

Jackson Dam Project Steering Committee

Approved by Hardwick Select Board on June 18, 2026

Purpose

The Jackson Dam Steering Committee will provide a structured forum for community engagement, project communication, and coordination as the project moves from feasibility analysis into design and future planning phases.

The committee will serve in an advisory capacity and will not have decision-making authority. Project funding, grant administration, engineering services, consultant procurement, and contract management will be administered by project partners, including the Caledonia County Natural Resources Conservation District and other participating organizations. Decisions regarding the future of Jackson Dam, municipal actions, and other matters within their respective jurisdictions will remain the responsibility of the Hardwick Select Board and the Hardwick Electric Department Commissioners.

The committee is intended to provide a venue for coordination among project partners, Hardwick Electric Department, municipal officials, businesses, and community members as the project advances.

Why This Matters

The Town has received consistent feedback that major projects benefit from stronger communication and more opportunities for public participation. Establishing a steering committee creates a clear structure for community involvement while ensuring that information is shared early, consistently, and transparently throughout the project.

The committee is intended to support the public engagement process that will accompany future planning, study, and design efforts associated with the project.

Successful long-term planning for Jackson Dam will require close coordination among the Hardwick Select Board, Hardwick Electric Department, project partners, local businesses, residents, and other stakeholders. Because the dam is owned and operated by Hardwick Electric Department, meaningful participation by HED will be essential throughout the design, public engagement, and decision-making process. The steering committee provides a forum for those perspectives to be heard and incorporated into ongoing project discussions.

Goals

The committee will:

- Support transparent and consistent communication with the public.

- Help identify community questions, concerns, and information needs.
- Assist in planning public meetings, community conversations, and other outreach activities.
- Provide community perspective as the project advances through future phases of study and design.
- Serve as a forum for communication among project partners, Hardwick Electric Department, municipal officials, businesses, and community members.
- Help ensure that residents have meaningful opportunities to learn about the project and provide feedback throughout the process.

Membership

The committee should remain small enough to function effectively while representing key community interests and project stakeholders. Membership may include:

- One Hardwick Electric Department Commissioner or designee.
- One representative from the Hardwick Select Board.
- One representative from the commercial district or business community.
- The Town's Resilience and Adaptation Coordinator serving as staff liaison and project point person.
- One to three at-large community members.
- Additional members as determined appropriate by the Select Board and Hardwick Electric Department.

Technical advisors, regulatory agencies, consultants, project partners, and other subject matter experts may participate in meetings as needed but will not serve as standing members unless specifically appointed.

Appointment Process

Initial members will be identified through consultation among project partners, Hardwick Electric Department, the Select Board, Town staff, and community stakeholders and will be confirmed by the Select Board.

The committee may recommend additional members as new needs, expertise, or community perspectives are identified during the project. Any additions to the committee will be subject to Select Board confirmation.

This approach allows the committee to evolve as the project progresses while maintaining transparency and accountability.

Meetings

The Town's Resilience and Adaptation Coordinator will convene meetings in coordination with project partners.

The committee will meet as needed throughout the design and public engagement process.

Meetings may include:

- Project updates from consultants and partners.
- Review of public feedback and questions.
- Planning for community outreach events.
- Identification of information needs and future discussion topics.
- Coordination of communication and education efforts.

Meetings will be conducted in accordance with applicable public meeting requirements.

Public Engagement

One of the committee's primary responsibilities will be helping organize and support public engagement activities.

Potential activities may include:

- Community presentations.
- Informal community gatherings or potlucks.
- Listening sessions.
- Topic-specific meetings addressing issues such as sediment management, recreation, hydropower potential, ecology, dam safety, project costs, and other community concerns.
- Development of project information materials and updates.

Public input gathered through these activities will help inform future project development and community education efforts.

Reporting

The committee will provide periodic updates to the Select Board regarding project progress, public engagement activities, and emerging community concerns.

Duration

The Steering Committee will remain active through the study, design, and public engagement phases of the Jackson Dam project. The Select Board may modify, continue, or dissolve the committee as project needs evolve.

Next Steps

Upon Select Board authorization, prospective members will be identified and invited to participate. A proposed membership list will be brought back to the Select Board for confirmation.

Following confirmation, the committee will begin work on a public engagement strategy and assist in organizing the next phase of community outreach associated with the Jackson Dam project.