

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 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
Kristen Leahy, Zoning & Floodplain Administrator
Irene Nagle – *Zoom*

Others Present

Renaud Demers, HED

Regular Meeting

6:01 P.M. Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, called the meeting to order.

6:01 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda - Add an additional item to discuss providing in kind labor from the Town for a grant that the East Hardwick Neighborhood Organization (EHNO) is applying for the East Hardwick trailhead and make that Item # 6 and move #6 to 7

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the adjusted agenda as stated.

6:03 P.M. – Communication from the audience – none

6:03 P.M. – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of December 5, 2024

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of December 5, 2024, as written.

6:04 P.M. – 6:15 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David shared that two of the three bank armoring projects through the Environmental Watershed Protection program are complete. The two are located on Route 15 (Jerome and Gilcris) and GW Tatro completed them and has already demobilized.

David reported that he has been working with Aldrich & Elliott on the intended use plan for the wastewater plant so that it can be on the priority list for funding in 2026 through the State clean water division.

David mentioned that we are finalizing the plat for the historic reservoir on Bridgman Hill. We have been working with the Shepard family to formally lay out the parcel where the reservoir is as there was never a formal parcel created. Sunwise surveying did the work, and this will be recorded in the land records soon. This will allow the Town to take ownership of the reservoir now that it is laid out.

David let us know that the Town will be rolling out *TextMyGov* in the next few months. There will be a widget on the website so that people can communicate with us via text for their questions. For example, someone could text "how do I vote?" and they would get a response directing them to the place on the website with this information. This will also allow us to do mass text alerts. We will use phone numbers for the people we already have using the current alert system. People will get an initial text to opt in to the communications.

David shared that a new pump has been installed at the Route 14S lift station. HED helped to put it into position with their bucket truck. This pump will be able to go along with any future upgrades to the lift station.

6:08 P.M. – 6:12 P.M. Hardwick Police Department (HPD) Report – Given by Mike Henry

Mike shared that HPD helped with the Hardwick Elementary School parade last week and it went very well. The route was modified from previous years to be safer.

Mike wanted to extend his appreciation to Morristown Police and Lamoille County Sheriff's Department for the back-up they have provided to HPD in recent weeks. Danny asked how long we can continue this before we encroach on their staffing issues. We are proposing an additional full-time officer in the FY26 budget.

Mike reported that Robin French graduated the Policy Academy. Her field training is about to be complete, and she will be ready to be on her own very soon.

6:12 P.M. – 6:18 P.M. Hardwick Electric Department (HED) Report – Given by Renaud Demers

Renaud reminded everyone that HED's new General Manager, Sarah Braese, starts on January 6. They continue to have a full line crew with three linemen and three apprentices, and they are keeping busy.

Renaud mentioned that HED is seeking funding from Union Bank for improvements to their office and garage buildings. This is on the agenda for Select Board approval as Item #1.

They currently have about twenty-five customer jobs pending and more coming in regularly. They also have 3 contract crews doing work, primarily tree trimming.

Renaud shared that HED has made the decision to enforce 13 V.S.A. § 301 in regard to people posting on utility poles. He said that it creates a liability issue for the company and a safety issue for their staff as well.

The statute is as follows:

§ 301. Posting utility poles

A person who paints or posts a sign, advertisement, or notice on a telegraph, telephone, or electric light pole shall be fined \$5.00 for each offense.

Eric asked about how their 2025 budget is coming along and Renaud said that it is still in progress and not completed yet.

6:18 P.M. – 6:24 P.M. Item #1 – Select Board to consider authorizing Hardwick Electric Department to borrow money from Union Bank to fund improvements to their office and garage buildings in the amount of \$250,000 - *Action needed*

Danny asked if they have plans to budget funds for future improvements. Eric mentioned that he has been going to their recent Commissioner meetings. Their rate increase last year was denied because the PUC said they were carrying too much cash and did not have enough debt. Danny said that they should still have a plan going forward for these types of maintenance expenditures.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to authorize Hardwick Electric Department to borrow money from Union Bank to fund improvements to their office and garage buildings in the amount of \$250,000.

6:24 P.M. – 6:25 P.M. Item #2 – Select Board to consider approving a banner application for the Craftsbury Chamber Players - *Action needed*

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve the banner application for the Craftsbury Chamber Players.

6:25 P.M. – 6:27 P.M. Item #3 — Select Board to consider showing support for Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) to provide funding for Carrington Consulting to prepare the Downtown Transportation grant application for pedestrian bridge funding - *Action needed*

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve a letter of support for Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) to provide funding for Carrington Consulting to prepare the Downtown Transportation grant application for pedestrian bridge funding.

6:27 P.M. – 6:48 P.M. Item #4— Zoning & Floodplain Administrator to discuss the priority list for the Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Fund (CRDMF) grant - *Possible Action needed*

The CRDMF grant provides funding to elevate properties for flood protective measures. We have \$700,000 but there are six properties on the list for potential elevation and there are not enough funds to do all of them. We might have enough funds to do four and possibly five of the properties. The Town needs to decide which properties to prioritize and then bring the list back to the State grant funder for approval. We are required to provide a priority list for the State.

Option 1 is based on grand list and Option 2 is based on the level of damage. See options in the meeting attachments. If a property is over 50% damaged, it is considered substantially damaged. None of the six properties have this classification. The only option is to elevate the properties - that is all the funds can be used for, not for relocating or purchasing a new mobile home. We would need to do engineering on all six of them to determine feasibility of the elevations. That will give us a better idea of how many properties we will be able to fund.

Ceilidh asked about next steps. Kristen explained that after we provide the priority list, we would need to put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for base flood elevations from an engineer for preliminary assessments. This would give us an idea of how many projects we would have enough to fund with the grant money. Kristen mentioned that one other option is to give each property an equal amount of money. However, we have to hand over the money and the project has to be finished. If it is not, the Town would be on the hook for finishing the project financially. No one liked this option.

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Danny Hale, the Select Board voted to do Option 1 as presented for the priority list for the CRDMF grant. See attachments for Option 1.

6:48 P.M. – 6:49 P.M. Item #5 Select Board to sign a letter of support saying that the Town Manager can be the Municipal Project Manager for the existing Transportation Alternatives grant for Mill Street – *Action needed*

We have a grant for a Mill Street scoping study. The grant funder requires a letter from the Select Board indicating that the Town Manager is capable of managing the project. David brought the letter with him.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to sign a letter of support saying that the Town Manager can be the Municipal Project Manager for the existing Transportation Alternatives grant for Mill Street.

6:49 P.M. – 7:05 P.M. Item #6 Select Board to discuss providing in kind labor from the Town for a grant that the East Hardwick Neighborhood Organization (EHNO) is applying for the East Hardwick trailhead – *Action needed*

Irene Nagle from the EHNO explained that they will be applying for grant funds from the State of Vermont's Recreational Trails Program to undertake improvements to the East Hardwick trailhead of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT). They submitted a pre-application and were subsequently invited to submit a formal application. They are asking that the Town sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for some of the match in the form of in-kind work. The in-kind work would be for clearing and grubbing the project site and being in the role of the construction management. She sent a draft of the MOU to David yesterday.

Shari asked about the wetland issue at that location. EHNO will pay a wetland scientist to map the wetland part out and it will be counted as part of the match. Tim asked when they planned to start. The application is due Jan 31, and they will hear in early Spring. They do not expect to have a grant agreement until at least July. However, once they know they have been awarded the grant, they can start work that they are paying for themselves, and it can be counted towards the match.

Ceilidh asked that the Board have some time to review the draft MOU before addressing this. There is time to wait to look at this at the January 2 meeting. Irene said that the match is 20% total between the EHNO expenses and in-kind work they would like the Town to do.

Ceilidh asked if Tom could look at the parcel to review it and see what resources it would take. David will put the draft agreement in the shared folder after he reviews it.

7:05 P.M. – 8:00 P.M. Item #7 Select Board to go through the FY26 draft budget and make changes as desired

Casey let the group know that the budget needs to be approved at the January 2 meeting so that the warning can be approved at the January 16 meeting. The Town report is due to the printer on January 21 and January 20 is a holiday, so the budget needs to be approved January 2 and the warning January 16.

Topics of discussion included:

- ~Changing the "downtown beauty" in highway to "downtown maintenance" such as flowers, mulch, and banners
- ~Capital equipment replacement schedule – the consensus is to save to purchase the trucks and not borrow
- ~Recreation coordinator salary being reallocated to programming – this was not done only discussed
- ~The draft job description for a Public Works Director (see attachments)
- ~Capital general fund categories – renaming Police Recruitment to Police Equipment
- ~Zeroing out the bike path in capital general and removing it
- ~Creating a sidewalk schedule would be challenging since the cost is so much – last estimate for 250' was over \$40,000

Select Board Reports: Eric mentioned that he read an email from VLCT about a new bill that passed last legislative session that Towns adopt a policy around ethics and assign a specific person to review ethics complaints. Casey mentioned that we have a code of ethics policy, and we can look at the existing policy for compliance and make edits if needed and decide who the designated person to accept reports will be.

Danny attended a meeting today about the Jackson Dam study. It focused on what the group wanted to get out of the study. It was an opportunity to learn about history and what a feasibility study will look like.

Eric asked about the flood modeling grant for the Lamoille County Planning Commission. Kristen said that they have a list of deliverables that is to be done by end of December 2025, so they will start in the Spring.

New Business: None

Old Business: David reported that Kristen created a helpful document outlining the status of all of the current buyouts and that we are going to pause any additional buyouts at this time and consider them on a case by case basis.

Shari mentioned that there are three open Select Board seats, and anyone interested should pick up a petition from the Town Clerk's office. Danny mentioned that Tonia put all of the open seats on Front Porch Forum a couple of times.

8:17 P.M. *Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to enter Executive Session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313 to choose a dedication for the Town report (just so it is a surprise!) to include Town Manager and Business Manager.*

8:24 P.M. Exited Executive Session. No *formal vote* -the Board said who the Town report will be dedicated to and what they want for a photo cover.

8:24 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