

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

**December 20, 2022**

Present: Will Cosby, Bob MacLean, Hussain Hamdan – Selectboard  
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday  
Virginia Gabert, Treasurer and Financial Administrator  
Gary Mitchell, Chris Tirone, Georgette deFriesse, John Sears, and Ken Bertsch

**The meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m. Warrants and minutes from the previous meeting were approved. Then:**

1. **Ken Bertsch presented a report from the Hawlemont School Committee.** He noted that he was planning to report to the Charlemont Selectboard once a month and suggested that he do the same for the Hawley board.

Ken explained that the committee was beginning to explore the possibility of installing solar power at the school, as the Mohawk Trail Regional School District was doing for the Mohawk School. He observed that there were questions about property ownership and said he was looking for guidance. Will asked whether the Hawlemont school building belonged to the town of Charlemont. Ken explained that the land belonged to the town. Hussain said that the town owned the former high-school building but that two-town school district owned the new building and should have the right to put something on that building.

Ken noted that the committee and volunteers were looking into grant possibilities to pay for the solar installation. Will said that the Green Communities Initiative had been asking about putting panels on the school and added that factors like sunlight level had to be investigated.

Ken went on to say that the school committee was beginning to think about the budget for the following year, inviting the public to submit input at the committee's meetings on the second Monday of every month.

He reported that the school district was about to receive a grant to install a backup oil burner and mini-splits at the school. Will asked whether the current cold weather would keep the school from operating; Ken replied that the temperatures probably had to fall below zero for the school to be too cold to hold classes. He said that between the new boiler and the mini-splits the problem of ultra-cold weather should be solved soon. The school would also be operable in extremely warm weather, thanks to the mini-splits.

In other news, Ken said that the Hawlemont and Mohawk districts had recently reached an agreement to extend the contract of superintendent Sheryl Stanton for three years. The added cost to Hawlemont for the next year would come to \$628, and Sheryl's salary would go up just over three percent per year.

He also noted that the district had received a grant through the Mary Lyon Foundation to reinstate the after-school program, and that the district would probably go along with the Mohawk Trail Regional School District on a sustainability study for all schools in the districts.

Chris and Hussain returned to the question of having a solar array on the school building. They explained that the fire service preferred ground-mounted arrays in general, since a roof-mounted array could create hazards that might prevent firefighters from climbing on the roof. The panels could become energized if hit by lightning. Will also noted that the ground-mounted tracking array at Hawley's Fire Station performed better than the physically larger array on the roof at the Town Garage. Virginia asked whether perhaps there was adjacent land where an array could go and wondered aloud whether the array could be mounted elsewhere and the energy credits transferred to the school. Will said that that was a possibility. Ken said he would be back the following month, and the board thanked him.

- 2. Will reported on the most recent website demonstration and proposal, from a company called Revize.** He noted that Revize was less expensive than CivicPlus, the previous presenter, but said that he found Revize's website design cluttered and old fashioned. Tinky, who had viewed the demo, concurred that Revize's designs were less than exciting. Hussain asked whether the town had tried bargaining with CivicPlus. Will said he was prepared to go back to that company, having recently talked to officials in a small town near Martha's Vineyard that paid a significantly lower yearly rate than the one quoted to Hawley officials. If his colleagues were amenable, he said, he would go back to CivicPlus and ask for a lower yearly rate. He reminded the group that the first year and the set up would be covered by ARPA funds; the problem was the annual fee thereafter. Hussain noted that a bargaining chip would be to say that CivicPlus could design the website at full price but that it would have to offer a better rate to host the site in future. Will said he would talk to Hussain and try to develop a strategy. He added that he had asked the current Hawley webmaster, Rick Kean, what he thought of the proposals so far but had been told that Rick didn't want to be involved in making any decisions.

**In other business, Virginia asked whether the personnel committee had any news about the road-crew opening.** Hussain said that the committee had a report, adding that he was comfortable voting on the report even though the issue wasn't formally on the evening's agenda. Will and Bob also said they were prepared to discuss and vote on the report.

John Sears stated that the committee had received one application, from Brandon Reynolds, and had divided up checking on his references, which were uniformly excellent. John said that his only problem with Brandon had been the worker's lack of experience in driving bigger trucks but said that Gary, the road boss, had said that so far Brandon had doing great work as a temporary employee of the town and could learn on the job. John noted that Brandon was getting his medical examination soon and would apply for a hoisters license. He said that the committee members strongly and unanimously recommended hiring Brandon.

Hussain reminded everyone that Brandon wouldn't even be driving the largest truck so experience in that regard was not necessarily germane; he asked whether Brandon intended to pursue a CDL later on, and Gary observed that Brandon would like to and that a CDL would increase his value to the town. Hussain moved that the town hire Brandon contingent on the medical exam, Bob seconded his motion, and all voted in favor of the hire. Will thanked the personnel committee for all its work.

Virginia asked whether she should wait until Brandon had taken his physical to have him fill out the paperwork. Hussain said that Brandon could certainly be given the forms to fill out while waiting.

Hussain reminded Tinky to call the person who had asked about the job after the deadline had passed. Tinky said she would continue to try to do so; he didn't have voicemail, she said, so reaching him was difficult.

**Will informed the group that there was news about the King Corner culvert design/engineering grant**, which was being handled by FRCOG. He said that three proposals had been received by FRCOG. Andrea Woods there had reviewed all three and sent them along. CEI might not have enough local experience, she had reported. Stantech had missed a few parts of the application. GZA seemed like the best bet, she had noted. At \$79,900, its bid was the lowest, and its application seemed the most complete. Will said that he was hoping to move forward with the design and engineering quickly in order to get started applying for construction grants in the spring. He said he would be happy to vote on the issue that very evening. Hussain stated that according to the law, the town should go for the lowest responsible bid but opined that something so important should be on a posted agenda. Tinky promised to put the issue on the agenda for the board's next meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

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Williams Cosby

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Hussain Hamdan

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Robert MacLean