

**MINUTES SPECIAL SELECT BOARD MEETING
5:00 P.M. THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2026
MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3RD FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Chair
Shari Cornish, Vice-Chair
Derek Richardson
Larry Fliegelman
Tim Ricciardello

Others Present

David Upson Jr., Town Manager
Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator
Kristen Leahy, Zoning Administrator
Scott Johnstone, HED
Roger Prevot, HED
Renaud Demers, HED
Jake Lester, HED
Myles Kamisher-Koch, HED
Jessica Louisos, SLR
Josephine Alling, SLR
Emily Finnegan

Other Present

Lesa Cathcart
Bill Trainor
Norma Spaulding
Norma Wiesen
Dave Gross
Elizabeth Dow
Eric Remick
Eric Jonathan
Manny Fliegelman
Stew Arnold
Sally Anstey
Will Marlier
Dana Allen
Paul Fixx
Peter Moskovitz

Special Meeting

5:00 P.M. –Select Board Chair, Ceilidh Galloway, Kane called the meeting to order.

5:00 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – None

5:00 P.M. – Communication from the audience- None

5:00 P.M. – 6:39 P.M. Item #1 Presentation of the Jackson Dam Feasibility Study by the Caledonia County Natural Resource Conservation District and SLR International to the Hardwick Select Board and Hardwick Electric Commissioners; discussion of next steps and additional information needs.

Emily Finnegan, with the Caledonia County Natural Resource Conservation District, opened with a brief introduction to the project. Jessica Louisos and Josephine Alling, with SLR, presented a PowerPoint outlining the feasibility analysis (see full presentation for details).

Some key points from the presentation:

- The Jackson Dam, owned by the Hardwick Electric Department, impounds sections of the Lamoille River and Alder Brook. It was built in 1920 and rebuilt in 1952.
- Sediment and vegetation buildup have altered water flow and the configuration of the pond/lake area.

- A 2001 inspection identified surface deterioration and structural concerns, with estimated repair costs at that time of approximately \$600,000. Current costs would be significantly higher due to inflation and regulatory changes.
- Several flooding events since 2001 have worsened the dam's condition.
- The dam is currently classified as a Significant Hazard Dam, meaning failure could impact Route 15, bridges, and the rail trail.

Dam Removal Considerations:

- Potential benefits include improved fish passage and natural sediment transport.
- Alder Brook is shallow and slow-moving; impacts to Hardwick Lake if the dam is removed remain uncertain.
- Flood modeling shows:
 - Minimal downstream change during flood events
 - Potential upstream benefits, especially near Cottage Street Bridge
 - Improved floodplain function, with water staying more contained within the river channel

SLR also completed a 100-year flood depth mapping analysis comparing existing conditions, proposed conditions, and a scenario in which the dam is removed. The results indicate that, without the dam, floodwaters would remain more confined to the river channel rather than spreading across surrounding areas. For example, under the proposed conditions, the Lamoille Valley Ford property would remain dry.

Roger Prevot asked whether there is immediate mapping available for winter conditions and how those conditions would affect the models. Jessica explained that this is very difficult to determine, as it requires detailed hydrology data and precise timing considerations. Lesa Cathcart added to this and asked about the bottleneck areas where ice tends to jam. Kristen confirmed that collecting this data is in progress. Josephine went further into detail and described that when there's a tabletop of water, such as Hardwick Lake and then there's a slope such as behind Tops- it changes the velocity and flood storage. With removal of the dam, this could help, but more data would help.

For the dam removal scenario, the wall adjacent to Route 15 would remain in place to help direct water flow under the bridge. The concrete wall to the right of the existing dam would also be retained. In addition, bank armoring is planned near the store to help stabilize the area. There are currently three options for this dam:

1. No removal – Not recommended due to environmental impacts, and deterioration and hazardous classification.
2. Full removal – Not recommended due to cost and ecological disruption.
3. Targeted removal – Recommended approach focusing on key areas near the dam and Route 15

Elizabeth Dow asked whether the sediment had been evaluated as clean material. Jessica responded that testing conducted at two locations indicated the sediment was clean; however, a more comprehensive analysis would be required to confirm conditions across the entire site.

Cost Estimates:

- Total dam removal: \$4–9 million
- Sediment removal: \$1.5–4.5 million
- Site restoration: \$50,000–1.5 million

Emily explained that the project is now 30% and the next step would be to talk to the owners, partners, and stakeholders. They would also need to get additional data and site assessment and potentially move onto removal design.

Paul Fixx asked whether there has been any consideration of removing the Jackson Dam while still protecting Alder Brook, potentially by creating an alternative structure. Emily responded that this scenario has not been modeled.

Jake Lester raised questions about potential downstream impacts, including effects on the ecosystem, bridges, downstream dams, sediment loading, how far sediment could travel, and whether flow rates and water velocities would increase.

Jessica explained that the Town currently has a wall within the river channel that remains full much of the year. If sediment were drawn down, that area would have increased capacity. She also noted that removing the dam would allow for more floodplain storage. A comparison between the existing storage behind the dam and the potential floodplain storage is still being considered.

Jake also asked where the sediment would ultimately be deposited. The team indicated that this is an area they plan to study further, including how much sediment is present and where it is likely to travel. Jake added that downstream floodplains could help slow the water and influence sediment deposition.

Tim asked if the removal of the dam would have any effect on the Wolcott Hydro Plant. Jessica stated that although in the past they were connected, they are not anymore and it would not have an effect. Scott Johnstone agreed that the dam does not release enough water to generate viable power.

Lesa raised concerns that hydraulic mapping does not always align with real-world conditions and asked how the project might affect the water table for residents around the lake, particularly those relying on wells. She also mentioned environmental considerations, including the presence of beaver dams, loons, and fish movement, and asked whether these factors have been studied or accounted for. Lesa noted that she may be able to provide additional data and shared that the state previously removed sediment in the area. She also emphasized that Hardwick Lake is often one of the first open-water areas for migrating flocks, and that changes could impact those patterns.

Emily acknowledged that there are still significant data gaps, noting that the team had a limited budget of \$25,000 for data collection. Jessica added that the purpose of the presentation is to help identify areas requiring further study, highlighting impacts to wells as an important example.

Eric Jonathan stated that he does not agree with changing the elements of the earth; more specifically, changing the movement of water.

Roger Prevot asked about the feasibility study cost, noting that it could reach into the millions, and questioned where the funding would come from, particularly from a taxpayer perspective.

Emily responded by encouraging consideration of the cost of not removing the dam, including ongoing maintenance expenses. She added that there may be external funding sources available and expressed doubt that there would be sufficient funding to support a "do nothing" approach long term.

Roger emphasized the need for clear limits on spending and noted that any plan should be financially reasonable and publicly appealing.

Jessica discussed the value of a phased approach, explaining that it would provide flexibility to adjust the plan, identify cost-saving opportunities, determine where no action may be appropriate, and allow time to gather additional data. She advocated for this approach to develop a more informed and practical plan moving forward.

David clarified for the record that neither municipal funds nor Hardwick Electric funds were used to cover the \$25,000 spent on the study.

Ceilidh discussed the need for the Town and HED to better understand funding before moving forward and raised the idea of temporarily drawing down the lake to observe impacts. Jessica noted this could require regulatory approval (e.g., DEC, Army Corps) and may fit into a phased approach but clarified it would not involve construction costs.

Ceilidh also asked about potential development and changes to the 100-year floodplain (e.g., Lamoille Ford). Jessica said development within the lake footprint is unlikely, though passive recreation may be possible. Emily added that more visualization is needed to understand future conditions.

Lesia raised concerns about drought, flooding, wells, wildlife, and sediment. Jessica said these impacts have not all been studied and require further analysis. Emily confirmed there is no current plan to intentionally draw down the lake, noting recent low levels were due to drought.

Paul asked if the Hardwick Select Board and Hardwick Electric collaborated before the meeting regarding future steps. Ceilidh said the boards will review the report, assess available data, and then develop a plan. Several members, including Roger, agreed more information is needed before making decisions. Ceilidh requested cost estimates for next steps, and Emily said she intends to secure funding (not from the Town) to advance the project.

Dave Gross emphasized the need for more data, alignment with the Town Plan, and a gradual approach.

Norma Wiesen encouraged making the information available.

Upon motion by Larry Fliegelman, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve to have SLR and Emily Finnegan gather further information, cost estimates, and funding options to get it to design phase.

There was a 5-minute recess.

6:44 P.M. – 6:35 P.M. Item #2 Discussion of Caspian Beach (owned by the Town of Hardwick), including current and future uses, community expectations, and coordination with the Hardwick Electric Department to ensure all operational, maintenance, and infrastructure needs are effectively addressed

Will Marlier (Orleans County Conservation District, Lake Watershed Specialist), accompanied by Dana Allen, presented on the beach restoration project. See attachment for further details. He explained they are currently working toward a 30% design through grant funding and would hold a broader public forum if the project moves forward. The goal is to gather feedback on the design before advancing to a final plan.

Paul asked whether the Beach Committee had been involved. David noted that only representatives from the two towns were present. Roger asked about the overall goal, and Will explained that the primary focus is water quality improvement, with secondary benefits including habitat enhancement (pollinators, birds) and reducing runoff into the lake.

Dana outlined proposed improvements aimed at minimizing impact on current use, including a concrete trench drain to capture sediment, concrete boat ramp, parking lot improvements, a defined walkway system to guide foot traffic, small retaining features, and added vegetation for erosion control. The plan avoids major changes like riprap or altering the dam area. A wider tree buffer (up to 50 feet) is proposed, which would reduce lawn space but improve water quality.

Norma Spaulding raised concerns about impacts to seating areas, shade, and use of the grass space. Larry raised concerns about the view of the beach from the granite blocks. He has concerns about placing

shrubs in front of the granite blocks. Will noted that final plant selections and layout are not yet determined and would be refined with input.

Eric asked what prompted this. Will explained the project originated from lake assessments starting in 2020, identifying runoff. Stew Arnold confirmed this is an issue across the whole lake.

Ceilidh emphasized the need for more public input. Will agreed and noted he could apply for additional grant funding and could serve as project manager if the project advances. Regulatory approval would need to be required, and subcontractors would be hired as needed.

Paul asked about long-term maintenance and Will and Dana noted that maintenance would be relatively low, including periodic sediment removal from drains.

Paul also asked if this would affect Act 250 and Act 248. It was confirmed that the project would not trigger Act 250 or Act 248 regulations.

Will outlined a tentative timeline: apply for next-round funding this summer, complete design, and outreach in fall/winter, and potentially begin implementation in summer 2027. He noted flexibility depending on funding and community input.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Derek Richardson, the Select Board voted to approve three to one, and one abstention to advise Will to get more information to get this project to 100% design and implementation with more public engagement.

Ceilidh- yea

Shari- yea

Derek- yea

Tim- nay

Larry- abstained

No Select Board Reports, New Business, Old Business – None

7:25 P.M. Ceilidh Galloway- Kane, Select Board Chair, adjourned the meeting.

Minutes taken by: _____
Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator

Minutes approved by: _____
Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Select Board Chair