

**MINUTES SPECIAL SELECT BOARD MEETING  
5:30 P.M. THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2025  
JEUDEVINE MEMORIAL LIBRARY  
93 N MAIN ST. HARDWICK  
PARKER LADD COMMUNITY ROOM  
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, Finance Director  
Sarah Braese, HED General Manager  
Jake Lester, HED Commissioner  
Myles Kamisher-Koch, HED Commissioner  
Michael Ambrosino, HED Commissioner  
Renaud Demers, HED Commissioner

**Others Present**

**Special Meeting**

**5:30 P.M.** – Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, called the Special meeting to order.

**5:31 P.M.** – Set/Adjust Agenda – none

No communication from the audience

**5:31 P.M. – 6:06 P.M. Item #1** History and Discussion on Hardwick Electric Department (HED) P.I.L.O.T. with possible restructuring

David explained that the method for calculating the PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) was changed a couple of years ago. The formula was provided by the former general manager with some guidance on the valuation of properties from the State of VT. This method had a specific formula to follow where the calculation was based on 75% of the assessed value of property plus the poles/wires that are in the Town.

David thinks that we should not be taxing the utility so much that the ratepayers suffer. With the upgrades they are making, the value of their assets increases causing the PILOT to increase.

Michael asked about the breakdown of land vs. poles/wires in Hardwick. The biggest assessment is Billings Rd. In November 2024, the VT Department of Taxes, Division of Property Valuation and Review (PVR) released new utility values for electric transmission and distribution appraisals:

<https://tax.vermont.gov/doc/sites/tax/files/documents/NTC-1343.pdf>. HED has paid over \$2.3M in taxes since 2019 to the 11 towns they serve. HED makes a PILOT to Hardwick, and they are taxed by the other towns for property owned as well as miles of poles/wires in each respective municipality.

Eric said that if Hardwick reduces the PILOT, then the Town subsidizes the other towns. He said that ideally, we would align all the towns to be the same. David would like to see us lead by example and look at reducing the

PILOT with Hardwick and then they can approach other towns about setting up a similar arrangement. David asked if HED has a breakdown of what they pay each Town. Sarah said they do. She gave the Top 5 – Hardwick, Greensboro, Woodbury, Wolcott, and Craftsbury are all over \$100K. Most of the others are above \$50K.

Myles commented that the State must have put some thought into the calculation. Sarah said the tax department was the driving force behind this.

Eric commented that as they replace infrastructure, the value does not actually increase as suggested earlier if everything is currently being treated like new anyway.

Danny commented that maybe we set something up that if they invest a certain amount in Hardwick, then the Town would adjust the PILOT by that amount.

Ceilidh said that talking to as many towns as possible would be a good route. Danny said that he does not think that all 11 towns will agree to this before Town meeting.

Eric, as a Select Board member, feels that it does not serve the town taxpayers to lower the PILOT unless some other towns also come on board with the same thought.

Ceilidh suggested the idea that any PILOT amount reduced for a specific town, that the amount it was reduced by would be invested in that particular town via equipment/infrastructure.

Danny said that Hardwick would need to go first if we were going to reduce the PILOT in order to lead by example to the other towns.

Myles said that lobbyists for Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) should be aware the valuation method is a driving factor for utility companies paying so much in taxes.

Eric asked if the decreased PILOT payments factor into their requests for rate increases. He wondered if the costs of services would also decrease therefore making less of an argument for a rate increase. Sarah said it is a small factor, but rising costs is the majority of the need.

The next steps are to come up with a new structure for payment to Hardwick, then approach other towns. Myles suggested talking to VPPSA for additional ideas.

**6:07 P.M. – 6:13 P.M. Item #2** Update on the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) funding and grant application for flood storage on the Wolcott Street/Lamoille River Property

David shared that the town just applied for a \$1.5M implementation grant for a flood restoration project on a 14-acre town-owned parcel, on the east side of the river downstream of the confluence with Cooper Brook.

Renaud asked about the river area behind the diner. David explained that the Town also applied for a planning grant from the same CDBG-DR source for all of the downtown area for planning and 30% engineering from the former Inn by the River site to the Cottage St bridge.

**6:13 P.M. – 6:20 P.M. Item #3** Update on Jackson Dam Feasibility Study

Danny is on the committee that started meeting about a year ago. He gave updates on what has been happening with the feasibility study of what to do with Jackson Dam. Emily Finnegan with Caledonia County Natural Resource Conservation District (NRCD) is leading the project. Her organization received grant funds for the study. In addition, the engineering firm doing this study is also looking at modeling of the Lamoille River. They are close to being wrapped up. A modeling report is estimated to be available to the committee in November. Then the engineering firm will make an assessment. Public engagement will happen after the report is released. Danny agreed to keep the board informed as it progresses and the report is released.

David mentioned that there was a program on dam removal here at the library last night. It will be available on HCTV's website for viewing.

**6:20 P.M. – 6:39 P.M. Item #4** Discuss starting a Task Force for our Dams

Sarah mentioned that three of their dams had periodic inspections recently. She met with the dam safety engineer who works for the State. He indicated that these dams are already being studied. Two of HED's dams are already on their radar for high risk safety concerns.

With the drought conditions, lake shore residents have been requesting dam gates to be lowered to manage and maintain lake water levels. The dams seem to be a topic of interest in the community. In general, there are a number of community stakeholders.

David went over a stakeholder list that includes conservation districts, state agencies, regional planning commissions, lake associations, etc. This does not only affect Hardwick. It would be good to form a task force to plan for the future of dams.

Danny heard that HED would have to pay their rate payers if a dam were divested. Sarah said that any sales or leases require Public Utility Commission (PUC) consent and be "of the public good" (see 30 V.S.A. § 109). Michael said we would need to convince the Public Utility Commission that the dam is a liability, not an asset.

Myles said that the dam is a liability for the town and the utility so it may make sense to start with those two parties. David mentioned that VLCT is not going to insure dams as of July 1, 2026. Sarah commented that HED is unique in that it owns 5 non-generating dams.

Jake said that it seems that the primary goal needs to be to reduce the liability of the dams to the Town and HED and the secondary goal would be to support the stakeholder's goals. Sarah said that establishing some reserves to address the dams would be wise as well.

Renaud asked if since Green Mtn. Power originally put the dams in to serve the hydro's between here and Lake Champlain, would it benefit us to know if they have a stake in the dams. David said that a group such as the NRCD might be able to get answers for us.

**6:39 P.M. – 6:48 P.M. Item #5** Capacity Building within the Town of Hardwick Municipal Corporation related

to Act 181 future investments in sewer, water, roads & electrical investments et al., to meet housing goals

Act 181 is a new law that went into effect last year. The town is going to need to be a participant in the goals for the law. Kristen and Tracy did a presentation on this to the Select Board in August. Now, our local regional planning commission, NVDA, is also coming to talk further about Act 181. We are going to be asked to make investments such as the water/sewer collection system and electric capacity in our community to increase housing.

Ceilidh said in the past we have identified town owned properties that might be developable. She asked if HED has any properties that meet this need. Nothing came to mind at the moment.

Eric mentioned that East Hardwick has a water system and could they possibly extend to add a sewer system. Ceilidh mentioned that the Better Connections study had information about this.

David said that it is important to keep open communication with HED about infrastructure. The group discussed the possibility of a shared project management position between the Town and HED.

### **No Select Board Reports, Board of Commissioner Reports, or New Business**

**Old Business:** David asked the Board if they wanted to have a conversation about the proposed Town forest on the next agenda. Yes, either of the October meetings would work. We will need to see if someone from the Conservation Commission is available for one of those meetings to come to talk about it.

Ceilidh mentioned that we used to have a bi-annual meeting with the Select Board and HED Commissioners. She would like to see us have this joint meeting at least once a year, preferably two. It makes sense to set it up now. The 2026 joint meetings will be Thursday April 9, 2026, and September 10, 2026.

**6:52 P.M.** *Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Danny Hale, the Select Board voted unanimously to enter an Executive Session pursuant to 1 VSA 313 for discussion about an ongoing litigation case, to include the Town Manager, Finance Director, HED General Manager, and HED Commissioners.*

**7:01 P.M.** *Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Danny Hale, the Select Board voted unanimously to exit Executive Session.*

**7:01 P.M.** *Danny made a motion, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway Kane, to authorize the General Manager of HED to advise counsel to dismiss the lawsuit without prejudice. Motion passed unanimously.*

**7:03 P.M.** Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, adjourned the meeting.

Minutes taken by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Casey Rowell, Finance Director

Minutes approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Eric Remick, Select Board Chair