MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2026
HARDWICK MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3rd FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM

Select Board	Others Present	Others Present
Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Chair	David Upson, Town Manager	Scott Johnstone
Shari Cornish, Vice Chair- absent	Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator	Renae DiGregorio
Tim Ricciardello	Mike Henry, Police Chief	Ken Leslie
Larry Fliegelman	Tonia Chase, Town Clerk	Daniel Baumann
Derek Richardson		Michael Miller- *Zoom*
		Patrick Kane

Regular Meeting

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

6:00 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – *Add an item for the Select Board to consider approving Ken Leslie to fill the library trustee vacant seat until March 2027 and make it item #1 and move other items down accordingly.*

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Derek Richardson, the Select Board voted to adjust the agenda, as stated.

6:02 P.M. Communication from the audience – None

6:00 P.M. Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of September 3, 2026

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Larry Fliegelman, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of September 3, 2026.

6:03P.M. – 6:06 P.M. Hardwick Police Department (HPD) Report – Given by Mike Henry

Mike reported that Joe Donna has decided to change from a full-time officer to a part-time officer as he has taken a full-time position with the Caledonia County Sherriff's Department. Sergeant Brunelle has been at the academy getting recertified for firearm instruction. He will now be certified for another two years. Corporal Mitchell has been testifying in federal court this week and things are going well. Hardwick Elementary's open house is tonight, and Officer Morris is there and will have a table set up.

Mike also reported that the department is still working on the radio system. Two out of three repeaters have been installed. The third is going on the Greensboro Fire Department, which will give more coverage in East Hardwick.

Lastly, there have been several issues and complaints regarding the traffic lights. The department has increased patrols at the three intersections.

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

David reported that work will begin at the Post Office tomorrow and continue throughout the remainder of the month. The sidewalk and entrance will be modified. The Town is not doing the work but is communicating and coordinating with the property owner.

NVDA will be hosting two public meetings in Newport to finalize the regional plan.

Work is continuing on the pedestrian bridge. Crews are currently working on the light posts, forming the granite curbing, installing the concrete sidewalk, and then will move on to the pavers. A community gathering is planned for October 9 and 10. The goal is to get as far along as possible and open a portion of the site for a soft opening.

Public meetings are scheduled for October 8 and October 22 to discuss the Essential Services project. The first meeting will focus on why the project is needed, and the second will focus on how the project will be funded. The meetings will be held in the Parker Ladd Community Room at the Jeudevine Memorial Library.

David reported that the office has been busy working on audit items. There is also a financial monitoring audit from the Department of Public Safety (DPS) that Casey is working on.

Lastly, the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the wastewater treatment facility remains open. Firms can submit questions through next week. Staff has also been working on a grant application for the wastewater treatment facility, which he plans to submit tomorrow.

6:11 P.M. – 6:14 P.M. Hardwick Electric Department (HED) Report – Given by Renae DiGregorio

Scott and Renae reported that after 52 years of service, Brian Forant has retired. Jamie Dailey was rehired as the Operations Manager.

The Smart Meter project will begin soon. Customers will receive more information as the project gets underway, including an opportunity to opt out and information on how to request additional details.

The 2025 audit is expected to be completed soon.

The rate case took approximately 14 months to complete. The approved rate was approximately half of what was originally requested, requiring another filing to make up the difference. This presents a short-term challenge, but a plan is in place to address it.

6:14 P.M. – 6:16 P.M. Item #1 Select Board to consider approving Ken Leslie to fill the library trustee vacant seat until March 2027

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Larry Fliegelman, the Select Board voted to nominate Ken Leslie to fill the library trustee seat term expiring March 2027.

6:16 P.M. –6:46 P.M. Item #2— Select Board to review the necessity resolution and bond vote warning for the Highway Garage Bond - *Action Needed*

The resolution explains the need for the project and the need to borrow the funds. Following approval of the resolution, the Town will need to advertise and hold public meetings. The overall project includes three facilities; however, the bond vote only represents the Town Highway facility.

Ceilidh asked whether the bond amount is flexible. David explained that the amount is up to $6 million. The project could cost less, but the Town cannot borrow more than the amount stated in the warning. If the full $6 million is not needed, the Town would not borrow the full amount. The amount is based on the current project estimates and is what will be included in the article as the Town can't change the wording.

Ceilidh asked when the Town would know the amount needed. David explained that the current amount is based on the project estimates available at this time.

Derek asked what would happen if the project required more funding. David stated that there would be risk measures in place to help prevent the project from exceeding the approved amount.

Larry asked whether the $6 million represents the plan that best meets the Town's needs. He noted that he has reviewed several different plans. David explained that the Hardwick Rescue Squad (HRS) portion of the project was reduced in size, but a third bay was added. The Town Highway shop was removed, and the existing cold storage space would be utilized. David stated that changes have been made throughout the first phase of planning to make the project as cost-effective as possible.

Ceilidh asked how the cost of the overall site work would be allocated. David explained that the site work would be shared among the three entities.

Patrick Kane questioned whether the Town could afford a $6 million town garage. Larry stated that he believes the Town cannot afford not to have it. Tim noted that the Town has already committed to setting funds aside, but it cannot afford to address every issue at once. The Town Garage is undersized, and the supporting structures are deteriorating. If the bond does not move forward, the Town will still need to take action to address and mitigate issues with the existing building. Patrick referenced Woodbury, noting that the project there started with a high cost and raised concerns about construction costs increasing. He suggested that looking at the project differently or asking certain questions could potentially identify ways to save money. David explained that there are several factors to consider, including the age of the facility and the fact that it barely meets the Town's current needs. He does not want the Town to be in a position where it needs to pursue another bond in an emergency because the existing building has deteriorated further. David acknowledged that the Town cannot afford to pay $6 million outright today but believes the community could afford the payments over a 20-year term when considering the longevity of the facility. It was suggested by Patrick that a new facility could have limited heat, and David stated that suggestion is not adequate as employees should not work in a cold facility and in the middle of the winter the Town truck would have a hard time starting and operating if they were stored in the cold. There are certain improvements needed to keep Town operations moving forward.

Ceilidh asked why the Town is pursuing the bond now rather than waiting until Town Meeting. David explained that there are two bond pools each year. If we get a bond pool now, we will close around the start of our fiscal year in July. If we waited, then we would have to wait to apply for the bond, and not close on it until the Fall of 2027, which delays construction. David stated that timing is an important factor.

*Correction to this after the meeting- If the $6 million bond is approved, the Town could initially use a Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) rather than borrowing the full $6 million. This would allow the Town to better determine the actual project costs before committing to the final bond amount and could reduce the amount ultimately borrowed. The Town could then participate in a future Vermont Bond Bank borrowing pool for the long-term financing. *

Patrick asked about the cost of reinforcing the columns in the existing facility. David estimated the cost at approximately $150,000. He explained that reinforcing the columns internally would be easier, but it would not address the space limitations of the existing facility. Patrick noted that $150,000 would be a relatively low-cost option for addressing structural concerns. David clarified that the $6 million bond would be for the Town Garage, while the $150,000 repair would not address the needs of the Fire Department or HRS. The larger project would also address site work and provide strategic opportunities rather than continuing to piece together improvements to the existing facilities. Patrick suggested reinforcing the existing building now if the Town is concerned about the possibility of the building failing before the bond pool closes. David stated that the Town has some capital available to put toward a project like that, if necessary, but if the money does not need to be spent, it would be better to preserve those funds. He added that if the bond does not pass, the Town would need to determine how to proceed.

Renae asked how the $6 million bond would affect Town taxpayers, noting an estimated $400,000 impact in the first year; which would be around the cost of the first payment. She asked whether there are other funding sources that could be used to lessen the impact. Ceilidh suggested using fund balance as one potential option. David explained that the Town could use fund balance, but doing so would bring the Town below its established fund balance threshold. Renae stated that additional public education would be helpful, particularly regarding what would change for taxpayers and what the financial impact would look like under current economic conditions. She believes there is general agreement that the project needs to happen but wants to ensure taxpayers understand how it would affect them. Ceilidh agreed that understanding the impact on taxpayers is an important consideration.

The bond vote will happen November 3, 2026.

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Larry Fliegelman, the Select Board voted 3 to 1 to approve the resolution and the bond warning for the Town Highway bond.

Tim- yea
Derek- yea
Larry- yea
Ceilidh- nay

6:46 P.M. – 7:02 P.M. Item #2 — Select Board to discuss and consider approval for a Community National Bank Note for HED in the amount of $800,000 for the purchase of the new facility in East Hardwick- *Action Needed*

Scott reported that Hardwick Electric Department is hoping to purchase a property location at 1868 Route 16 in East Hardwick. The purchase addresses two challenges. First, the current shop is located in the floodplain, and relocating the shop would address that issue. Second, the purchase provides an opportunity to identify new uses for the current building.

The property includes approximately 5,400 square feet of building space and eight acres. The building is approximately 30 years old and needs limited work. The addition is approximately 10 years old and is in good condition. All inspections have been completed. There are a few items that the current owners will address before closing, which is scheduled for October 16.

The building was originally designed to house trucks, making it well suited for HED's needs. The property will be owned fully by HED, which serves all of its member communities, not just Hardwick.

Renae stated that relocating the infrastructure has been a long-standing goal and that there is a significant need for the move. Everyone at HED is excited about having the operations together in one location rather than split between Route 14 and North Main Street.

Scott reported hearing from two customers who were concerned about losing the ability to drop off payments at the current location. Overall, there has not been significant concern from customers.

Renae explained that the financing is structured over 20 years, with payments beginning in September 2027. The first five years the annual payments are $66,149.56 with a fixed interest rate of 5.38%. The next fourteen years the annual payments will be $66,990.87 with a variable interest rate based on the Federal Home Loan Bank Classic Advance rate plus a fix 1.40% margin. The final payment will be $66,990.76, subject to any changes in the variable interest rate and the remaining principal and accrued interest.

HED has also explored other financing options to minimize the amount that needs to be borrowed. There are no closing costs, reports, or inspection costs associated with the financing. One option was to use a note for the purchase. A longer-term financing option was also explored, but it would carry an interest rate approximately two percentage points higher. The current option would have a five-year fixed rate followed by 15 years at a variable rate. The note would be tax-exempt.

There are several surplus items that will remain at the facility. HED plans to sell those items in the future to help recover some of the costs.

Derek asked whether the property could accommodate additional space since some of the trucks may not fit. Scott explained that the larger trucks will fit, but the pickup trucks will not. HED could potentially construct a pole barn in the future. The plan is to use the property for a couple of years and determine how the space works before making additional improvements.

Derek asked about the inspections. Scott explained that the bank did not require inspections at different levels, but inspections of the property were completed. Derek also asked whether there were any building-code concerns. Scott stated that there may not be a fire wall between the garage and office areas and that he will investigate the issue after closing.

Renae discussed the potential for rate increases and noted that the projected impact is approximately a 1% increase. She stated that this projection was filed without including any proceeds from the property across the street.

Derek noted that there is currently approximately $600,000 in debt, with another $800,000 now being considered, and asked whether this could create a financial burden. Scott explained that HED plans to make additional investments and updates over the next several years. As financing changes and existing debt is paid down, HED's debt-to-income ratio will also change. Additional information will be provided as part of the next item.

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Larry Fliegelman, the Select Board voted to approve a Community National Bank Note for HED in the amount of $800,000 for the purchase of the new facility in East Hardwick.

7:02 P.M. – 7:10 P.M. Item #3 — Select Board to discuss two Union Bank Capital Notes for HED, each in the amount of $300,000 for a 10-year term, to finance capital work and projects planned for completion during the remainder of 2026

Scott stated that no action is needed tonight.

HED is experiencing cash flow challenges. Due to the timing of the projects, the financing has been divided into two notes: one for capital work that has already been completed and another for work planned over the next three months to upgrade the system.

Under state statutes, there are parameters regarding the financial decisions HED can make. If the debt exceeds the established ratio, the matter must go to the taxpayers for a vote.

Renae explained that HED has been trying to use available cash to invest in the operating system, but doing so makes it difficult to have enough cash available at the end of the year for infrastructure upgrades. To minimize the impact on ratepayers, spreading the costs over time is a better approach. This allows the costs to be shared over the useful life of the improvements rather than requiring current ratepayers to pay for the entire investment upfront. Renae noted that this is consistent with how other utilities in the area handle these types of investments.

The goal is to bring more information to the Select Board on October 1, with the two projects scheduled to begin the following Monday. A special HED meeting will be held on September 30 at 9:30 a.m. to review the documents.

Scott also discussed HED's capital plan. Over the next few months, the Town will see a 10-year capital plan outlining HED's anticipated capital needs and projects.

7:11 P.M. – 7:14 P.M. Item #4— Select Board to appoint three board members and alternate(s) to the Development Review Board (DRB) - *Action Needed*
The Select Board has received four letters of interest.

Upon motion by Larry Fliegelman, seconded by Tim Ricciardello the Select Board voted to appoint Daphne Kalmar to fill an existing term expiring 6/30/2028, Peter Moskovitz to fill an existing term expiring 6/30/2028, Joe Nudell to fill an existing term expiring 6/30/2029, and Grace Johnstone as an alternate.

7:14 P.M. – 7:15 P.M. Item #5— Select Board to consider approving a Manufacturers Tier 3 renewal for Tilia

Processing LLC - *Action Needed*

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Larry Fliegelman, the Select Board voted to approve a Manufacturers Tier 3 renewal for Tilia Processing LLC.

7:15 P.M. – 7:15 P.M. Item #6— Select Board to consider approving a Cultivation Tier 1 Renewal License for DCB LLC - *Action Needed*

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Derek Richardson, the Select Board voted to approve a Cultivation Tier 1 renewal license for DCB LLC.

7:15 P.M. – 7:16 P.M. Item #7— Select Board to consider approving a Cultivation Tier 3 Renewal License for The Clean Cannabis Company - *Action Needed*

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Larry Fliegelman, the Select Board voted to approve a Cultivation Tier 3 renewal license for The Clean Cannabis Company.

7:16 P.M. – 7:19 P.M. Item #8— Select Board to review the North Main Street Stormwater bids, select a contractor, and authorize the Town Manager to execute a contract – *Action Needed*

The Town received five bids for this project. See attached document for further details.

Upon motion by Larry Fliegelman, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to select Gravel Construction and authorize the Town Manager to execute a contract in the amount of $29,107.00. Derek abstained.

7:19 P.M. – 7:30 P.M. Item #9— Select Board to review and approve the MOU for the Hardwick Rescue portion of the Essential Services Project- *Action Needed*

Ceilidh explained that part of the goal is to have all three portions of the project move forward concurrently. She asked David to provide an update on Hardwick Rescue's anticipated timeline, based on his communication with them. David did not provide an update at that time and subsequently left the meeting for the remainder of the meeting.

Derek asked about the proposed construction cost allocation 72% for the Town and 28% for HRS. It was clarified that this allocation is separate from the $6 million bond vote. The Town does not yet know how much

FEMA funding will be available for the Fire Department portion of the project. The project also includes shared space and site work.

The proposed percentages were provided by the architect. The Board could decide not to include the percentages; however, members want to better understand how the costs are being allocated. Larry asked about the urgency of the project. The percentages themselves are not necessarily a sticking point, but the Board wants clarification on where the numbers came from, including how costs related to soil contamination were determined.

The Select Board did not make a motion. Instead, members developed a list of questions to bring back to HRS:

1. More information is needed on why the Town would be responsible for all costs associated with the soil contamination.
2. Clarification is needed regarding the 72%/28% allocation, including what each percentage represents and specifically which costs and buildings are covered. The Board would also like to understand whether the allocation is based on the size or use of the Fire Department and HRS portions of the project.
3. Clarification is needed regarding the purpose of the $4.1 million amount and what portion relates to the Fire Department. The Town is hoping that approximately 90% of the Fire Department portion will be covered by FEMA; however, the overall Fire Department project cost is not included in the current MOU.
4. Clarification is needed regarding how ongoing operational costs will be shared. Specifically, the Board wants to know whether operational costs will be divided using the same 72%/28% ratio as the construction costs or whether a different allocation will be used.

Additional questions may come up between now and October 1. The Board would also like representation from HRS at the discussion. A Select Board member should speak with the Town Office to better understand its perspective on the project.

7:31 P.M. – 7:31 P.M. Item #10— Select Board to authorize the Town Manager to submit the USDA Rural Development Funding Application for the Wastewater Treatment Facility and discuss having a public hearing – *Action needed*

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Larry Fliegelman, the Select Board voted to authorize the Town Manager to submit the USDA Rural Development Funding Application for the Wastewater Treatment Facility.

Select Board Reports

- Derek reported that the Post Office parking lot will be shut down from Friday morning to Monday.

New Business- None

Old Business

Larry reported that the Town Meeting Task Force survey has received a strong response and will remain open until September 29 at 6:00 p.m. A community gathering will be held October 14 at 6:00 p.m. on the third floor of the Memorial Building to discuss the survey and future options. A report will be presented at the November 19 Select Board meeting.

7:35 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