

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 2025
HARDWICK MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3rd FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

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

Others Present

David Upson, Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Business Manager
Alberta Miller, Asst. Clerk/Treasurer
Tom Fadden, Road Foreman

Others Present

Julie Holcomb
Jeannine Young
Elaine Bellavance
EJ Blondin, J. Hutchins, Inc.

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 #13 for the Select Board to consider approving a grant proposal for a grant to cover the demolition of 41 Brush Street

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to approve the adjusted agenda as stated.

6:00 P.M. – 6:04 P.M. Communication from the audience – Jeannie Young with the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) was here to follow up on the “never forget” garden in the Memorial Park that they came to talk about last year. Elaine Bellavance shared the plaque that they had made. They just wanted to provide an update on where it stands. The location in the park might have to change because the fountain leaks in the Memorial Park, but they are still working on getting it planted there.

6:04 P.M. – 6:05 P.M. Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of May 15, 2025 – *Action needed*

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of May 15, 2025, as written. Ceilidh abstained.

6:05 P.M. – 6:13 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David shared that he has an engineering proposal from Aldrich & Elliott for Hideaway Acres to rehab the sewer lines. We have done some repairs and would like to make upgrades for possible future expansion. The funds for this work would come from sewer capital.

David reported that fiber is ready at the repeater site. Burlington Communications has started some of the installation for the police repeater, but they do not have all of the equipment yet. They will be able to tie into the fiber through NEK Broadband once the remainder of the equipment arrives.

The closing on 41 Brush Street happened this week. Later in the meeting, we will talk about a grant to demolish it. David shared that we have four more closings schedule for FEMA buyouts, two in June and two in July.

David wanted to make a couple of public announcements:

There is a Children's Parade in East Hardwick this Saturday, June 7 starting at 11:00. Check in at 10:30 a.m.

He would like to thank Jan Mueller for heading up Springfest. The event went really well. He put a ton of time and effort into it and the community should be thankful for all of his efforts.

Danny mentioned that he has received some emails about the new property values and concerns about the % increase. There were some concerns about the length of the informal meetings being too short. People think that because their assessment doubled, their taxes are going to double. This is not true. When the grand list increases, the tax rate decreases. While we have not set the tax rate yet, we do anticipate a pretty significant decrease in the tax rate. Ceilidh mentioned that Eric had provided a good explanation about this at Town meeting.

6:13 P.M. – 6:16 P.M. Road Foreman Report – Given by Tom Fadden

Tom reported that they put gravel on Kate Brook Rd. and Marsh Rd. While they were on Kate Brook Rd., a crew member noticed a crack in the road where the brook was undermining the road. They fixed it while they were there. They have been grading various roads around town. They ran out of the red paint for the crosswalks but most of them were done. Tom has ordered more paint, and the others will be done when it arrives. They replaced a culvert in East Hardwick. A set of guardrails was installed on Hardwick Farms Rd. where people expressed concern about a drop-off. The crew has been patching holes on Center Rd and around the village. They intend to do additional patching downtown and on West Hill. They have also been working on Center Rd. in preparation of the upcoming paving.

Some of the crew members have been helping out at the wastewater plant. They will be starting the Church St. sidewalk next week.

David mentioned that we are working on getting releases signed for the properties for the water meter pits. Danny commented that our sidewalks are very visible, and he thinks that it is great.

6:16 P.M. – 6:20 P.M. Hardwick Police Department (HPD) Report – Given by David Upson

Mike is at a conference. The new intern scrubbed a bunch of files and reviewed electronic files and is purging the system. They are making progress on a vandalism case. Danny mentioned that there are kids riding recklessly on bikes in the village on the sidewalks and there is concern about them hitting someone. He would like to see HPD talk to them.

6:20 P.M. – 6:21 P.M. Item #1 – Select Board to consider approving various liquor licenses - *Action needed*

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve the liquor license renewal for House of Pizza, Inc.

6:21 P.M. – 6:32 P.M. Item #2 – Select Board to discuss concerns regarding Main Street Cemetery

Julie Holcomb was present to express concerns with the Main Street Cemetery. She sent an email with pictures. Her father is buried there, and it bothers her that the cemetery is not being kept in line with the vision statement of the town's cemetery policy. She shared her observations and would like to see resolutions. She does not think the current conditions are welcoming for people who are there to grieve their loved ones.

Eric said that we have taken over the town's cemeteries relatively recently from the cemetery associations and we are focusing on record keeping and we have hired a sexton to assist in the upkeep of the cemeteries. It is not going to happen overnight. Julie said that when people purchase lots, they have an expectation that it will be kept a certain way. The Town understands this and will continue their efforts to make repairs as we can.

David explained that he meets with the sexton annually to go over maintenance. He also has regular contact with him. He went over the maintenance list of items that were completed last year. Each year, we intend to make repairs as money allows.

She would like to see us have clear communication about who handles the various aspects of the cemetery. The feedback from the Board was that she should contact the Town Manager with her concerns. David was out of the office when she called last week.

6:32 P.M. – 6:37 P.M. Item #3 Select Board to consider approving the contractor for the Pedestrian Bridge project and authorize the Town Manager to sign the contract - *Action needed*

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to accept the bid from CCS Constructors in the amount of \$2,375,00 for the retaining wall repair and \$775,000 for the pedestrian bridge and authorize the Town Manager to execute the contracts (one for each).

6:37 P.M. – 6:38 P.M. Item #4 Select Board to consider approving the construction admin contracts with SE Group for the pedestrian bridge and the retaining wall repair and authorize the Town Manager to sign the contracts - *Action needed*

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve the construction administration contracts from SE Group for the retaining wall repair and the pedestrian bridge and authorize the Town Manager to execute the contracts (one for each).

6:38 P.M. – 6:40 P.M. Item #5 – Select Board to consider approving a new private road name "Draper Sugar Maples Dr." in East Hardwick – *Action needed*

The Select Board thinks the name is a little lengthy, but since the owner needs to get the sign themselves, then they approved it anyway.

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Danny Hale, the Select Board voted to approve the new private road name "Draper Sugar Maples Dr."

6:40 P.M. – 6:49 P.M. Item #6– Select Board to choose a contractor for the Center Rd. paving and authorize the Town Manager to sign a contract - *Action needed*

Bids were as follows:

\$76.76/ton J Hutchins, Inc.

\$79.15/ton Pike industries

\$98.00/ton Gray's Paving

Danny asked if J Hutchins was the company that got our paving bid in 2023 and did not come. Yes, that is true and was apparently due to flooding. They ended up coming in 2024 after Tom reached out several times. Tom shared about infrastructure issues with the last paving job that J Hutchins did for us on N. Main St. While we do strive to get the lowest cost possible, we also factor in the quality and past experiences with vendors. We need to do what is in the best interests of the Town and with this being a large project, we want to ensure that it gets done with high quality work.

The Town's budget for this project was up to \$850,000 with \$200,000 coming from a Class 2 paving grant. In this scenario, we are going to spend about \$200,000 less than expected and will still be able to pave all of the portion of Center Rd. that is in Hardwick.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to use Pike Industries for the Center Rd. paving project for \$688,605 and authorize the Town Manager to sign a contract.

6:49 P.M. – 6:53 P.M. Item #7 Select Board to discuss the Creamery Road project

The Select Board was not sure what they were supposed to discuss and wanted to move to the next meeting. Danny asked if anything had happened with the rescue squad. David said that Hardwick Rescue needs to have a meeting with their membership and then we need to reconvene after. They are unsure if they want to own or lease. The next steps are that we need to get public input once we get all of the costs and the conceptual plans. We will need to have a bond vote for the highway garage at the next Town meeting.

6:53 P.M. – 7:09 P.M. Item #8 Select Board to discuss and repeal the Trash Ordinance – *Possible action needed*

Danny asked if it was really feasible for the Select Board to enforce the trash ordinance. Ceilidh asked about abandoned houses and vehicles and how those are looked at. Abandoned cars in the travel way or right of way can be removed based on State laws.

The policy is very gray. David read the following statement:

"The Hardwick Trash Ordinance was created to promote public health, safety, and the overall well-being of our community by addressing issues related to debris, abandoned items, and property maintenance. Its intent is to support a clean and safe environment for all residents—not to target or pass judgment on individual property owners.

Recently, concerns have been raised by community members that the ordinance is being used in a manner that feels less about public welfare and more about personal grievances or social divisions. It is important to acknowledge these concerns and affirm that no municipal ordinance should be used to single out or stigmatize individuals or families based on personal opinion, economic status, or differing lifestyles.

When enforcement of the Trash Ordinance strays from its purpose and is instead perceived as a tool for judgment or retaliation, it undermines trust in our local government and fosters division among neighbors. We must remember that respect, compassion, and understanding are core values in any strong rural community—and those values should guide how we implement and enforce local regulations.

The Town of Hardwick is committed to fair and consistent application of its ordinances and will continue to evaluate how we engage with residents around these issues. We encourage community members to come forward with questions, suggestions, and concerns as we work together toward a more inclusive and respectful approach to maintaining the character and health of our town.”

We have to have a court order or warrant to enter a property to clean it up. We cannot just go on private property. There are other rules, regulations, and statutes that cover some things such as having a certain number of unregistered vehicles in a yard. Some of this would fall under the town Health Officer.

Shari would like to see us fix the ordinance and not repeal it. She feels there is an element of health and safety with having it. Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District (CVSWMD) would be willing to help us with the ordinance and make it more functional.

Ceilidh asked if instead of having the ordinance maybe we have information available on the website to answer people’s questions on how to handle situations that seem pertinent to trash issues.

Shari volunteered to work with CVSWMD to revise the ordinance and bring back some suggested changes. That is the route that was agreed upon, rather than just repealing it.

7:09 P.M. – 7:13 P.M. Item #9 Select Board to consider approving the operating line of credit renewal for Hardwick Electric Department (HED) issued through Union Bank – *Action needed*

Eric mentioned that cash flow has been tight for HED with the rising costs of doing business in their industry. The line of credit helps to keep them going and we certainly do not want to leave them in turmoil. This line has an increase of \$200,000 over last year. Danny expressed concerns about customer service. He is finding it difficult to collaborate with them. Eric said that he and Danny could meet with the General Manager, Sarah, at some point to discuss this.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to approve the operating line of credit renewal for Hardwick Electric Department for \$700,000 issued through Union Bank.

7:13 P.M. – 7:24 P.M. Item #10 – Select Board to review and consider approving the water and sewer expense budgets for FY26 – *Action needed*

The Business Manager presented the FY26 water and sewer expense budgets for consideration. See attachments for the full drafts. Both water and sewer expenses are projected to increase about 8%. The primary increase has to do with the new Director of Public Works position, where a percentage of their salary will come from the water and sewer funds and be transferred to the general fund. (same as is now for highway and office for time spent working on water/sewer tasks). The Board would like to make sure that the audit expense percentage that these funds pay for is equitable. Currently, the general fund pays 50% of our audit costs and water and sewer pay 25% each. Eric wondered if that was equitable. Casey said that she can look at this, but the lowest she would consider going is 20%, as the same reports and analysis are needed for those funds, so it is fair that they pay 25%.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve the FY26 water and sewer expense budgets, as presented.

7:24 P.M. – 7:27 P.M. Item #11 – Select Board to approve and sign the FY26 dispatch contract with Lamoille County Sheriff's Department – *Action needed*

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve the FY26 dispatch contract with Lamoille County Sheriff's Department.

7:27 P.M. – 7:35 P.M. Item #12 – Select Board to discuss a local option tax in Hardwick

Danny asked for this to be discussed. He sees a lot of people in town, and we talk about expenses all the time, but do not talk as much about revenues. He thinks we should talk with the community about it. As we grow and our needs expand, we need to talk about ways we can increase revenue without adding property taxes.

Eric said that he likes the idea of generating revenue from more discretionary spending vs. the value of someone's property, which may not necessarily align with what they have the ability to pay.

When the Downtown Partnership completed their Downtown Designation application, it was estimated that a local sales and use tax would generate around \$175,000/year.

The next steps would be to research more about this and have public engagement. It would need to go to a townwide vote at Town meeting. We have some time to decide if we want to put it on a ballot.

7:35 P.M. – 7:37 P.M. Item #13 – Select Board to consider approving a grant proposal for a grant to cover the demolition of 41 Brush Street – *Action needed*

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve the grant proposal to cover the demolition of 41 Brush Street.

Select Board Reports: Eric asked about a tour of the town house renovation project. Shari said it is not completed yet, but she is willing to show him or other board members whenever they would like to. Shari reported that there will be a Black Fly Story Hour at the Town House tomorrow night at 7:30 p.m. Annie Houston will be the host. The theme is "Busted," and participants have 5 minutes to tell a story.

New Business: Casey mentioned that the two lines of credit that the Town took out last year for flood expenses are up for renewal on June 10. Her opinion is that we do not need to renew them and can just let them close out, but she wanted to run it by the Select Board before confirming with our lender at Union Bank. The Board was comfortable with Casey's opinion and agreed it would be fine to close them out. Shari mentioned that Downtown Newport has offered us bumper stickers to promote Canadian tourism in VT. She had some with her if anyone wanted one.

Old Business: Shari asked about the job posting for the Director of Public Works. David said that it was just posted in a couple of locations this week and will be put out in a few more newspapers next week and the VLCT website.

Casey has a resolution for the SCRF loan that was approved at the last meeting that just needs signatures from the Select Board. They voted to approve the loan at the last meeting, but this document was missing from the closing documents. Ceilidh asked about looking at the Economic Development Loan Fund policy at a future meeting to make it more accessible for people with smaller loan requests.

7:43 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