

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2025
HARDWICK MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3rd FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

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

Others Present

David Upson, Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Business Manager
Mike Henry, Police Chief
Kristen Leahy, Zoning & Floodplain Admin.
Tom Fadden, Road Foreman
Kathy Hemmens
Peter Fairweather, Fairweather Consulting (*Zoom*)
Andrea Day, Dufresne Group (*Zoom*)

Others Present

Raymonda Parchment
Tracy Martin, CDC
Dave Gross
Myles Kamisher-Koch, HED
Diane Grenkow, Library Dir.

Regular Meeting

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

6:00 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – none

6:01 P.M. – Communication from the audience

6:01 P.M. – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of April 3, 2025

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway Kane, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular Select Board meeting of April 3, as written.

6:01 P.M. – 6:06 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David reported that due to the oil spill at 9 Main St., the environmental review for the VT Huts purchase of the adjacent lot is delayed until they do the assessment on that oil spill. They have asked for an extension to 12/31/25 for the purchase option agreement they have with the Town. David signed the agreement to extend the option.

We do not have a notice to proceed from USDA on the pedestrian bridge yet. USDA has all of the documents, and they are questioning if the total amount of the project (including the retaining wall) needs to be provided in the Monthly Progress Budget Report (MPBR). We received a notice today from someone at USDA saying that the grant expires in May and cannot be extended beyond 3 years from the original award date. However, Casey has an email from our USDA representative back in November stating it was approved to be extended to 8/8/25. We will be following up on this right away.

David reminded everyone that the annual hydrant flushing will take place next week, April 21-25. Eric asked about the notification system and if someone is signed up for email alerts, will they get the text too? They should get the texts if their phone number is provided too.

6:06 P.M. – 6:11 P.M. Road Foreman Report – Given by Tom Fadden

Tom reported that they are caught up on grading. They completed the Hardwick Farms Rd. area and the week before did the Mountain View area. Hopkins Hill and Mackville are also done. They are working on West Hill and will be doing Bridgman next week. They have been focusing on the busier mainstream roads more than the small side roads.

They have had three guys working at the sewer plant recently helping with some cleanup work. They also dealt with a water issue on N. Main St and Spring St., as well as some water meter trouble shooting.

Tom mentioned that the cell phone dialer for the reservoir was not working due to signal issues. The system has become obsolete, but we were able to have EOS Research do a temporary fix to get us by. This will be something we will likely have to replace in the near future.

As far as equipment is concerned, Dump Truck #3 has a small oil leak they have been monitoring, and it is now at RR Charlebois being looked at. They needed to get through the plowing before they could get it down there. Next week, Dump Truck #4 is going to Viking for a tailgate issue. All of the department is attending the annual MSHA class on 29th in order to be able to work in our gravel pit. The crew's summer hours will resume on April 28, where they work four 10 hours days, Monday – Thursday.

6:11 P.M. – 6:16 P.M. Hardwick Police Department (HPD) Report – Given by Mike Henry

Mike reported that Joe Donna completed another week of field training as a part-time officer.

Mike shared some data about incidents and arrests compared year over year. Crime has decreased, but the number of incidents has increased year over year. They are still busy with fingerprinting. See attachments for the reports.

6:16 P.M. – 6:18 P.M. Hardwick Electric Department (HED) Report- Given by Myles Kamisher-Koch

Myles reported that Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) is helping HED file their long term integrated resource plan. It should be filed by the end of the month. This is essentially a long term strategic plan.

Myles shared that HED has submitted a rate increase request of 13.24%. If the Public Utility Commission (PUC) approves, the rates would be effective June 1. The need for the increase stems from increased cost of purchased power, as well as increased labor costs. Ceilidh asked if the Wolcott hydro is not producing power, does that affect the cost of purchased power. Myles said that it does increase their costs as they have to purchase more without it.

Myles also mentioned that they have out a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a feasibility study on the flood repairs at Wolcott Hydro.

6:18 P.M. – 6:21 P.M. Item #1 – Select Board to review, approve, and sign the MCRF loan documents for Hardwick Electric
– *Action needed*

David explained that we received the documents from HED. This is for flood repairs for the 2024 flood, similar to the one that we did for the 2023 flood. The loan amount is \$368,000. The Town's attorney has reviewed the documents and determined that it does not need voter approval based on the fact that it is to fund repairs that will be reimbursed by FEMA later. Our attorney indicated that the unqualified opinion letter from HED's attorney was missing from the documents. The Select Board could not sign and wait for the letter, or they could sign and then give HED's attorney week to produce the letter and not give the documents back to HED until we have the letter. Documents will need to be signed prior to the next regular meeting, so the Board decided to table this and have a Special meeting when we have the last piece of information.

6:21 P.M. – 6:25 P.M. Item #2 – Library Director, Diane Grenkow, to give a quarterly update on the library

Diane provided a report to the Select Board of visitors and circulation for January – March 2025, as well as what a random day looked like in the life of the Library Director. See meeting attachments for the details.

Diane sent pictures of the floors being refinished in the old part of the library. It looks really good! The Library is operating from the Memorial building on the third floor for the next 2 weeks while that work is taking place. Diane wanted to follow up on what was said a couple of meetings ago about a Select Board member attending the Trustee meetings regularly. She thinks that it would be a great way to keep open communication. The agendas are posted around town and on the library's website, and the meetings are open to the public. The meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 5:15, typically at the Library. Ceilidh asked about the official date of opening. Diane hopes for a soft opening by Springfest with a grand opening sometime in July.

6:25 P.M. – 7:00 P.M. Item #3 – Select Board to hear the final Better Connections report given by Peter Fairweather

Peter Fairweather with Fairweather Consulting presented the draft of his final report on the Better Connections grant project for East Hardwick. He talked about the process involved and then went into details of the findings and recommendations for future action items. See the meeting attachments on the website for the complete presentation.

Ceilidh mentioned that she thought that the point of this project was to open up funding opportunities to do the actual work that is recommended. Peter and Tracy both indicated that this is correct. They partnered with the State throughout the project. Tracy mentioned that VTrans and ACCD expect that we will come back to them to fund some of the improvements. We were able to get this funding because East Hardwick is a designated village.

The report provided next steps for the Select Board, Town Manager, and the steering committee to look at the immediate needs. Tracy mentioned that the stormwater issues are significant. Andrea Day with Dufresne Group has gotten a good start on design, but did indicate that there are more steps to complete the design.

Dave Gross brought up that the Fire district has one of their main lines that runs right through the Main St. section that needs work. Ultimately, the next grant is probably additional design work and then followed by construction. Tracy suggested a task force might be useful to determine how we are going to proceed with the projects.

Peter mentioned that the State is reviewing the report now so they will be familiar with it already when we submit for funding to complete some of the projects.

Ceilidh said that there are some immediate fixes needed in East Hardwick, and she does not think it can wait for another season. The Town needs to commit to at least addressing some of the safety issues with culverts, sidewalks, etc. She would like to see the Board talk about this at a future meeting and make a commitment to at least addressing the safety issues. Eric said that David would look into these areas and get back to them.

7:00 P.M. – 7:13 P.M. Item #4 – Zoning/Floodplain Administrator, Kristen Leahy, to give flood resiliency update

Kristen asked the Select Board about how often they want regular flood updates and planning/zoning updates. She would like to come once a month. Eric thought quarterly would be adequate, but Kristen feels monthly is more appropriate. Kristen shared a 2-page document outlining the grants and activity that the town is engaged in for flood resiliency efforts. She reported that since the 2023 flood, the Town has received \$3.1M in grants for flood resiliency projects including buyouts, mitigation, and future planning. See the meeting attachments for the detailed report.

7:13 P.M. – 7:14 P.M. Item #5 – Select Board to appoint alternate #1, Kole, to the Planning Commission for a 1-year left on a three-year term, expiring June 2026 – *Action needed*

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted unanimously to appoint Kole to the Planning Commission for a 1-year left on a three-year term, expiring June 2026.

7:14 P.M. – 7:15 P.M. Item #6 – Select Board to consider approving a Manufacturers Tier 2 cannabis license for *The Magician's Kitchen* (existing location – taking over for Tillia Processing, LLC) – *Action needed*

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve a Manufacturers Tier 2 cannabis license for The Magician's Kitchen.

7:15 P.M. – 7:29 P.M. Item #7 – Select Board to consider approving the purchase of a new trailer to be used for transporting town equipment – *Action needed*

The Town has a trailer that is used to carry concrete blocks and town equipment, primarily the excavator. We purchased the Town's existing trailer about 15 years ago for \$4,000. We had DMV do a quick look over. They have said in the current condition; it is basically red tagged. The air brakes were not operational, and no emergency lock of the air brakes was installed. Tom looked into the cost to repair it. It needs eight new tires, some other light repairs, but it is mainly the braking system. The estimate was \$10-\$15K in repairs. There was discussion about whether we should repair the existing one or purchase a new one.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to approve the purchase of a new trailer up to \$31,342 using some of the budget adjustment act funds.

7:29 P.M. – 7:30 P.M. Item #8– Select Board to complete the PM-1 for the Heartbeet VCDP grant to authorize the Town Manager to sign the grant agreement – *Action needed*

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Danny Hale, the Select Board voted unanimously to adopt the PM-1 resolution.

7:30 P.M. – 7:33 P.M. Item #9 – Select Board to authorize entering into a contract with VHB for the Mill Street Scoping Study (an approved vendor through "at the ready" consultant program) and authorize the Town Manager to sign a contract – *Action needed*

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted unanimously to enter into a contract with VHB for the Mill Street Scoping Study and authorize the Town Manager to sign a contract.

7:33 P.M. – 7:43 P.M. Item #10 – Business Manager, Casey Rowell, to give FY25 Quarter 3 budget update

Casey presented a revenue and expense update for 03-31-2025 (3 quarters into the fiscal year). We are slightly ahead in revenues, primarily due to FEMA reimbursement from the 2023 flood that we received this fiscal year. Expenses are close to being on track if we factor in the reimbursement we will receive for the 2024 flood expenses.

Casey wanted to discuss the Town's fund balance policy and that we may want to review it and consider editing it. Without having the policy in front of her, she thinks it says the goal is to have at least 15% with a goal of 20%. She was thinking it would be better at 10% minimum and 15% goal. Some of the Select Board recalls our auditors saying 10% was good to aim for. Casey commented that since she started working for the Town 6.5 years ago, the budget has increased about \$1.2M, which means that the amount we strive to have in the fund balance has also increased. Based on the current items that have been committed to be paid from fund balance, we would only have 8% if we did not add any to the fund balance in the

current fiscal year. Danny and Eric do not want to see us lower the minimum any lower than 10% because they feel it is especially important to have this to fall back on and that was proved after the flooding events. Nothing is going to be done tonight, but we may want to consider reviewing the policy in the future. ****Note, after the meeting, Casey looked the policy up and the minimum is 10% with a goal of 20%.****

7:43 P.M. – 7:52 P.M. Item 11 – Select Board to discuss the Public Works Project Coordinator job description & ad

There was no ad provided, as that will be developed after we finalize the job description. Eric and Ceilidh both liked this version better than the last one. Danny wanted this to be a Public Works Director with supervisory responsibilities. Eric wants to see a specific reference to water and sewer projects. We will continue to work on this and try to have a final version at the next meeting.

7:52 P.M. – 8:07 P.M. Item #12 – Select Board to discuss the Water Meter project

David said that we have \$135,000 in water capital for new meters. David said that we should have put out an RFP in the last couple of years, but this had not been at the top of the priority list after the flooding events. There was a shortage of meter pits at one point. We currently have twelve in stock, and we have roughly eighty unmetered accounts. Most of the unmetered accounts are mobile homes, about sixty of them. Tom indicated that town employees have installed some of the meters and pits but the number they can do varies depending on the complexity of the installation. It was suggested to start with the largest group of properties such as the group of mobile homes near Glenside. It was suggested that we start with the twelve that we have in stock and get those done this summer.

Tom mentioned that during the summer months, there are often weeks where 1-2 of the crew are on vacation, so we need to factor that in. Eric asked for a rough plan for installing the meters that we currently have.

Shari had to leave the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

Select Board Reports: Danny mentioned that Jeff Perry talked to him about getting the trail off of his driveway and back where it was previously on the leased area of Alfred Willey's property, which was an early 2000 agreement between Alfred and the Town. David said he would work on this with Alfred to resolve the issue.

VASA is anxious to get the Wright Farm Rd. trail finished, but there are still some areas of wood that need to be cut to finish it.

No New or Old Business

8:15 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