fund for Hardwick Downtown Partnership (HDP) - *Action needed*

This document is done annually for the municipality to acknowledge the funds that the HDP receives for operations. David mentioned that the downtown area looks great, all lit up, and people patronizing the downtown businesses. Danny mentioned that the streetlights are kind of dark. Shari mentioned that there is one missing streetlight that lots of people have been asking about. It is on order. The original one that was there was discontinued, so we ordered the one that is the closest match we could find.

Tracy expressed concern about a new LED light not matching the others in that area. She suggested that we put the new light in a location that is more isolated by itself, so it does not look so odd lined up with the others along Main Street.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Danny Hale, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the annual municipal attestation for the Downtown Vibrancy Fund for Hardwick Downtown Partnership.

6:43 P.M. – 6:50 P.M. Item #3 — Update on the retaining wall repair from the 2023 Flood and the pedestrian bridge construction - *Possible Action needed*

David sent pictures of the bridge abutment on the Daniels Rd. side of the Pedestrian Bridge to Engineering Ventures, and they also made a site visit earlier this week. They pulled the abutment back 3.5 feet to inspect it. We should receive a report soon about the overall condition after the flood and how it will affect bridge construction (if at all).

David thinks we should put the bridge and retaining wall back out to bid now. He thinks that bids were so high last time because of the timeline that we needed to get it done. If we do it now, then we have a better chance of getting a more competitive bid for work to be performed in the summer of 2025. Furthermore, we were able to get our grant funding extended to the end of 2025.

SE Group came up with a Phase III construction administration for about \$100,000. David would like to negotiate with them to help with the bid process, possibly at an hourly rate.

Shari found out that we can apply for another round of the Downtown Transportation Funds (DTF) for the current funding gap. Tracy plans to complete the application for this year's funding round. We already have a \$200,000 grant from the DTF. We also submitted the Pedestrian Bridge to be on the priority project list for the Northern Border Regional Commission's regional projects.

6:50 P.M. – 7:04 P.M. Item #4 — Select Board to consider authorizing the purchase/order of a 2025 Western Star Chassis from R. R. Charlebois up to \$182,000 including an extended warranty (has to be ordered now for Fall of 2025) - *Action needed*

Since the agenda was made, Tom obtained a few other quotes for different brands of trucks.

1. Volvo \$154,000
2. Mack \$157,000 (an extended warranty is about \$11K on the Volvo and Mack)
3. Freightliner \$172,000 + warranty
4. Western Star \$182,000 including warranty – this is what we anticipated buying before lower prices

The chassis would be available to the Town in the Fall of 2025 with the body being installed in the first couple of months of 2026. The Business Manager suggested that the Town finance the chassis and pay for the body with capital. The draft capital budget that will be discussed later in the meeting reflects this scenario. The first payment on the chassis would be in the FY27 budget. This is highway equipment to maintain the roads, so the loan for a truck can be done without going to the voters. Eric and Danny do not like the idea of not paying outright for them. They want to see us save through capital set aside. Casey commented that the trucks now cost \$275,000. In order to pay outright for them, the Town would need to set aside \$300,000+ per year to keep up with the equipment replacement schedule.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Danny Hale, the Select Board voted to authorize the purchase/order of a dump truck up to \$170,000 including an extended warranty.

7:04 P.M. – 7:08 P.M. Item #5 — Select Board to discuss the "Policy on Separation of Membership for the Hardwick Planning Commission (HPC) and Development Review Boards (DRB) – *Possible Action needed*

This is being brought to the Select Board because we have individuals who have expressed interest in serving on both boards. The DRB needs members. We currently have one DRB member who serves as an alternate on the HPC. The Zoning Administrator would like to have the person interested in being on both boards be able to do that. The current policy restricts that.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to rescind the policy on Separation of Membership for the Hardwick Planning Commission (HPC) and Development Review Boards (DRB).

7:08 P.M. – 7:14 P.M. Item #6 — Select Board to consider approving a new Grants Policy - *Action needed*

The Business Manager explained that while grants can be greatly beneficial to the Town, it is important for us to know what we are getting into before we sign grant agreements. There have been times in the last couple of years that the Town has been monitoring more than forty grants at once and upwards of sixty at one point ranging from \$150 to \$3M. During this same time, there were checks or grant agreements just showing up and then we had to figure out who applied for them and track down information such as the application to start files. The purpose of this policy is for anyone applying for a grant to review the requirements after the grant is awarded and see if it makes sense administratively. Grants over \$5,000 will need to be approved by the Select Board prior to application. See the attachments for the proposed new policy and application.

Danny made a motion, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, to approve the new Grants Policy.

There was discussion about the threshold that an application needs to go to the Select Board. Eric thinks that \$5,000 is too low. After some discussion, the group generally agreed that \$25,000 seemed like a more appropriate level.

Tim amended the motion to approve the policy with a threshold of \$25,000 instead of \$5,000 and seconded by Danny Hale. The amendment passes unanimously. Motion carries unanimously with the amendment.

Casey will amend the document from \$5,000 to \$25,000 (no other changes) and just bring the policy to be signed by the Board to the next regular meeting.

7:18 P.M. – 8:20 P.M. Item #7 — Business Manager to present the FY26 DRAFT budgets for Highway, Police, Fire Department, Buildings, and Capital

The Business Manager went through each of these draft budgets, which were put up on the screen for viewing. Topics of discussion included:

- ~Trailhead expense being added to the budget somewhere
- ~Hiring an additional Officer for Police Department
- ~Long term sustainability of the Police Department
- ~Need to set aside funds for the radio repeater
 - ~Level funding of building capital Improvements to exhibit Town investment to positively impact leveraging grant applications
- ~Borrowing for chassis and buying the body for dump trucks
- ~Saving more in capital equipment vs. having a debt payment
- ~Refurbishing dump bodies and putting them on new chassis to save money
- ~Center Rd. paving in FY26

It would be great if residents came to the meetings during budget season and provided their input on the various topics. Jan Mueller agrees with the Board that we need more people involved. He is willing to help with civic engagement.

See attachments for the detailed drafts. This is the first round of budget discussions, so we can definitely expect to have changes between now and January.

Select Board Reports: none

New Business: none

Old Business: Eric asked for an update on NEK Broadband. David said that they are running about forty miles of fiber in Hardwick. Some people have already signed up and they will be contacted when service is ready. They have to run the fiber and then it gets "lit." They are hoping that this will start in the first few months of the new year.

8:23 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