

Town of Hawley, Massachusetts
Minutes of a
Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
In Person & via Conference Call

January 3, 2023

Present: Will Cosby, Bob MacLean, Hussain Hamdan - Selectboard
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday
Virginia Gabert, Treasurer and Financial Administrator
Gary Mitchell, Chris Tirone, Georgette deFriesse, Kimberly Orzechowski,
and (via Zoom) Pamela Shrimpton

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. Warrants and minutes from a previous meeting were signed. Then:

1. **The Selectboard discussed the recommendation by FRCOG for the King Corner culvert work.** Will explained that GZA, the company recommended, had submitted a strong proposal and had good personnel. He reminded his colleagues that this company had done MVP work for Hawley the previous year, and he thanked the board members for finding this company. Hussain moved to sign the contract with GZA, Bob seconded, and all voted in favor. Hussain looked over the contract to make sure that a line he had found problematic had been removed; it had. Will signed the contract on behalf of the group.

While the group was discussing culvert work, Will noted that FRCOG was accepting bids for the Sears Road work until the end of January. Maxymillian, a local company, had told Andrea Woods at FRCOG that it might submit a bid, which would be over \$1 million, although the grant for this work was \$800,000. Will said that Andrea had said she was waiting to see what else might come in. He said that he wasn't sure what would happen if no bids came in at the right price. Perhaps the town could apply for a supplemental grant, or perhaps it needed a new grant. He asked Gary how much it would cost for the highway department to do the needed work. Gary estimated the cost at about \$25,000 to simply replace the existing structure, but he said that Hawley's highway department couldn't legally do that due to stream crossing standards except in an emergency.

2. **Conversation turned to how road-work materials could be more appropriately stored around town.** Will said that he and Gary thought that perhaps materials such as culverts and road-fill materials could be stored (in a trailer, maybe) in neighborhoods where they might be needed. He reminded the group that the MVP study had identified the town's numerous roads positioned along waterways as a major vulnerability.

Hussain noted that the neighborhoods in need of road repair would need not just materials but machinery to install them; it machinery could be brought into an area, the materials could be brought with it. Will brought up the example of a culvert on East Road as a problem area. Gary noted that using trucks to transport materials around town hadn't worked very well during Tropical Storm Irene. Virginia suggested that perhaps the town needed another site for storage.

Hussain suggested that the state might let the town use room in its garage at King Corner for storage. He also suggested that it would be helpful to have salt and sand available on the east side of town, not just in the west.

Will noted that the MVP study might have opened up funds for moving the highway garage away from its current precarious location right over the river. The group discussed possible lots it owned, none of which appeared to be perfect for a new highway garage. Kim asked whether the town could just take over the garage at King Corner from the state, but Hussain said that although the state might allow storage there, it wouldn't let the town take possession of the building (which it currently used), and in any case giving or selling it to the town would take a two-thirds vote of the state legislature, which was unlikely. He asked whether MVP funds could be used for purchasing land elsewhere, and Will said that this was a distinct possibility. Will wondered aloud whether the Sons & Daughters of Hawley might sell the town some of the land adjacent to the Hawley Grove. Such a sale would make the location useful in emergencies as the Grove had a kitchen and a working bathroom. Hussain noted that this public-safety aspect of the project might open up additional funding streams. If the town garage were relocated to the east side of town, he observed, the existing garage in West Hawley could still be used for storage as it was safe 99 percent of the time.

Will observed that MVP action grant applications were due in the spring and suggested that the town could apply for funds for a feasibility study. Georgette observed that the Grove site might not be big enough, and Chris suggested that if the town built a new fire station, the old one could be used as a salt/sand shed.

Kim asked where most people in town lived. Hussain said that the town clerk could generate a list but that he believed that more people lived in East Hawley than in West Hawley. He returned to the idea of expanding the fire station, suggesting that perhaps the nearby Hawley Preserve might be persuaded to sell some land to the town. Will asked the board to keep thinking about this issue.

3. **On behalf of the planning board, Kimberly explained that the highway department needed to do tree work on Ashfield Road.** Because the road was a scenic one, the work had to be advertised in the newspaper twice, she noted, with each advertisement costing \$107. She asked the board where the money for the ads could be found. Virginia suggested that the tree-maintenance budget, which Gary didn't think had been touched so far during the fiscal year, would be a good fit. Will moved to use that fund, Hussain seconded, and all voted in favor.
4. **Discussion turned to the question of designating the representative and alternate representative to the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District special municipal employees.** Tinky explained that this designation, which would apply to the positions rather than to any specific people in them (Hawley didn't even have an alternate), had been requested by the district for legal reasons. Hussain said that he thought that the designation was unnecessary for Hawley due to its population being under 3,000 but understood that the district believed it had to have all member towns agree to it in order to move forward. Will moved to designate the two positions as special municipal employees, Hussain seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

5. **The board considered FRCOG's offer to monitor the town's fire alarms and sprinkler systems.** The town had no sprinkler systems and already had an alarm contract. Chris Tirone was the notification point on the alarm for town hall and said that he had responded to several calls. The board determined the proposal was therefore not relevant to Hawley.
6. **The topic of the town website was reintroduced.** Will said that he had had a frustrating call with the representative from CivicPlus, who seemed unwilling or unable to reduce the yearly fee he was requesting. Hussain suggested that the communications committee be asked to work on this issue as well as the Selectboard.

Pam noted that the Sons & Daughters of Hawley had worked with a local company, but Tinky reminded her that John Sears, the president of the Sons & Daughters, was unenthusiastic about the company.

Hussain wondered aloud whether the site might be redesigned without changing its host, currently WordPress. He suggested that the town could find a person who could achieve this change and pay him or her a yearly retainer for troubleshooting. He noted that the town should retain ownership of the content of the website.

Will said he wanted to ask the finance committee to make the website a priority in the budget for the next year ... and said the town needed to keep looking.

Tinky offered to talk to the person who had designed her website, who (she said) might or might not still be doing that kind of work. She was also asked to talk to Jorma Kansanen, a local man who had submitted a proposal in the fall, and get some examples of websites he had designed. Will noted that the topic would come up again in future meetings.

In other business, Pamela and Tinky presented a description of the town clerk's duties they had drafted using materials at hand, materials from other towns, and Pam's own knowledge of the job. Pam said that she had spoken to Donna Desmarais Lemoine that day and that Donna was feeling better and was still interested in the position. Will said that his fingers were crossed that Donna could take on this work and thanked Pam for following up. He asked Tinky to have the description put on the town website and in the e-news, in the hope that Donna or someone else would come forward to be appointed to the job until the election and then run for the office. Pam reminded everyone of the devotion to Hawley that members of Donna's family had always expressed.

Chris said that Christine Hicks had offered to clean the Town Office one more time before her pending surgery. The Selectboard asked him to tell her that they would be happy to have her do this ... and to thank her.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

Williams Cosby



Hussain Hamdan



Robert MacLean