

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING  
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2025  
HARDWICK MEMORIAL BUILDING  
20 CHURCH ST. 3<sup>rd</sup> FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

**Select Board**

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

**Others Present**

David Upson Jr., Town Manager  
Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator  
Mike Henry, Police Chief  
Tonia Chase, Town Clerk  
Diane Grenkow, Library Director

**Others Present**

Sue Rivard  
Rachel Kane  
Jack Travelstead  
Hannah Redmon  
John Kerr  
Elizabeth Conway  
Jennifer Deyo  
Steve Deyo  
Gary Circosta  
Jake Lester  
Andrew Gilbert

**Regular Meeting**

**6:00 P.M.** Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Select Board Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order.

**6:00 P.M.** – Set/Adjust Agenda – The Select Board would like to remove Item #1, Item #8, and remove the Executive Session and move it to a future meeting.

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

**6:00 P.M.** – Communication from the audience- None

**6:01 P.M.** – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of December 4, 2025

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes as written.*

**6:02 P.M. – 6:08 P.M.** Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David reported that there is a new meter-reading capability for water & sewer accounts that will shorten the time required to read meters, and the system operates via cell phone. The Assistant Town Clerk has accepted a new opportunity and will be leaving at the beginning of the year, and he expressed appreciation for her long service. Shari asked about posting that position, and David stated that discussions are still ongoing, with details regarding whether the position will be full-time or part-time still being worked out.

The Community Development Coordinator has released the third round of MERP insulation bids, with two

companies expressing interest in this round. Things will continue forward with this project.

The Planning Commission has reviewed the river corridor overlay bylaws, which are expected to come before the Select Board within the next couple of weeks. Following the 2023 flood, \$750,000 from the Community Resilience Fund was originally allocated to raise houses. Since then, the funding has since been shifted to cover elevating utilities such as water heaters and furnaces. This change was noted as positive and is expected to benefit more residents.

The Town is still waiting on a FEMA offer for the wastewater treatment facility, with the deadline remaining January 16.

Vermont Huts has requested a one-year extension of the purchase and sales option agreement due to the oil spill that occurred last year.

A public meeting is scheduled for January 21 at the library to discuss the essential services project, including the plan and associated costs.

CCS, the contractor for the Pedestrian Bridge, plans to remove the old bridge within the next couple of weeks. Shari asked what side of the bridge they would be working from, and David confirmed that it would be the Daniels Road side. David also stated that CCS plans to build a temporary walking bridge for their employees to make it easier to work. This will not be open to the public.

Ceilidh thanked Alberta for all her dedication to the Town and wishes her the very best!

#### **6:08 P.M. – 6:10 P.M. Hardwick Police Department Report – Given by Mike Henry**

Mike reported that Officer Morris will start full-time at the end of this month and will be going to the Level 3 academy starting February 2.

The Police Department has received some new equipment. This was paid for through grants, and Mike is looking to give the old equipment away at no charge.

Snowmobiles have been serviced by Buffalo Mountain Powersports and are up and running. Officers will take them out on the trails when the weather gets better.

\*The Select Board was ahead of schedule and Jake was not yet at the meeting. The Select Board jumped to Items 1 & 2 and then came back to Hardwick Electric's report. \*

#### **6:16 P.M. – 6:24 P.M. Hardwick Electric Department Report (HED) – Given by Jake Lester**

Jake reported on the dams owned by the Town and HED, noting that representatives from Caspian have expressed interest in discussing the future of the Caspian Lake Dam and the parcel on which it is located. He stated that discussions will continue to focus on desired outcomes and long-term planning, with the goal of developing an overall plan rather than addressing one dam at a time. VLCT has notified HED that the dams will

no longer be insurable at the start of the year. HED would like to schedule a special Select Board meeting soon to discuss the dams. The State will also determine whether HED will be able to receive funding related to the dams. More information to come.

Jake also reported job openings for a line worker, and a financial controller are now posted.

Community National Bank is involved with financing for the replacement of a bucket truck, with continued support from Union Bank to help cover the cost- more discussion on this in item 3.

David asked about setting up a joint meeting date, and Jake stated he would bring back January 15 as a possible option. The General Manager will contact David to finalize this.

**6:11 P.M. – 6:14 P.M.** Item #1 – Select Board to determine a private road name for a driveway off Center Road.  
– *Action Needed*

John Kerr asked about his driveway and the process to get a private road name as there are three houses on the same driveway. He will be in communication with the Town Manager's office soon.

*Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Danny Hale the Select Board voted to approve Clover Lane for the driveway off Center Road.*

**6:14 P.M. – 6:16 P.M.** Item #2 – Select Board to consider approving proposal for Bridge Services from Vermont Integrated Architecture for the Essential Services Complex Project – *Action Needed*

David explained that this proposal is a contract that will allow Vermont Integrated Architecture to keep working with the Town of Hardwick and have the project move forward. The total of this proposal is not to exceed \$9,494, which Hardwick Rescue will pay one-third of that cost. This contract will go until the Town goes out to bid.

*Upon motion by Danny Hale seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the proposal with Vermont Integrated Architecture in the amount not to exceed \$9,494.*

**6:24 P.M. – 6:36 P.M.** Item #3 – Select Board to consider approving the line of credit *increase* for Hardwick Electric from \$300,000 to \$575,000 and a note for \$325,000 for a new bucket truck and sign the loan documents – *Action Needed*

Danny stated that he was concerned with the communication between the Town and HED and felt like the fiscal responsibility would fall all on the Town.

Ceilidh stated that the Select Board had previously approved of a line credit not that long ago. She asked Jake if anything had happened with that. Jake stated that HED has a few different lines of credit and he would have to get back to her with specific details. Ceilidh asked what the operating budget was, and Jake was unsure.

Ceilidh asked if this would cover a quarter or half of the budget since this is a big request. Jake stated that this would cover some of the revenue from the billing cycles.

*Upon motion by Danny Hale seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve the note for \$325,000 for a new bucket truck.*

Gary Circosta stated that he's been attending the Hardwick Electric board meetings, and he feels like the staff has a good handle on the financial situation, but from his understanding they want to pay off VIPPSA. He also stated that HED does not have a fund balance.

The Select Board would like to wait until January 8 to discuss more about the line of credit increase.

**6:37 P.M. – 6:55 P.M.** Item #4 – Select Board to discuss Local Option Tax

There was discussion about whether to put a local option tax proposal to the voters. Shari reported that she checked in with other towns, noting that Wilmington, which has a similar population, adopted a 1% rooms and alcohol tax in 2013 following Hurricane Irene to help generate additional revenue after flooding, and they've had it ever since. Shari also stated that in Hardwick, a five-year average could generate approximately \$177,000 per year for the Town. Ceilidh asked whether this figure reflected the amount after the State's share, and Shari stated she was unsure, noting that the State receives the 6% tax plus 25% of the local 1%.

Sue raised concerns about affordability and the importance of keeping businesses in town. Tim stated that a 1% tax would be nominal and is intended to generate revenue, noting that larger towns commonly adopt it. John Kerr asked how such a tax would affect the tax rate, and it was noted that it could potentially offset taxes, though there was discussion about how much impact \$125,000 would actually have. Danny referenced the prior meeting's discussion, stating that it was felt the idea might not be a good one unless the town brings in a significant number of businesses. Clarification was made that the tax options under discussion included sales and use, rooms and meals, and alcohol, with rooms and meals paid for by non-residents.

Danny stated that he did not think the issue should go to a vote, while Tim said that he thought it was a good idea in order to let the Town residents decide. Shari reiterated that the \$177,000 figure represented sales and use revenue only, averaged over five years for Hardwick. Danny explained that the topic was raised to explore ways Hardwick could bring in revenue, while Tim viewed it more tangibly, such as funding a specific need like a new truck. Sue noted that purchasing a new truck does not directly decrease taxes.

Rachel Kane stated that she felt uneasy and believed there should be more discussion, noting that a 1% tax can make a difference and that residents could choose to shop in neighboring towns such as Morrisville. She added that it felt complex to put the issue to a town vote at this time. Tim respectfully disagreed, stating that residents should be made aware and given the opportunity to weigh in. Sue stated that the biggest concern is declining revenue.

Andrew Gilbert stated that he saw very little risk in proposing the question to the voters, emphasizing the importance of public input. He also noted that he did not believe there was significant risk if the Town adopts the tax and that, if it does not work out, it could be rescinded.

*Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello seconded by Ceilidh Galloway- Kane, the Select Board voted three to one to approve the rooms & meals, and the alcohol tax to be placed on the Town Meeting warning.*

Tim - yea  
Ceilidh - yea  
Shari - yea  
Danny - nay

Tonia stated that she will work on specific language with the lawyer and bring it back on January 8.

**6:55 P.M. – 7:29 P.M.** Item #5 – Select Board to get an update from the Conservation Commission on Buffalo Mountain and discuss potential bond vote for Buffalo Mountain Town Forest proposal.

Hannah reported that a site visit happened this past Monday and that the appraisal report is expected around the New Year. She noted that this is the next major step in determining whether both the Davis family and the Town wish to move forward. She stated that there are no conservation restrictions related to snowmobiling or sugaring.

Rachel asked why the agenda stated that it was bond, as this is not a bond vote. David stated that the agenda read incorrectly and confirmed that it was not a bond. Rachel also stated that the Conservation Commission would like to establish a steering committee if the project moves forward, and was wondering if interested parties should be recruited through the Conservation Commission or the Select Board, with clarification that the Select Board would ultimately approve any committee. Tim stated that it should remain an informal steering committee until the appraisal value is known and an official decision is made, and that while education and outreach are appropriate, committee members should not yet be formally approved. Ceilidh stated that she was not comfortable establishing a steering committee at this moment.

There was discussion about whether a vote should occur at Town Meeting versus or if this topic should be tabled and put onto the November ballot. Hannah noted that she could help suggest ballot language if needed for March, and that appraisal results are expected around New Year's.

It was stated that the Town has voted to accept the property, and that the proposal being brought forward includes a Town financial contribution of \$25,000 toward a total project cost of approximately \$700,000. Andrew recommended putting the question before voters, stating that it is a great opportunity and that he does not see significant risk. Jake asked whether the appraisal would affect the Town's contribution, and Hannah responded that it would not, though it could affect the overall project moving forward. Danny asked whether the contribution could exceed \$25,000, and Hannah stated that it would not.

Sue expressed concern that the Town had agreed to take ownership of the property prior to full public discussion and questioned voting to allocate funds before residents fully understand potential uses of the property. Rachel stated that a public presentation is planned for January 24 at the Library, at which time the appraisal and property acceptance would be discussed further. Ceilidh noted that a small contribution demonstrates commitment to grantors. Discussion followed regarding how much the Town would ultimately commit and what future costs might be. Rachel stated that the Town could choose to spend nothing beyond the initial contribution, while Sue questioned whether the project should proceed if there is no long-term commitment. Rachel noted that Wolcott successfully leveraged grants to implement similar projects.

Ceilidh requested more information at the January 8 meeting regarding the appraisal process and Wolcott's

experience. Andrew stated that the focus should be on net cost, emphasizing that growing the Town and improving the tax base requires attracting people. Elizabeth Conway questioned why the Select Board was discussing funding given that it does not currently have available funds. Ceilidh clarified that while the Town has accepted the property, it has not yet committed financially, and that this would be a one-time contribution of Town funds. Danny stated that it is not accurate to characterize the funds as one-time. Hannah explained that the \$25,000 contribution aligns with the Town's strategic plan and that a Town Forest would be a positive economic resource.

Jennifer Deyo stated that grant funding is not free money and that while it may not directly affect the Town budget, it does impact taxpayers, expressing concern about ongoing maintenance obligations. David responded that grants come from various sources. Jake added that grants require staff time to apply for, manage, and administer. Ceilidh asked for a clear question to be brought forward and requested information on how much has been spent to date.

Sue mentioned her concern again with the whole dynamic of the Town already accepting the property. David questioned whether a town vote is required to purchase the property, noting that the property would be purchased by the Northern Land Trust, and then gifted to the Town. He stated that there is a statutory process for acquiring forest land. Hannah believed approval rests with the Select Board, but David stated he would look into whether voter approval is required. More discussion will occur on January 8.

**7:29 P.M. – 7:40 P.M.** Item #6 – Select Board to discuss the balance of the Town House renovation contract and how to get the final payment paid – *Action Needed*

David explained that when the renovation first occurred, the contractor found where the building had previously been burnt. This created a change order and additional costs. Throughout the project there were several change orders.

The original bid for the project was \$281,521. The Town originally agreed to put in a \$20,000 contribution, leaving the remaining balance for NEKarts. To date NEKarts has paid \$220,603.08. The Town, due to the change orders, has paid \$40,917.92, and there's a balance of \$50,702.66.

David stated that there's \$21,129 left in the capital budget for the Town House. Ceilidh suggested using that first, and then the rest would come from the fund balance.

Danny stated that a Public Works Director would have caught pre-existing conditions.

Sue asked about additional quotes and David stated that the work has already been completed.

Tim would like to have Eric and Casey involved in this conversation.

**7:40 P.M. – 7:42 P.M.** Item #7 - Select Board to authorize the Town Manager to enter into Highway Union negotiations, and to appoint a Select Board member to join the discussions. – *Action Needed*

*Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to authorize the Town*

*Manager to enter into Highway Union negotiations.*

There was discussion who would be the Select Board representative. Tim volunteered.

*Tim Ricciardello, amended his motion, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to authorize the Town Manager to enter into Highway Union negotiations and to have Tim be the Select Board representative.*

**7:42 P.M. – 8:24 P.M.** Item #8 - Select Board to recap the FY27 budget draft and discuss changes any additions they might want to make.

The Select Board went through the draft budget, which was put up on the screen for viewing. Topics of discussion included:

- ~ Removing the local option tax in the revenue section
- ~ The Public Works Director and the Assistant Town Clerk
- ~ Library took out \$4,000 from fuel and heating costs.
- ~ Carey Road being removed from Capital & place it into the Highway Dept. budget
- ~ Local Share (FEMA projects) being reduced to \$100,000- Board changed it back to \$150,000.
- ~ Spring Fest- exact budget will be brought back on January 8
- ~ Equity Committee being cut- Ceilidh suggested coming to meetings and learning more
- ~ Changing the trails capital and not accounting for the new snowmobile that was just purchased.

See attachments for the most current draft version of the budget.

**Select Board Reports, New Business, Old Business:** None

**8:24 P.M.** Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Select Board Vice Chair, adjourned the meeting.

Minutes taken by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator

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