

**MINUTES SPECIAL SELECT BOARD MEETING
INFORMATIONAL MEETING
TOWN GARAGE BOND VOTE
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, October 8, 2026
PARKER LADD COMMUNITY ROOM
193 NORTH MAIN STREET
VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

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

Others Present

David Upson, Town Manager
Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator
Tom Fadden, Road Foreman
Michael Lew-Smith- President Hardwick Rescue
Tyler Lebeau- *Zoom*

Others Present

See Attached List

Special Meeting

6:09 P.M. David Upson Jr., Town Manager called the Informational Meeting to order.

6:09 P.M. Set/adjust agenda - none

6:09 P.M. – 6:1 P.M. Item #1 Select Board to discuss the need for the Town of Hardwick to construct an Essential Services Complex, review the proposed design, and discuss next steps.

David opened the meeting with introductory comments outlining its purpose, emphasizing the importance of community participation, and understanding the choices and opportunities ahead. He also noted that information would be available on the Town website under the Essential Services section.

Tom explained that the current Highway Garage no longer meets the Town's operational needs and is beyond reasonable maintenance and repair. With plows attached, trucks sit approximately five feet from the back wall, making it difficult for staff to move around and perform necessary maintenance. One support beam is completely rotted and leaning, while other beams are deteriorating. The building also has a leaking roof, a deteriorating ceiling, black mold, and six major structural cracks. The crew needs adequate space to work on trucks and a wash bay to help prevent rust caused by road salt.

David explained that the Fire Department flooded in both 2023 and 2024. If repairs exceed 50% of the building's value, the Town has three options: elevate the building, dry-proof it, or relocate it. Elevating the building could create a rise scenario that would negatively affect residents on Wolcott Street and Granite Street during future flooding. Dry proofing remains under consideration, but relocation may be the best option to remove the facility from the flood zone. David also noted that even though the Fire Station is currently operational, the Town Plan calls for critical assets to be located above flood levels to ensure first responders can respond quickly to emergencies, regardless of conditions.

Michael Lew-Smith, President of the Hardwick Rescue Squad (HRS), explained that when the building was constructed in 1982, the organization had minimal staffing and responded to approximately 200 calls annually. Today, HRS has 40–50 members and responds to approximately 1,000 calls each year. HRS is a nonprofit, and leases property from the Town. HRS has four full-time employees, maintains 24/7 staffing, and also employs per diem staff.

The original building includes two bays, a storage area, and two downstairs rooms. However, the building now has roof leaks, plumbing issues, and electrical problems. HRS would prefer to avoid investing in the existing building if it is not necessary. The organization explored alternative locations and rebuilding on the current property. When HRS learned that the Town was considering rebuilding the Highway Garage, it expressed interest in partnering with the Town. HRS would fund its portion of the project separately.

David reported that the Town received a Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP) grant in 2025 and issued a request for proposals (RFP) seeking an architectural firm to assess the property and evaluate options for all three buildings. After considering several firms, the Town selected Vermont Integrated Architecture (VIA). David noted that the Town has been completing portions of the project as opportunities arise to keep the overall effort moving forward.

Ely Fretz of VIA presented the proposed design. Creamery Road would need to be straightened, and the buildings would be pushed back into the bank. The design aims to maximize the use of the rail trail and parking areas while reusing portions of the existing buildings where it is possible to help control costs. The goal is to make the most efficient use of the available space while incorporating necessary features, including a vehicle wash bay. Ely also reviewed the proposed square footage for each building. See the PowerPoint presentation for additional details.

David explained that the proposed \$6 million bond would cover the Highway Garage and a portion of the site work. The Town is also negotiating with FEMA in hopes of securing funding for some of the site work, particularly given the Fire Department's relocation to the proposed site. The current funding plan includes separate funding sources for each facility: the Highway Garage would be funded through the bond, the Fire Department through FEMA, and HRS through its own funding.

David emphasized that voter approval of the bond would demonstrate community support for the project, potentially strengthening the Town's position in its discussions with FEMA.

The overall project is estimated to cost approximately \$14.8 million, with the following preliminary breakdown:

- Highway Garage: \$6 million
- Fire Department: \$2.9 million
- Hardwick Rescue Squad: \$3.3 million
- Site work: More than \$2.6 million

David reviewed the anticipated bond payments and potential impact on the Town budget. The current

budget includes approximately \$150,000 toward the initial payment. The FY28 budget would increase \$130,000 to put towards the initial payment, with FY29 representing the remaining amount, making the grand total of the first full payment approximately \$475,000. These figures will depend on the final borrowing amount and project schedule.

The estimated tax impact for the first year would be approximately \$40 per \$100,000 of assessed property value, increasing to approximately \$60 per \$100,000 in the second year. Bond payments are expected to decrease in the fourth year of the bond. The Town plans to seek competitive interest rates and apply for a bond anticipation note (BAN). Once the project is complete and the final borrowing amount is known, the Town will convert the temporary financing into a permanent bond.

David also noted that the Town may need to invest between \$150,000 and \$300,000 in the existing Highway Garage to maintain operations and address urgent issues while the larger project moves forward to avoid emergency repairs happening.

Bill White asked where the Highway Department would operate during construction and whether there would be additional costs. David explained that the project would be completed in phases. For example, a portion of the new Highway Garage would be constructed before the existing garage is demolished. HRS would temporarily store its trucks at the Fire Station and operate out of the Community Building while its new facility is being constructed.

Maggie McGuire asked whether the proposed design would accommodate larger trucks in the future and whether the new facilities would be appropriately sized to maximize efficiency. Perley Allen, Fire Chief, stated that the Fire Department's trucks are already as large as they expect them to be.

Shari Cornish asked David to explain why the Town was pursuing the bond vote at this time. David explained that both the Town and HRS want to keep the project moving forward, as further delays would push back the anticipated construction start date. If the bond fails now, the plan is to retry in the Spring.

Ceilidh asked David to explain the bond schedule. David explained that there are two bond issuance periods available, summer and winter. The Town hopes to apply for a bond anticipation note (BAN), but voter approval is still necessary to authorize the borrowing amount and allow the Town to transition to permanent bond financing when appropriate.

Ross Connelly asked whether the Fire Department and HRS could wash their trucks in the Highway Garage. David stated that the goal is to maximize space and operational efficiencies, and a shared-use agreement could be considered if feasible.

Holly Williams asked whether the Fire Department and HRS portions of the project could proceed if the bond failed. David explained that HRS would need to determine whether to continue discussions with the Town or pursue another property. Michael Lew-Smith added that the situation was complicated and that it would be difficult to speculate about potential outcomes. Eric Remick gave a short answer of no. Holly

then asked about the Fire Department, noting that its current location would remain in the flood zone. David stated that the project could be reconfigured and that the Town remained open to alternative ideas. Perley Allen noted that relocating the Fire Department to Creamery Road would be preferable to moving it elsewhere, as the Town already owns the property.

David reminded residents that the State had mailed ballots for the November 3 election, but the bond vote was not included in that mailing. Residents wishing to vote on the bond must contact the Town Clerk's Office to request a ballot or vote in person on November 3.

Perley Allen asked when construction was expected to begin. David stated that the anticipated groundbreaking would be in 2028 if the bond passes. Holly Williams asked whether the existing Highway Garage could remain operational until then. David said that was the hope, noting that the budget includes capital funds for necessary repairs in the meantime.

Ranny Bledsoe asked about public outreach efforts to inform voters. David noted that another public meeting was scheduled for October 22 and that the Town had distributed flyers. HCTV covered the meeting and was expected to cover the October 22 meeting as well. Additional outreach included word of mouth, the Town website, and the *Hardwick Gazette*. Maggie McGuire questioned how many residents would see these notices and asked whether the Town could mail information directly to residents. David stated that a mailing would cost approximately \$2,600, but the Town could consider that option.

Shari Cornish noted that Creamery Road is located within the designated Downtown and may qualify for tax credits.

Tom offered tours of the existing Highway Garage, available Monday through Friday, for anyone interested in seeing its current condition firsthand. David concluded by noting that Town staff, HRS staff, and Fire Department staff were available to answer questions about the project.

7:16 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