

**MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2026
HARDWICK MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3rd FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

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

Others Present

David Upson, Town Manager
Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator
Tom Fadden, Road Foreman
Renaë DiGregorio, HED
Julie Sullivan
Lucian Avery
Margie Prevot
Michael Lew-Smith
Hannah Redmon-*Zoom*
Rachel Kane
Rob Alcusky

Others Present

Andrew Gilbert
Brendan Buckley
Paul Cillo
Jack Travelstead
Paul Fixx
Michael Miller- *Zoom*
Danny Hale- *Zoom*
Paul Fixx- *Zoom*
Eric Remick
Amy Rosenthal
Derek Williams

Regular Meeting

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

6:00 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – None

6:00 P.M. Communication from the audience – None

6:02 P.M. Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of September 17, 2026, and the minutes of the Select Board retreat of September 25, 2026

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of September 17, 2026, and the Retreat minutes of September 25, 2026.

6:02 P.M. – 6:14 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David reported that the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) work has begun. The first project is on Brush Street, where the bank is being armored to prevent further erosion. An asbestos inspection is also being completed at the old Cooper House on Brush Street in preparation for the demolition of the building.

There was a railroad track celebration at the Depot building this past Sunday, which was well attended. The Trailhead Project next to the Depot has also been completed.

The Fire Department project with FEMA is continuing to move forward, although progress has been slow. There is still no movement on the obligation for the Wastewater Treatment Facility project. The project is currently held up but is expected to move forward soon.

Work on the pedestrian bridge is progressing smoothly. The concrete sidewalks have been poured, and work on the pavers is expected to begin Monday. The current goal is to have traffic reopened to two lanes within the next two weeks. This timeline could change, but that is the Town's goal as of now.

NVDA has finally secured a senior traffic planner to work in East Hardwick. The planner will be looking at the area between Bayley-Hazen Road and Cedar Street, which was identified in the Better Connections Plan.

The Town's tax sale was held on September 24. Two properties from the 2024–2025 tax year were sold.

David also gave a shoutout to the East Hardwick crew for their work on the pavilion roof on Stevens Lane. The project has been a great example of community effort.

David reported that the Town recently experienced a malware/phishing attempt that caused some disruption for office staff. The Town has network monitoring and firewall protections in place, and Blue Mantis assisted the Town in responding to the incident. Everyone was required to change their passwords, and no information was lost.

Paul Fixx reported that he received the suspicious emails and expressed concern about the attack and the potential damage to the community, particularly because the link in the email appeared to be requesting information. It was noted that most individuals who received the link were unable to open it. David stated that the Town went above and beyond by sending a TextMyGov alert and an email notification to inform the community of what had occurred. The notifications recommended that individuals contact their IT provider or change their passwords as a precaution. David stated that incidents such as this happen frequently and that no information was shared as a result of the incident. Paul disagreed, stating that email addresses had been shared. Ceilidh asked Paul to reach out to David individually to discuss the matter further.

Additionally, there will be a Jackson Dam presentation on Monday, October 5, at 6:00 p.m. at the Hardwick Memorial Building and available via Zoom. This will be the first public conversation regarding Jackson Dam. Further information is available on the Town's website.

6:14 P.M. – 6:18 P.M. Hardwick Road Foreman Report – Given by Tom Fadden

Tom reported on several completed projects, including work on Bridgman Road and Town Farm Road, upsizing three different culverts, and completing a culvert project on West Hill Road. The retaining wall on Kate Brook Road has also been completed. Grading work has been completed on Tucker Road, West Hill Road, Bunker Hill, Bridgman Hill Road, Billings Road, Morin Road, and Hunter Lane. The sidewalk in front of the Post Office has also been removed.

The new truck has been completed, and a couple members of the department will be traveling to Maine to pick it up. Two of the trucks are scheduled to go to the shop soon for repairs.

Paving is scheduled for October 22, with Highland Avenue and West Church Street potentially being closed during the work.

Shari raised a question regarding a crosswalk painting. Tom stated that this all depends on the weather.

6:18 P.M. –6:29 P.M. Item #1— Select Board to discuss and approve two Community National 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- *Action needed*

Renae reported that historically, Hardwick Electric has used available operating cash to fund significant capital investments. While this approach avoids borrowing costs, it places additional pressure on the utility's operating cash position and reduces the funds available for day-to-day operations. State regulators have changed their approach to how utility companies fund and manage capital projects, with the goal of creating more generational equity. This approach is intended to help reduce rate shock for customers and, ultimately, reduce the need for frequent rate increases. As a result, Hardwick Electric will need to borrow more funds and may need to make more frequent requests to the Select Board for approval.

The goal is to develop a long-term capital plan that allows projects to be more streamlined and planned in advance, rather than addressing projects on a piece meal basis. The first project has already been completed and included cutout replacements, pole replacements, transformer replacements, system rewiring, and reconductoring of aging distribution lines. The \$300,000 note is being used to pay for these completed projects and avoid using Hardwick Electric's operating capital, in accordance with the state's requirements. The first payment on this note is due October 1, 2027. The note has a 10-year term with a fixed interest rate of 7.195%.

The second request is for planned work involving reconductoring on the Hardwick and Greensboro circuits. This will be a line of credit with an interest rate of 4.95% per annum, with a borrowing limit of up to \$300,000.

David asked about the transportation for the culvert project on Craftsbury Road and thinks the cost of this should be FEMA work. Renae stated she would be following up with him on this project.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to approve the Community National Bank 10-year note for the amount of \$300,000, with an interest rate of 7.195% for work that has already been completed.

Upon motion by Larry Fliegelman, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the Community National Bank line of credit for remaining capital work for up to \$300,000 with an interest rate of 4.95%.

6:30 P.M. – 6:34 P.M. Item #2 — Town Meeting Options Task Force to present an update on the work up to this date.

Amy Rosenthal, Chair of the Town Meeting Options Task Force, reported that the committee has been meeting for the past six weeks and has seven additional meetings scheduled. The committee plans to bring its recommendations to the Select Board on November 19.

The committee's month-long survey was completed on September 29, with a total of 318 responses. The committee will also review the results of the Town survey conducted in March as well.

A community gathering is scheduled for October 14 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. on the third-floor meeting room of

the Memorial Building. The purpose of the gathering will be to share the survey results, review the five options the committee has been considering, and work toward making a recommendation for the Select Board.

Amy noted that some level of compromise will be necessary and expressed hope that community members will understand that the issue is more complex than initially anticipated. She emphasized that continued public engagement will be important throughout the process.

6:35 P.M. – 7:12 P.M. Item #3 — Buffalo Mountain Steering Committee to present the draft Management Plan- *Action needed*

The Buffalo Mountain Steering Committee presented a draft of the management plan, which needs to be completed and approved before the final sale of the property.

Brendan Buckley reported that the Buffalo Mountain Committee has been meeting monthly from June through September. During that time, the committee conducted a community survey, held bike and walking activities, attended the farmers market, and held a public meeting on September 28. The committee reached consensus in support of the first draft of the plan.

Paul Cillo explained that the primary document lays out the general purpose and goals for Buffalo Mountain, establishes a governance structure, and identifies potential uses for the property. The document also includes historical information that will help support future decisions regarding the property.

Margie Prevot clarified the distinction between a management plan and a conservation easement. The property will be protected by a conservation easement held by Northern Trust, which will remain in place permanently. The management plan is a separate, dynamic document that will be reviewed approximately every ten years and can be updated as needed.

Andrew Gilbert reported on the community survey conducted from June through August, which received 287 responses, including 197 responses from Hardwick residents. The survey showed strong support for natural resource protection and low-impact recreation. Concerns raised through the survey included trapping, unleashed dogs, potential development, impacts on taxes, and questions regarding who would be responsible for addressing issues related to hunting and other activities.

Paul Cillo reviewed the proposed governance structure. The Select Board would appoint members to the Buffalo Mountain Committee, with staggered three-year terms and an expectation of broad community representation. Paul noted that the current draft does not include the forestry management plan, which is expected to be completed in approximately one month and could be incorporated as an addendum if a motion is made tonight.

Julie Sullivan reviewed the recreation plan, which is intended to support diverse recreational opportunities while protecting the forest and preserving existing recreational uses. The plan includes recommendations for signage, with rustic hiking trails identified as a priority because they are relatively cost-effective. Hunting would continue to be governed by state laws and applicable seasons.

The recreation plan also includes a proposed action schedule for future committee members. Initial priorities

include developing signage for the primary entrances, meeting with a trail builder to discuss potential costs, identifying funding mechanisms, addressing parking, continuing public outreach, and keeping the Town website updated.

Larry asked about the recreational activities and whether the requirement for Town permission should include a mechanism for reviewing requests before they are brought to the Select Board. Paul explained that the Select Board would ultimately make those decisions. He noted that because the Select Board oversees the committee, the Board could potentially decide in the future to give the committee authority to make certain decisions directly.

Tim asked about the language stating that the Town may allow certain activities with written permission from the easement holder and questioned what criteria would be used to approve or deny such requests. Paul explained that this would be handled at the easement level and that the typical process would involve the Town contacting Northern Trust. Tim specifically raised the issue of ATV use and whether approval would be required to implement a trail for that purpose. Paul explained that the goals outlined in the conservation easement focus on minimizing impacts to the property and that a low-impact proposal would still require the appropriate approval.

Larry raised concerns about how future projects could affect neighboring properties, using Granite Street as an example. He questioned whether a project on the mountain could potentially increase flooding or otherwise negatively affect neighboring properties and whether the plan should include language addressing those concerns. Paul explained that one of the standards of the conservation easement is to improve and maintain flood mitigation. He noted that impacts to neighboring properties are addressed in the easement language but agreed that the Board could discuss adding additional language if it felt the issue was not adequately covered.

Ceilidh noted that she had reviewed the Wolcott forest plan and identified differences in the hunting section, particularly regarding hunting regulations, game cameras, tree stands, and enforcement. Brendan stated that the committee had not specifically discussed enforcement but wanted to approach these issues as carefully as possible without drastically changing existing uses. He noted that the language was drafted with Vermont state requirements in mind.

Eric suggested that the new committee could be responsible for monitoring tree stands or working with volunteers to address compliance. Ceilidh also asked whether the plan should include similar guidance for game cameras and tree stands. Eric agreed that the language could be revised. David noted that there are already state rules governing tree stands, and Eric explained that the proposed language is intended to mirror those requirements. Hannah Redmon noted that the tree stand rules were taken directly from state regulations. Ceilidh suggested adding a quick reference to the applicable state laws.

Ceilidh asked whether the proposed action schedule was intended for the Buffalo Mountain Committee rather than the Select Board. The committee agreed that it was. She also questioned the language regarding updating the Town webpage and whether certain responsibilities should be assigned to the committee rather than the Town. Brendan suggested that the new Buffalo Mountain Committee be charged with those responsibilities. Eric added that the purpose of the proposed action schedule is to provide guidance for the new committee and give it a starting point. He noted that the Select Board could make changes to the schedule as needed. Ceilidh suggested changing the numbered priority list, currently ranked from one through seven, into bullet

points. The Board also discussed trapping and whether the plan provides guidance for considering requests on a case-by-case basis. Brendan stated that the prior owner had received a small number of requests related to trapping but that no action had ultimately been taken. Eric said the committee had discussed trapping extensively and noted that there are numerous existing regulations through Vermont Fish & Wildlife.

The Board discussed the anticipated timeline for finalizing the plan. Brendan stated that the committee will review the feedback received, meet again on October 13, and continue meeting beyond that date if necessary. The committee hopes to have the plan finalized by the end of the year in connection with the anticipated property sale and currently feels that it is on schedule.

Paul stated that the forestry plan is expected in early November. He noted that portions of the management plan that are unlikely to change could potentially be acted upon before the forestry plan is completed, with smaller changes incorporated once the forestry plan is received. Paul suggested that acting on the portions of the plan that are already settled could help move the process forward more quickly.

The Select Board discussed whether to wait for the forestry plan before taking action. The Board expressed a preference for receiving a clean, complete version of the plan incorporating the forestry plan before final consideration, potentially at the November 5 or November 19 Select Board meeting. It was also noted that the Town will review the conservation easement before it is submitted to Northern Trust for review.

7:13 P.M. – 7:19 P.M. Item #4 - Select Board to review and approve the MOU for the Hardwick Rescue portion of the Essential Services Project- Action Needed - *Action needed*

This item was previously included on the last Select Board agenda, but the Board had several questions regarding the proposed cost allocation and project details.

Michael Lew-Smith addressed the questions raised in the previous meeting's minutes. He explained that the 72/28 cost split was provided by the architect and is based on the square footage of the space. The project includes shared training space that will be used by Hardwick Rescue Squad (HRS) and the Fire Department, with the cost of that shared space being divided between the two. David explained that the cost allocation is reflected in the project spreadsheet and that much of the difference in the percentages is related to site work. The overall project costs include both the building and associated site work.

Michael also explained that once the facility becomes operational, HRS will provide the Town with an additional Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for consideration. The MOU will outline how HRS and the Town will operate together and share the space.

Public informational meetings are scheduled for October 8 and October 22 at 6:00 p.m. in the Parker Ladd Community Room. Information will also be shared through Front Porch Forum and the Town website. The October 8 meeting will focus on the need for the project and the next steps. The October 22 meeting will focus on the funding and how the Town would pay for the project. Both meetings are expected to include an opportunity for questions and discussion. David suggested that members of Hardwick Rescue Squad attend the meetings to help answer questions regarding the operational aspects of the project.

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Derek Richardson the Select Board voted to approve the MOU

for the Hardwick Rescue portion of the Essential Services Project; pending the dates being changed to October 1.

7:19 P.M. – 7:25 P.M. Item #5— Select Board to receive an update on the Request for Proposals (RFPs) for the Wastewater Treatment Facility Project.

The Board was originally expected to review four proposals for the Wastewater Treatment Facility project. However, based on guidance from the state consultants, two additional questions were sent to the firms for further information. The deadline for responses was extended to Friday at midnight to allow the firms adequate time to provide thoughtful and complete answers rather than rushing their responses.

A special Select Board meeting is planned for next week to review the proposals and, if possible, approve a firm so that the contractors are not left waiting. The meeting is scheduled for October 7 at 8:00 a.m. and will be held in a hybrid format. References and responses to the additional questions will be provided to the Board prior to the meeting.

If the Board has difficulty making a decision between two, three, or all four of the firms, interviews with the firms can be scheduled as an additional step in the selection process. It was noted that this is a long-term project that will have significant economic and community development implications for Hardwick for decades to come, making it important to select the right firm.

Derek asked when the Town should expect to award the project. David explained that the FEMA portion of the project has not yet completed its review and that approximately \$8.1 million in funding has not yet been obligated. Ideally, the Town would like the selected firm to be able to begin work this fall or early winter, if the funding and approvals allow.

7:26 P.M. – 7:30 P.M. Item #6— Review public and partner engagement conducted since the July 2023 flood and determine whether it provides a sufficient basis for continued plan development or whether additional engagement is needed. *Action needed.*

This work was identified as a result of the Select Board retreat. Kristen has begun working on the Town's Long-Term Recovery Plan and has been focusing on public engagement. A significant amount of community engagement has already taken place, including numerous educational opportunities and classes, as well as outreach with community groups and residents.

Kristen is looking for guidance on whether additional community engagement is necessary or whether the engagement that has already been completed is sufficient to move forward with developing the Long-Term Recovery Plan. Larry asked whether the additional engagement was being requested by Kristen or if it was a requirement. David clarified that there is no specific requirement for additional engagement.

David recognized Kristen for the significant amount of work she has done to engage the community, highlight local community groups, and build relationships with residents and outside organizations and partners. He noted that Kristen has received recognition at both the state and national levels and expressed his appreciation to Kristen for all of her work.

Upon motion by Larry Fliegelman, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to recognize the public, neighborhood, property-owner, partner, and project-specific engagement conducted since July 2023 as a sufficient basis for continued development of the Long-Term Recovery Plan, with the completed draft to return to the Select Board for review and direction concerning public review and adoption.

7:30 P.M. – 7:46 P.M. Item #7— Select Board to review the essential service project FAQ sheet for the informational meeting on October 8

The Select Board reviewed the informational materials for the November 3 Town Garage Bond Vote and discussed several revisions. The estimated cost should be listed as \$40 per \$100,000 for the first year, as future costs cannot be predicted. The Board also requested that “serviceable” be corrected.

The Board clarified that HRS fundraising is separate from the Town’s bond obligation and that HRS would cover its own costs if fundraising fell short. While the three essential service projects are financially separate, they are interconnected as part of the overall project. The Board agreed that the materials should clearly explain that the bond vote is specifically for the Town Garage while supporting the larger Essential Services project.

Ceilidh suggested adding “Town Garage Bond Vote – November 3” to the top of the materials. David recommended removing the “FAQ” heading, using “estimated” rather than “maximum,” and posting the information on the Town website.

The Board discussed the importance of explaining that if the bond does not pass, the Town may not be able to complete the overall Essential Services project. FEMA funding is still pending, but the funding partners continue to support the project. October 8 and October 22 public meetings will provide additional opportunities for questions and discussion.

Shari will make the revisions, distribute the updated materials, and prepare larger copies for display. Flyers will be distributed during the upcoming week.

Select Board Reports

Shari reported that events will be held October 9 and 10 to celebrate the pedestrian bridge opening, including music, dancing, and a 3:00 p.m. ribbon cutting on October 10. Historic panels will be displayed, funders have been invited, and a food truck will be available Saturday evening at the Town House.

New/Old Business- None

7:49 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