MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 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	Amy Rosenthal
Shari Cornish, Vice Chair	Casey Rowell, Finance Director	Beth McIntyre
Tim Ricciardello	Mike Henry, Police Chief	Kris Schmitt
Larry Fliegelman	Tonia Chase, Clerk/Treasurer	Paul Brierre
Derek Richardson	Diane Grenkow, Library Director	Michael Miller - *Zoom*
	Tracy Martin	Heidi Krantz
	Patrick Larsen	Ken Leslie
	Jack Travelstead	Stew Arnold
	Ross Connelly	Karen Collier
	Maureen Demers	

Regular Meeting

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

6:00 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda -

6:01 P.M. Communication from the audience – Stew Arnold, with the Caspian Lake Dam Task Force, informed the Select Board that the Greensboro Select Board approved funding for a Hydrologic and Hydraulic (H&H) study of the Caspian Lake Dam. The estimated cost is $36,000, which he anticipates will be split among the two towns and a third party, possibly the Lake Association or Hardwick Electric. The Task Force plans to formally request a $12,000 commitment from Hardwick at the next Select Board meeting.

6:02 P.M. – **6:03 P.M.** Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of November 5, 2026

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the regular Select Board meeting of November 5, 2026, as written.

6:03 P.M. – 6:06 P.M. Town Manager Report – Given by David Upson

David reported on the following items:

- Vermont Huts reached out regarding its purchase option agreement for the Mill Street property. They are wrapping up their Phase II work and have requested an extension of the agreement. David plans to collaborate with them on the extension.
- USDA submitted additional questions regarding the Town's wastewater treatment facility funding application, which David forwarded to Aldrich & Elliott (A&E). USDA also requested permission to communicate directly with the State and FEMA regarding the project. A&E is working on updated cost

estimates that incorporate the new flood maps, base flood elevations (BFE), and applicable codes and standards.
- VIA, the architect for the essential services complex, is working with Engineering Ventures to evaluate dry floodproofing the fire station at its current location, as requested by FEMA. SLR prepared the original no-rise memorandum, and FEMA has requested an additional analysis using a lower base flood elevation. VIA will develop cost estimates for dry floodproofing the fire station as an alternative to elevating the building.
- Addendum #1 to the FEMA consultant RFP was issued this week, and the Town has extended the submission deadline to the end of the month.
- Gravel Construction completed the North Main Street stormwater project.
- A clogged stormwater drain near the Post Office that was impacting a neighboring property was cleared.
- He plans to visit the Burke and East Montpelier town garages on Tuesday to tour their facilities and discuss their experiences with their respective projects.
- A right-of-way issue near Depot Street is expected to be resolved.
- He will be submitting a Better Roads Grant application for Hopkins Hill on Friday.
- A walkthrough at the pedestrian bridge is scheduled for Friday at 11:00 a.m. to review the remaining punch list items.
- The Hooper house on Brush Street was demolished this week.

6:09 P.M. – 6:16 P.M. Hardwick Police Department (HPD) Report – Given by Mike Henry

Mike reported that Valcour, the records management and dispatch system used by law enforcement, fire departments, and EMS agencies throughout Vermont, was taken offline earlier this week following a potential security breach. HPD is having to manually maintain its records until the system is restored. Emergency response services remain operational; however, there is currently no timeline for restoring the system.

Mike reported that James McGowan, who was hired as a part-time officer in July, has submitted his resignation after accepting a full-time position with the Berlin Police Department. The department also lost full-time officer Joe Donna recently, so staffing is a little tight, but they are managing.

Mike had identified a potential candidate for the February Police Academy; however, the candidate recently sustained a knee injury and is unable to move forward at this time. All requirements must be completed by December 1 for the academy beginning February 1. Mike indicated that it is unlikely he will identify another candidate in time to meet the deadline. The next academy begins August 1.

Mike reported that the department's current tasers are obsolete and no longer supported by the manufacturer. The initial quote to replace all five tasers was approximately $35,000. To reduce costs, Mike is proposing the purchase of three tasers that would be shared among officers at a cost of $16,300. The purchase would be made through a five-year payment plan of approximately $3,500 annually, which includes training and equipment support. The annual payment would need to be incorporated into the department's operating budget.

6:16 P.M. –6:17 P.M. Item #1— Select Board to consider approving a tobacco substitute endorsement application for DG Retail, LLC d/b/a Dollar General - *Action needed*

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Derek Richardson, the Select Board voted to approve a tobacco substitute endorsement application for DG Retail, LLC d/b/a Dollar General.

6:17 P.M. –6:20 P.M. Item #2— Select Board to consider approving the final Management Plan, along with the forest management plan for the Buffalo Mountain Town Forest – *Action needed*

David reported that the closing has been pushed back to January. The Northern Rivers Land Trust is satisfied with the final version of the Management Plan and is prepared to sign off on it. The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) has also reviewed the draft and is satisfied with the plan. Following the closing, a core stewardship group will be formed to oversee the ongoing management and stewardship of the Buffalo Mountain Town Forest.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Larry Fliegelman, the Select Board voted to approve the final Management Plan, along with the forest management plan for the Buffalo Mountain Town Forest.

6:20 P.M. –6:43 P.M. Item #3— Select Board to discuss a local option tax and the possibility of putting it on the warning at Town Meeting and forming a task force – *Possible action needed*

The Hardwick Downtown Partnership (HDP) presented materials outlining how a 1% local option tax could work in Hardwick. The materials outlined the options for taxing retail sales, meals and alcoholic beverages, and lodging, as well as the process for bringing a proposal to voters at Town Meeting. The State would administer the tax and distribute 75% of the net collections to the Town. HDP expressed its willingness to assist with the public engagement process.

HDP shared feedback from Vergennes, Montpelier, and Waterbury regarding their experiences with local option taxes. Vergennes had recently received its first payment and was still considering how to allocate the funds. Montpelier had used revenue for emergency vehicles and post-flood budget needs. Waterbury had used revenue for capital purchases and housing incentives, identifying stabilization of municipal property taxes as one of its goals.

The materials also included a draft policy that would establish a dedicated fund for Hardwick's local option tax revenue. Proposed uses included infrastructure and public safety, municipal debt and property tax relief, and economic and community development. The draft proposed allocating a portion of the revenue to HDP for work performed under its agreement with the Town. It also called for Select Board approval of expenditures and annual reporting on the fund.

Shari discussed a recent VLCT training that recommended developing a policy outlining how the revenue would be used, noting that voters may be more supportive if they have a clear understanding of its intended purpose. She expressed support for forming a task force to assist with public engagement.

Ceilidh asked whether it was possible to determine what percentage of the revenue would be generated by local residents versus visitors. David explained that while data is available, it is difficult to make that distinction accurately.

Heidi noted that the Co-op had shared sales data regarding where its customers come from. She also referenced 2025 Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) usage data, which indicated that Hardwick had one of the highest daily usage counts, with more than 25,000 visitors annually. These figures do not account for people traveling through

Hardwick by other means. Heidi also noted that one of the municipalities she spoke with regretted not having a plan for the revenue before implementing the tax.

Larry expressed concerns about affordability and wanted to better understand how a local option tax would benefit taxpayers rather than increase their financial burden. Discussion followed regarding the importance of clearly communicating the potential benefits and financial impacts of the tax. Derek expressed reservations about moving forward at this time, given the recent bond vote and anticipated tax increases.

Tim supported continuing the discussion and allowing voters to consider the proposal at Town Meeting. He thanked Shari and HDP for their research and efforts.

Upon motion by Tim Ricciardello, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Board voted 3–2 to place a local option tax on retail sales on the Town Meeting warning and establish a task force to assist with public engagement.

- *Ceilidh – Yea*
- *Tim – Yea*
- *Shari – Yea*
- *Derek – Nay*
- *Larry – Nay*

Following the vote, the Board discussed the importance of establishing clear objectives for the local option tax, educating the public about its potential impacts and benefits, and developing a policy outlining the intended use of the revenue. The proposed seven-member task force would include two Select Board members, including Shari, two representatives from HDP, and three community members. The Board requested that the Town Manager's Office prepare a document outlining the proposed structure, purpose, and responsibilities of the task force.

6:43 P.M. – 7:10 P.M. Item #4— Select Board to hear an updated from the Town Meeting Options Task Force – *Possible action needed*

The Town Meeting Options Task Force presented its final report and recommendations to the Select Board. Over the past three and a half months, the Task Force held 14 public meetings, including a community input session, and reviewed results from two community surveys. The Task Force evaluated various voting options with the goal of improving accessibility and voter participation while preserving the tradition of Town Meeting.

The majority of Task Force members recommended the following:

- Adopt Australian ballot voting for budgets, appropriations, and expenditures outside the budget of $10,000 or more.
- Change the day and time of Town Meeting to accommodate greater participation.
- Hold an annual public meeting in January to allow residents to provide input on proposed budgets and articles before the warning is finalized.
- Relocate Town Meeting to Hardwick Elementary School.
- Continue working with the Select Board and community members to evaluate the format and purpose of Town Meeting.

- Hold a Special Town Meeting on a weekday evening no later than January 14, 2027, to allow voters to consider the proposed change to Australian ballot voting.

The recommendations reflect majority support from the Task Force, although members did not reach unanimous agreement.

David asked several clarifying questions regarding the process for amending the Town Charter and whether voting at the proposed January 14 Special Town Meeting would be conducted by floor vote. It was confirmed that it would be a floor vote.

Discussion followed regarding the timeline for warning a Special Town Meeting. Tonia confirmed that the statutory requirement to warn the meeting between 30 and 40 days in advance could be met for a January 14 meeting.

Tim expressed concern about rushing the process and suggested that the proposal could instead be considered at the regular Town Meeting.

Amy indicated that the Task Force is prepared to continue its work. She noted that the Task Force received considerable feedback from residents who felt they did not have an opportunity to participate in Town Meeting and emphasized the importance of acknowledging those concerns. She expressed concern about delaying the proposal for another year following the work the Task Force has completed. Tim reiterated his support for moving the process forward but felt that the proposal could wait until the regular Town Meeting.

Ceilidh expressed concern about attendance at a Special Town Meeting in January due to potential weather conditions and limited daylight. She noted that the Board would need to determine at its December 3 meeting whether to bring the proposal before voters at a Special Town Meeting or the regular Town Meeting. Given the warning requirements, proceeding with a January 14 meeting would likely require the Select Board to hold a special meeting shortly after December 3 to approve and sign the warning.

The Board thanked the Task Force for its considerable time, effort, and work in developing the recommendations.

7:10 P.M. – 7:14 P.M. Item #5— Select Board to hear from Library Director, Diane Grenkow, about what has been happening at the Jeudevine Library the past few months

Library Director Diane Grenkow provided an update on activities at the Jeudevine Memorial Library from July through September. In July, the library celebrated its 130th anniversary and the first anniversary of the new addition, which included a dedication of the patio and landscaping project.

The Library Board and staff completed their five-year strategic plan for 2026–2031, which focuses on operations, facility maintenance, fundraising, and community engagement. The Board also updated its collection development policy regarding AI-generated materials. Work continues to improve the efficiency of the HVAC system, with most items on the consultant's punch list completed.

The library continues to offer a variety of programs for children and adults, and its meeting spaces are regularly

utilized by community organizations. Library staff also continue to assist with the Neighbor to Neighbor program, which responded to 29 requests for assistance during the quarter. Revenue for the quarter totaled $9,125.35.

7:14 P.M. – 8:03 P.M. Item #6 –– Finance Director Casey Rowell to present the first drafts of the following FY28 budgets: Library, Fire Department, Police Department, Office/Administration/Other Payroll and Line Items

The Finance Director presented these department budgets for discussion. Topics of discussion included:
~ *Library electricity expenses* – With the recent HVAC improvements, there was consensus that the budgeted electricity expense could be reduced by a few thousand dollars.
~ *Equity Committee* – Discussion regarding restoring the $1,000 allocation to support community outreach, local organizations undertaking equity-related projects, and educational events, including bringing Susan Clark to Hardwick for a presentation on Town Meeting options.
~ *Town Garage Bond payment* – Increase in that estimated payment
~ *Police Department* – The proposed budget reflects an increase of only 1.27%.
~ *Fire Department* – The proposed budget remains level-funded.
~ *Buyout properties* – Including funding for the ongoing maintenance of green spaces created through the property buyout program.
~ *Community programs* – Continuing financial support for Green Up Day, community programming, and the swim program as individual budget line items that were previously under the Recreation department

Select Board Reports: Shari reported that the Hardwick Downtown Partnership prepared their annual fundraising campaign today and Shari hand delivered the envelopes to the rest of the Board.

Old Business: The State requested confirmation that the Town still intends to proceed with the buyout of 42 South Main Street (the former Gazette building, owned by The Civic Standard) due to the building's historic significance. Shari would like to see a historic marker at the site. Derek asked whether the property could be used for parking following the demolition. David confirmed that this would not be permitted under the buyout program's open space requirements. The Board had no objections to proceeding with the buyout, as it had previously voted to move forward. David will provide confirmation to the State.

8:10 P.M. *Upon motion by Larry Fliegelman, seconded by Tim Ricciardello, the Select Board voted to enter an executive session pursuant to 1 VSA § 313 for a personnel matter to include the Town Manager.*

8:42 P.M. Exited Executive Session. *No action taken.*

8:42 P.M. Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Select Board Chair, adjourned the meeting.

Minutes taken by: _____
Casey Rowell, Finance Director

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