

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2, 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

Casey Rowell, Finance Director
Tom Fadden, Road Foreman
Tracy Martin, CDC (*Zoom*)
Liam Abbate, NVDA
Cathlin Driscoll, NVDA
Dakota Foley (*Zoom*)
Hannah Redmon, VT Trust for Public Land
Paul Cillo, Northern Rivers Land Trust

Others Present

Rachel Kane
Andrew Gilbert
Bruce Larrow
Renaud Demers
Mike Brochu
Ashton Allen
Sue Rivard
Adam Ortiz

Regular Meeting

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

6:01 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – Add an Item #6 Select Board to discuss the retaining wall project and authorize payment of Pay App 1 for \$25,000 for CCS Constructors for the performance bond - *Action needed*

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

No communication from the audience

6:02 P.M. – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of September 18, 2025, the Public Hearing minutes of September 18, 2025, and the minutes of the Special Select Board joint meeting with HED Commissioners held on September 25, 2025

Danny noticed that his last name was missing the e at the end of it on the September 18 regular minutes and would like it to be corrected. The Town Manager's office will edit and update the version on the website.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Danny Hale, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of September 18, 2025, the Public Hearing minutes of September 18, 2025, and the minutes of the Special Select Board joint meeting with HED Commissioners held on September 25, 2025, with the one typo change. Tim abstained.

6:02 P.M. – 6:12 P.M. Road Foreman Report – Given by Tom Fadden

Tom reported that due to the dry conditions, chloride applications are not working very efficiently. They have to do a double dose. He said that they have completed ditch work on Bunker Hill and also replaced some culverts on Marsh Rd. The crew spent 3 days doing prep work for the demolition of the Anair property near Wolcott St.

and changed out the banners downtime. He also attended a meeting with the boring company for 9 S Main St. That activity is supposed to happen next Tuesday. There may be a little disruption near that area. He let them know that they will need to obtain 3 flaggers if the drilling extends out into the road at all. As of now, they are going to only do one boring well site on the side of the building near the town owned lot next to the Clip Joint. The rest of the boring will be on the sidewalks dug by hand and about 3' deep.

There was discussion about salt prices. Salt prices increased 12% over last year from \$95.75/ton to \$107.25/ton. If we use all of our quota, we will go almost \$40,000 over budget. Eric said that maybe we could use less salt in some areas. Casey agreed that we should do salt reduction areas. Tom has been looking into salt brine equipment to make our own. Casey contacted the vendor about negotiations and there is no negotiation. Their salt mines were completely depleted last year, and they had to replenish those. American Rock Salt does not deliver to this district. She did contact another vendor, but they are 200 miles away. They still need to get back to her with a price, but it will likely be more expensive due to trucking costs. We are basically stuck with the same vendor. Tom reached out to a Canadian company, but they have already taken on what they can for the year.

Eric asked about the materials we had stockpiled at the pit. Tom reported that the ditch stone is going fast. However, the crusher will hopefully be coming next week.

6:12 P.M. – 6:13 P.M. Hardwick Police Department (HPD) Report – Given by Casey Rowell

Mike is covering a shift this evening and unable to be here. The Police Department is busy with cases which they obviously cannot discuss publicly. Robin French has left, and Joe Donna is going to be stepping into a full-time position.

6:13 P.M. – 6:15 P.M. Item #1 – Select Board to consider renewing an Indoor Cultivator Tier 1 Cannabis license for Root to High Altitude – *Action needed*

There was brief discussion about the new process for renewals. The State is no longer going to send out reminders about renewals. We will need to develop our own tracking system to look at the renewals. We still need to do the renewals because the local cannabis board agreed to look at each one annually to see if there were any complaints or concerns.

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Danny Hale, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the renewal of an Indoor Cultivator Tier 1 Cannabis license for Root to High Altitude.

6:15 P.M. – 6:48 P.M. Item #2 – Select Board to hear from Liam Abbate and Cathlin Driscoll from Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) about Act 181 Tier 1A

Liam and Cathlin with NVDA presented a PowerPoint with information about Tier 1A and Tier 1B, which pertain to Act 250. Tier 1A offers permanent, total exemption from Act 250 for designated areas. They also went through Tier 1B and the draft maps for what areas would be affected within the town. Tier 1B offers an alternative with different requirements and benefits, available sooner. See attachments for the complete PowerPoint and maps.

Danny indicated that he is more concerned about the process and not as much as the maps. He questioned who was going to administer this – the DRB? From his experience, anything that was Act 250 exempt had even more

complications and nuances. Liam indicated that the Town could decide which areas we want to in each tier. Danny wants to ensure that what the town does now will work if Act 250 goes away. It was confirmed with NVDA that Tier 1A will have more administrative work.

Tracy shared that the planning commission already has draft river corridor rules and is planning a public engagement meeting in December.

One of the slides showed that the Town needs to have smart growth principles which we do already have. Liam and Cathlin went over Tier 1B requirements, which are not as strict as Tier 1A. Ceilidh asked about the timeline for applying for Tier 1A. Tier 1B will be available around mid-2026 and Tier 1A will likely be in 2027.

Eric asked about the restrictions on Act 250 acreage. Hardwick has a 10 acre rule about Act 250, whereas some towns trigger above 1 acre.

Liam and Cathlin shared a sample resolution that the Town could adopt if they want to move forward with Tier 1A. No action is needed at this meeting, as there is still time. Eric said that it is going to be important that we have a really good understanding of both of these tiers before we jump into this.

Danny said that this concept is a benefit to development, but it may not necessarily be a benefit to the Town because the administrative burden will fall on the Town. It is not really an exemption; it is shifting responsibility.

Ceilidh said that it would be helpful to know the administrative plan for both tiers, as in what roles the Select Board plays, as well as expectations from Town staff. Kristen should be able to help since she is very versed in this.

Tracy said that she is not really sure how it affects our town since Act 250 does not apply to our map areas now. The existing permits do not go away. She wonders how it changes our relationship with the process whereas we already have zoning.

Cathlin explained that you would currently go through Act 250 and Town zoning, and with the new scenario, you would have decision making at the local level. Liam confirmed that it only affects future development, not existing.

6:48 P.M. – 7:36 P.M. Item #3 – Select Board to hear from Hardwick Conservation Commission with an update about the proposed Town forest (Buffalo Mountain)

Rachel Kane gave an update that a letter of intent with the seller was initiated, and the seller took the property off the market. Appraisal is the next step, but it is challenging to find an appraiser right now. After the appraisal, the Trust for Public Land and the landowners will review the appraisal to see if they agree on the value. At that point, the Town can form a steering committee and create a management plan for the property. A number of FAQ's can be found in the meeting attachments.

Hannah Redmon with VT Trust for Public Land said that the biggest step is the management planning, which has to come after the appraisal determines if the value makes it a viable project. There are several people involved

in developing a management plan, including the County Forester, Land Trust, the Town, etc. It is a process that includes the community with surveys, site visits, and more. It is about finding out what the residents want for recreation, timber management, and so on. The management planning process will work out all of those details. The Select Board needs to approve the management plan in order to move forward.

Eric mentioned that he viewed Wolcott's town forest plan and how it is a very lengthy and detailed document. Hannah agreed that the plans are very thorough and that Emily Potter, County Forester, her agency, and Northern Rivers Land Trust would all help with developing the management plan.

Renaud Demers expressed concerns about the Town losing tax revenue, the percentage of money that the town will need to put in for the purchase, as well as the cost for ongoing maintenance. What can be done to recoup those expenses? We have existing trails and roads. Do we really need more town forest?

Ceilidh mentioned that we have been talking about a local option tax. More recreation equals more revenue and how we can benefit from that. Having more trails may bring more people in. Ashton Allen said that a local option tax would be a punishment to the locals if we are not a biking or recreation destination for example. We are just taxing ourselves.

Renaud asked if this would go to a public vote. He would like to see the voters have a say in it. The Select Board has the ultimate say. Public engagement is a part of the process, but it does not have to go to a vote. Hannah said that most towns already have rules about what needs to go to the voters. In general, at the Select Board's discretion, they can enter into purchase agreements.

Ashton Allen asked if the Board knows if the town residents truly have an appetite for this. He suggested that they open it up for discussion before the management plan. Do we have a way to quantify people using the Town trails – just hiking trails, not LVRT? Eric replied that there is a saying that if you have 2 hours of trail riding that people will come. We currently have about 1.5 hours.

Andrew Gilbert commented that given the Town's total grand list, taking this property off the tax rolls would only be reduced by about .10%. It is about \$6,000/year in taxes. Sue Rivard added that this would be in addition to the several we have already removed from the grand list that were bought out through flooding. Danny said that it permanently reduces that tax opportunity for the future.

Sue Rivard said that the timing is hard to swallow. Her tax bill recently increased \$2,000 with the reassessment and she knows that there are people struggling to stay in their homes due to affordability. She said it seems like we need to focus more on these types of issues rather than more trails that we do not necessarily need. Eric said that we can focus on multiple things at once and we do not have to focus on one thing at once. We should fill the empty storefronts, rebuild the pedestrian bridge, and other important projects. This is just one of many things that we can work on simultaneously. Sue indicated that she was frustrated with the Board's decision in July to proceed with accepting the property without more public input. She does not think that many people are actually interested in pursuing this.

Tim agreed that we need public input. He would not be opposed to taking it to the voters at Town meeting. Sue said that the Select Board already voted to move forward. They did vote to accept the property if funding is

obtained. Danny said that the Board made a commitment back in July that he voted no to and that now they are locked into moving forward.

Paul Cillo, Northern Rivers Land Trust, clarified that if the Town does not want to complete the purchase, they do not have to. All of the parties invested, including the Town and the Land Trust, all have to agree on the management plan, so if they cannot come to an agreement, then it will not happen. Ashton Allen commented that work has already started and does it make sense to keep going if there is no interest from residents. Hannah clarified that the appraisal is paid for by her agency, and it is needed to determine the viability. Also, the Town will not incur any costs during the investigation stage that we are at now.

Ceilidh asked about the steering committee being formed sooner than later. She had concern about how far away Town meeting is.

Hannah explained the turnaround for the appraisal is 2-3 months. Tim said that with the appraisal taking that long, why would we not just bring it to Town meeting.

Sue said that it may not be fair to the sellers who took it off the market to wait that long. Hannah clarified that it is a process as an option agreement will be the next step and then the management plan can take several months to complete. The seller is aware of the potential for a longer sales process.

Sue asked how people can have an informed vote if they do not really know what it is going to look like when the management plan is not complete. Tim said that the March Town meeting seems like a good forum to address this with the residents.

Paul Cillo said that it varies from community to community if a vote is taken. Three things that need to come together are a willing seller, funding, and the management plan – as well as the town accepting the property. If all of these elements do not exist, then the transaction will not happen.

The public engagement process is more during the management planning about how it is going to be used. The Select Board gets to decide if the Town accepts. Paul commented that the financial commitment can be Town funds or donors. Hannah said that it is not a set amount, but often 3-5% that the Town would contribute. Rachel commented on opening up a conservation fund that could accept donations.

Hannah said that maintenance fees at a standard \$20,000 are put into the budget. Often times, revenues exceed the cost to maintain through timber or sugaring activities.

Ceilidh said that we should wait until the appraisal comes back. Ceilidh requested that we think about the steering committee and leave your contact information on the sign in sheet if you are interested in being involved.

Rachel said that a vote at Town meeting is a good idea to hear the residents' opinions on the idea.

7:36 P.M. – 7:37 P.M. Item #4 – Select Board to approve the sewer rate for Institutional (error on last version)
– *Action needed*

On the previous version presented, it showed the sewer institutional rate as the same as water, but it is not. It

was supposed to show \$13,200, an increase of \$200 over last year. Instead, it showed the same rate as water (going from \$7,200/yr to \$7,400/yr), which is substantially different.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the institutional rate for sewer of \$13,200 per year.

7:37 P.M. – 7:41 P.M. Item #5 – Finance Director to give FY26 Quarter 1 budget update

The Finance Director gave the quarterly budget update. Both revenues and expenses are tracking right about where they should be. We should be at 25% after the first quarter and revenues are at 30% and expenses at 23%. See attachments for the detailed reports.

7:41 P.M. – 7:44 P.M. Item # 6 – Select Board to discuss the retaining wall project and authorize payment of Pay App 1 for \$25,000 for the performance bond - *Action needed*

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted unanimously to authorize payment of Pay App 1 for \$25,000 for the performance bond to CCS Constructors.

No Select Board Reports or New Business.

Old Business: Danny asked why we are using ReArch for the buyouts. Casey explained that this batch of buyouts were managed by the State, and they chose ReArch for all of their demolitions, not the Town.

Shari asked about the Town Manager evaluation. Eric said that they will work on it before next meeting.

Ceilidh asked about reminding departments to be diligent with their budgets this year. She also asked that we try to encourage public input during our budget season.

Ceilidh said that while it is nice to do a dedication in the Town report, we have lost several people who have been involved and influential in the community over the last year. It would be nice if we could have a page dedicated to those no longer with us and honor several people at once. Adam Ortiz suggested a slide show of those people highlighting their contributions could be played at the Town meeting.

7:50 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