

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING  
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025  
HARDWICK MEMORIAL BUILDING  
20 CHURCH ST. 3<sup>rd</sup> FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

**Select Board**

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

**Others Present**

David Upson Jr., Town Manager  
Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator  
Casey Rowell, Finance Director

**Others Present**

Bruce Larrow  
Rachel Kane  
Josephine Alling, SLR  
Jessica Louisos, SLR

**Regular Meeting**

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

**6:00 P.M.** – Set/Adjust Agenda – The Select Board would like to remove the executive session and move it to a future meeting.

*Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to amend the agenda as stated.*

**6:01 P.M.** Communication from the audience – Rachel Kane stated that the Conservation Commission would like to create a Conservation Reserve Fund and asked the Select Board about the proper process to do so. Rachel reported that she has been working with Casey on the details. Casey explained that if the fund is to be established using town money, it must be approved by a Town vote. However, if the fund is created solely from donations, no Town vote is required. Eric requested that Rachel gather additional information and return to the Select Board at a future meeting.

Danny stated that he has concerns regarding committees creating funds. The Select Board agreed to discuss this later in the meeting.

**6:06 P.M.** – Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of November 20, 2025

*Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve the regular meeting minutes as written. Danny abstained.*

**6:06 P.M. – 6:11 P.M.** Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David reported that the Town has received preliminary designs and cost estimates for both Bridge 31 and Fisher Folly Bridge, each with three proposed alternatives. These alternatives will be submitted to FEMA for review and a final decision. For Bridge 31, the options include replacement at \$2.3 million, replacement at \$2.5 million, or choosing not to replace the bridge. For Fisher Folly Bridge, the alternatives are replacement at \$1.5 million, replacement at \$1.6 million, or not replacing it.

The Town is requesting extensions for seven FEMA projects, including a two-year extension for the Wastewater Treatment Facility and a one-year extension for the Fisher Folly Bridge project.

David reported that he continues to meet with FEMA every two weeks. FEMA is still requesting additional information regarding the lift stations and the fire station. He hopes FEMA will present an offer for the Wastewater Treatment Facility by mid-January.

The Essential Services project is progressing, with a public engagement session scheduled for mid-January. David also met with the Fire Department this week and addressed all of their questions about the proposed new fire station building.

The final closing for this season's FEMA property buyouts took place today.

River modeling presentations were held on December 3 with SLR, attended by approximately 60 people. Additional information will be provided under item 1.

Finally, the third VHB meeting on the Mill Street/Main Street study is scheduled for January 7, during which funding will be discussed.

**6:12 P.M. – 6:12 P.M.** Road Foreman Report – Given by David Upson

The highway crew has been busy plowing and salting.

Ceilidh mentioned a washout on Hardwick Farms Road. She placed a flag in it but wanted to make Tom aware.

**6:12 P.M. – 6:36 P.M.** Item #1 - SLR to give an overview of the River Flood Modeling project of Lamoille River and Cooper Brook funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration through the Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD)

Jessica Louisos and Josephine Alling gave an overview of the River Flood Modeling project of Lamoille River and Cooper Brook and how future flooding could affect Hardwick. Please see the attachment for the slide show that they presented.

Ceilidh asked whether there is specific guidance on determining the river's flow direction and whether certain steps need to be taken before proceeding. Jessica responded that there is no required sequence and no reason to complete one step before another. She added that it is helpful that discussions are already underway.

**6:36 P.M. – 6:57 P.M.** Item #2 – Select Board to discuss implementation of a local option tax

Eric explained that there are three local option tax choices—sales, meals & alcohol, and rooms—and that the Select Board can choose one or more to forward for a Town vote.

Danny expressed concern that none of the options would benefit a small town like Hardwick. He noted that adding taxes places a burden on small businesses, especially those that operate in multiple towns and must keep track of different tax requirements. He gave the example of delivering lumber to 33 towns, each with its own tax rules. He emphasized that scalability is a major issue.

Shari responded that businesses already have to keep track of sales tax, but Danny reiterated that varying taxes between towns create complications for businesses that travel versus those that operate only within Hardwick.

Eric agreed that a local sales tax seems complicated due to variability across towns. He suggested that the meals and alcohol option would be easier for businesses to manage. Danny said he supports a meals tax for businesses that operate within town, but not for businesses that make deliveries elsewhere.

Eric clarified that if the tax is passed by voters, individual businesses cannot opt in or out; it would apply town wide.

Tim said he would like to hear more feedback from local businesses.

Rachel Kane said she is still learning about the issue. She currently collects sales and rooms and meals tax, and noted that most towns with local option taxes are larger than Hardwick. She expressed concern that adding taxes could discourage visitors and create complications for businesses that get deliveries.

Eric estimated that the Town could receive roughly \$50,000 in revenue. Tim commented that over ten years that amount could purchase a new dump truck. Eric added that the goal is not to generate profit but to help cover the Town's budget.

Ceilidh asked whether Hardwick Downtown Partnership had been asked for input. Shari said they had not been asked yet but could seek feedback. Ceilidh asked whether opinions should come from all businesses in Town or primarily restaurants. Eric clarified that for instance, auto sales are taxed differently and would not be included.

Shari said she does not have a strong opinion either way.

The Select Board agreed to seek more input and place the item on the next agenda.

**6:57 P.M. – 7:04 P.M.** Item #3 – Select Board to consider approving a revised Fund Balance Policy– *Action needed*

Casey stated that the notable change is that the current fund balance policy states that the balance should be no less than the equivalent of 10% of annual budgeted expenditures in its unassigned fund balance, with a goal of 20%. Casey is proposing to change it from 20% to 15%. Currently it is 14%.

Ceilidh expressed concern that in the past two years the Town has had unexpected costs from the flood. The Town was fortunate to have that fund balance and wants to continue to ensure there's enough money to cover unexpected costs.

Danny expressed concern about it, stating that we should continue to hold the balance between 15-20% instead of dropping it.

*Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted 4-1 to approve the revised Fund Balance Policy.*

*Danny- nay*

*Ceilidh- yea*

*Eric- yea*

*Tim- yea*

*Shari- yea*

**7:04 P.M. – 7:10 P.M.** Item #4 – Select Board to consider approving a revised Procurement Policy to comply with the Uniform Grant Guidance for federal grant awards – *Action needed*

Casey explained that it has been in the audit report for several years that our policy needs to meet the uniform grant guidelines for federal grant awards. It did not previously meet that because it was missing specific references to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Currently the Select Board has to approve purchases of over \$12,000. Casey would like to change that amount to \$15,000. The other changes are geared towards citing CFR's that pertain to federal awards.

Ceilidh asked what other towns were doing and Casey said that the ones she has seen have a limit between \$20,000 and \$25,000 before it is presented to Select Boards. Ceilidh asked if we should raise the \$15,000 to \$20,000, and Casey said that it is not necessary based on the purchases that the Town has made. Most of the purchases are over \$30,000 anyway, so they would still end up going to the Board, even if we made it \$25,000.

Danny stated that it's not clear that authority is needed for each purchase level; however, the first sentence under purchasing authority states Town Manager, or his/her designee- and then the limitations of purchases are listed below.

*Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the revised Procurement Policy.*

**7:11 P.M. – 8:37 P.M.** Item #5 – Select Board to recap the FY27 budget draft and discuss changes and additions they might want to make

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

- ~ Hardwick Rescue increase to cover costs
- ~ Director Public Works – getting rid of the position and moving \$25,000 for consultants for specific projects
- ~ Highway Budget - Salt, concerns about actual amounts in past years vs. proposed amounts in various areas, but mostly equipment expenses which always seems to be over budget
- ~ Capital - Fire & Equipment- Raising the amount of funds that are set aside for rising costs of equipment

- ~ Capital General - move Carey Road balance to Highway Garage, using Recreation capital funds for the skating rink instead of in their regular budget, the cost for the temporary fix for the Highway Garage, and sidewalk expense (creating a replacement schedule for sidewalks) and the Mill St./Main Street expense
- ~ Line Item – proposed Bond Payment increase due to the essential service project expected to be \$6.6 Million
- ~ Library – the electricity increase
- ~ Library – ask Trustees to decrease by \$4,000 in order to reduce the 9.25% increase to 7%
- ~ Ceilidh would like to see 6% or less for the overall budget increase, which would require reducing the current proposed budget by \$60,000 between all the departments - Select Board to come back December 18 with suggestions
- ~ Recreation- decreasing the community programming from \$7,000 to \$5,500
- ~ Town funded groups - a policy needs to be created for funds raised and held by the Town

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

**Select Board Reports:**

- Danny announced that he would not be running for a Select Board seat again. There are 2 seats available for a 1-year term, and 1 seat available for a 3-year term.
- Eric mentioned that during the Essential Services discussion, the group brainstormed potential funding ideas for the project. There are some possibilities that the Town may receive - additional information will be provided as it becomes available.
- Ceilidh asked about funding regarding SLR. This sparked discussion that we need to think about where the 10% match money to cover the retaining wall and bridge projects from the July 2023 flood would come from. David said it might not end up being 10%, but probably at least 7.5%. Casey commented that the retaining wall at 10% would be \$230,000, so we need to think about where that money is going to come from. This will need to be a topic of discussion at the next meeting during the budget portion.

**New Business:**

- Casey noted that the Select Board will need to decide soon on the cover photo and dedication for the upcoming Town Report.
- Shari wanted to highlight the downtown lights that the Hardwick Downtown Partnership put up.

**Old Business:** None

**8:45 P.M.** Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, adjourned the meeting.

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

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