

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2026
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 - *absent*

Others Present

David Upson, Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Finance Director
Kristen Leahy, Zoning/Floodplain Admin.
Larry Fliegelman
Karen Sentoff, VHB – *Zoom*
Jake Lester

Others Present

Peter Woskowiz
Ann Gilcris
Kathy Rowley
Miranda Brown
Patrick Kane
Anne Galloway

Regular Meeting

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

6:00 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – none

6:00 P.M. Communication from the audience – Ann Gilcris expressed concerns about holding Town Meeting at the Town House, citing potential issues with parking, voter accessibility, and limited space for lunch service and informational tables. She questioned whether the Select Board had fully considered voter needs and asked why the Town House was selected as the location.

Eric noted that while the Town House is smaller, it can accommodate attendance levels similar to recent Town Meetings and offers improved acoustics. He also stated that the last Town Meeting held there was in 2006 and that he does not share all of the same concerns.

Ceilidh reported that significant efforts have been made to make the building suitable for Town Meeting, including installation of a lift to access the stage where voting will occur. She has spoken with Tonia on the setup, and NEKarts will provide parking attendants, along with additional volunteers to assist attendees and help ensure accessibility. She noted that there is ample parking on Creamery Road, with a walking distance comparable to the walk from the elementary school's back parking lot. Ann suggested providing a shuttle or bus service around town to assist residents who may be deterred by parking concerns.

Ceilidh stated that the Town will try the Town House location this year and that a ballot item will ask voters whether future Town Meetings should be held at the Town House or the school. She agreed that a shuttle service could be a helpful idea regardless of location. Ann reiterated that difficulty finding parking may discourage voter participation. The Board thanked Ann for her feedback and affirmed that steps are being taken to ensure the day runs smoothly.

Anne Galloway asked whether holding Town Meeting on a Saturday has been considered. This option was not included on the current warning. Eric noted that he researched this in prior years and found that changing the

meeting day did not necessarily increase attendance in other towns, and that polls must still be open on Tuesday. Anne expressed interest in raising the topic at Town Meeting. Since it is not warned, options discussed included a straw vote or placing the question on the November primary ballot, which could then be included on the 2027 Town Meeting warning. Tonia should be involved in further discussion.

Anne also suggested conducting a survey at Town Meeting. Kristen proposed using a QR code to allow broader participation beyond those in attendance. Jake Lester noted that surveying only those present at Town Meeting would not capture input from residents unable to attend.

6:15 P.M. – 6:15 P.M. Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of January 22, 2026

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of January 22, 2026, as written.

6:16 P.M. – 6:21 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David reported that a second collective bargaining meeting has been held with the Public Works crew and their union representative. The current contract expires June 30, 2026, and negotiations are underway for a new three-year agreement. Tim has been representing the Select Board in these discussions.

David also reported that the Town rejected FEMA's initial funding offer for the wastewater treatment facility, as it was significantly below projected costs. While Ludlow received an offer closer to expected levels, the offers to Johnson and Hardwick were not sufficient. FEMA has returned to a cost analysis review, and a revised offer is expected by April 15. The Town is hopeful that the new offer will better align with actual project needs.

Regular coordination meetings have begun with NVDA and the State Recovery Officer regarding a USDA disaster funding application. Approximately \$30 million in funding is anticipated statewide, with \$15 million designated for wastewater projects in Vermont. This funding could support the overall project financing once FEMA's revised offer is known.

Work is also underway to place four projects on the State priority list for water and wastewater funding: the Hideaway Acres water storage roof, the Wolcott Street water main, the wastewater treatment facility, and related lift stations.

David has begun working with NVDA on a Brownfields grant application for the proposed Essential Services project on Creamery Road.

David provided an update on the pedestrian bridge project. The temporary bridge currently in place is for construction use only and is not open to the public. The original bridge has been removed, and contractors are expected to return in early March to begin work on the retaining wall in preparation for installation of the new bridge later this year.

6:21 P.M. – 6:24 P.M. Road Foreman Report – Given by David Upson

The Highway Department continues routine winter operations, including plowing, sanding, and salting, and performing truck maintenance as needed. The crew also responded to a sewer issue on Mill Street and installed a new water shutoff on Buffalo Street.

Ceilidh asked about snow removal in East Hardwick, noting visibility concerns at the intersections of Cedar Street and Main Street where they meet Route 16. David reported that the crew was in East Hardwick this week with the grader, pushing back snowbanks and removing excess snow near sidewalks to improve visibility.

Casey noted that a regional salt shortage may be developing. While the Town has not yet run out, deliveries have been delayed, and some neighboring communities have reported running out of salt in recent weeks.

6:24 P.M. – 6:41 P.M. Item #1 – Select Board to hear a presentation from VHB on the Mill Street Scoping study
– *Action needed*

Karen Sentoff of VHB presented a summary of the Mill Street Scoping Study findings. The presentation slides are included in the meeting attachments.

Eric asked about the proposed parking changes near the post office. Karen noted that the postmaster was consulted and is supportive of the suggested changes.

Ceilidh asked about next steps following acknowledgment of the study. Karen explained that VTrans is currently reviewing the project, as it may be eligible for funding through the Transportation Alternatives Program. The purpose of the scoping process was to develop a plan and position the project to seek funding for the design phase. The report will be finalized and submitted to VTrans for approval, after which the Town can pursue funding sources.

Eric requested clarification on the proposed motion, noting that it may not make sense to formally endorse a final version of the study before it is complete. Karen indicated that VTrans has been involved in discussions and is supportive of the proposed changes, and she does not anticipate any substantial revisions to the preferred alternatives.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to acknowledge completion of the public engagement process for the Mill Street and Main Street Scoping Study, authorizing VHB and staff to finalize the study. Endorsement of the final version as a basis for future funding applications and phased implementation planning is subject to future Select Board approval.

Kristen wanted to acknowledge how great VHB was to work with throughout the project.

6:41 P.M. – 6:43 P.M. Item #2 - Select Board to consider approving a contract addendum with SW Cole for the construction phase geotechnical engineering services for the retaining wall not to exceed \$30,000 and authorize the Town Manager to sign the contract addendum –
Action needed

The Town previously contracted with S.W. Cole for geotechnical borings. David explained that CCS requires engineering support related to the borings during construction. Because S.W. Cole performed the original work,

it is recommended that they provide this support. The estimate is \$30,000 as a worst-case scenario. The retaining wall repair is classified as a large FEMA project, and most of these costs are expected to be reimbursed through FEMA.

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve a contract addendum with SW Cole for the construction phase geotechnical engineering services for the retaining wall not to exceed \$30,000 and authorize the Town Manager to sign the contract addendum.

6:43 P.M. – 6:48 P.M. Item #3 – Select Board to consider approving the current expense line of credit *increase* for Hardwick Electric issued through Union Bank from \$300,000 to \$575,000- *Action needed*

Jake Lester provided an overview of the need for an increased line of credit. He explained that the line is used to cover operating expenses due to timing differences between purchased power billing cycles and customer payments, which can create periodic cash flow shortages. He also noted that the rate-setting process is lengthy; while costs may increase immediately, rate adjustments can take several months to implement. In addition, progress has been made on the Wolcott Hydro Dam project, but delays in reimbursement have further strained cash flow.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the current expense line of credit increase for Hardwick Electric issued through Union Bank from \$300,000 to \$575,000.

6:48 P.M. – 7:05 P.M. Item #4 – Town Manager to present bridge alternatives for Tucker Brook and Carey Rd. for discussion and consider authorizing the Town Manager to move forward - *Action needed*

The Board will determine the preferred direction for the project, after which Verdantas will complete a final design to submit to FEMA. These are large capital projects that are reimbursed based on actual costs, up to 90%. The Town's anticipated financial responsibility is estimated at approximately 5–7.5%. In evaluating options, the Board emphasized the importance of selecting the most cost-effective and durable solution with long-term longevity.

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to authorize the Town Manager to work with Verdantas to figure out the most durable and cost effective option and move forward. Ceilidh abstained. Motion carries.

Select Board Reports: Ceilidh reported that the Equity Committee has completed the Hardwick Equity Project, which was funded through the Vermont Community Foundation (VCF). The committee plans to return with a report summarizing the work completed and how those involved have applied the project within their organizations. Ceilidh thanked VCF, the individuals who contributed, and the participating organizations for their support of the project. She also requested that the Equity Committee be invited to attend a Select Board meeting in April to provide an update on their current work.

New Business: none

Old Business: The Board noted that a public survey is currently being circulated regarding Bridge #31 and its impacts on Hardwick and surrounding communities in relation to potential replacement options. The deadline to complete the survey is February 27, 2026.

Tim shared comments in response to feedback he has heard in the community about the Town budget and the proposed local option tax. He encouraged residents to participate throughout the entire budget development process, noting that multiple meetings are held during the budget season and provide ample opportunity for public input. Tim acknowledged concerns that a local option tax could disproportionately affect some businesses but noted that it would also serve as an additional revenue source for the Town. Ceilidh suggested that a handout at Town Meeting may be helpful to provide clear information. It was noted that the revenue estimates included in the Town Report are based on actual Hardwick data.

Shari suggested placing the proposed Town Meeting day change question on the November primary ballot. The Board will consult with Tonia regarding the process and mechanics for doing so.

David reported that Rachel Kane asked that the Conservation Commission's upcoming discussion on the Town Forest be announced. The meeting will be held February 19, with a virtual presentation at noon and an in-person presentation at 6:00 p.m. in the Parker Ladd Community Room.

7:14 P.M. *Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to enter an Executive Session pursuant to 1 VSA 313 for a personnel matter to complete the Town Manager's annual performance evaluation, including the Town Manager.*

7:50 P.M. Exited Executive Session. *No action taken.*

7:51 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