

**Minutes of a
Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
in person & via Zoom
May 21, 2024**

Present: Will Cosby, Hussain Hamdan, Robert MacLean – Selectboard
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday; Virginia Gabert, Treasurer and Financial Administrator
Anne Gobi, Gary Mitchell, Chris Tirone, Lloyd Crawford, Kimberly Orzechowski,
Dean Desmarais, and Robert Sears

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. Warrants were signed.

1. **Tinky stated that a representative of a company called Rising Tide Towers had called the week before, asking about regulations for cell-phone towers in Hawley.** She explained that she had told him that Hawley wasn't exactly a mecca for cellular service but that she would ask. Kimberly said that she had investigated the question and had found no rules for anything other than wind turbines. The group speculated about what might help people erect towers (elevations like those at Sidehill Farm and at the Lawless property) and what might deter them (the hills in general and the amount of protected land). West Hawley was particularly complicated topographically, noted Hussain. He said the new 4G LTE technology had advantages. In any case, Tinky was told to call the man back and tell him that he was welcome to come look around.
2. **The board reviewed the previous week's Annual Town Meeting.** Hussain opined that it had gone well; the budget had passed. Will said that after discussion with Lloyd, he had something for the group to think about, which might require a Special Town Meeting. The town was always looking for grants, and most grant applications required some sort of match. The two were proposing that the town establish a \$10,000 matching-fund account on which it could draw for these matches, a fund that would carry over from year to year. When establishing the account, townspeople could authorize the Selectboard to spend it as needed. Virginia expressed a concern that the idea might be too vague. Even if the account were called "Highway Grants," it might be hard to sell. Lloyd said that it might be difficult to make deadlines if the account were too specific. Hussain pointed out that only 14 days were needed to call a Special Town Meeting, asking how many grants needed less time than that. Virginia observed that a Special Town Meeting could provide more specific funding amounts as well. Kimberly indicated that as a voter she would be more likely to vote for something specific.

Speaking of the Town Meeting, Tinky read aloud an email from John Sears. He wrote that he was disappointed that his petition hadn't passed but was pleased that the meeting had been civil, well run, and educational. The board thanked John. The Selectmen also noted that they had written a letter to several state senators over the weekend advocating for legislation that would support rural schools.

3. The group signed a sympathy card for Serra Root, whose brother had died recently. **Then the board turned to road projects.** Gary said the road crew had been doing a lot of grading and that the DCR had provided gravel for the State Forest. Will said that Ashfield Road looked great. He said he had been to a pre-bidding conference there and that some good local companies seemed to be interested. He said that a few parts of the request for bids might change but not many.

He explained that the project would entail removing the surface and putting in Geotech fabric and drainage. The culvert replacement would have to come out of another grant. He said he hoped the main work would be complete by the end of the year. He said that Sears Road was just about complete (Dean told him the last step had been accomplished that day) and that the group was awaiting final permits for King Corner. The DCR was proposing a drive down through its land to the stream; that was in negotiation. He was also hoping to use the DCR parking lot for construction vehicles.

Will noted that the current estimate for King Corner was \$2,100,000, more money than Hawley could raise through a STRAP grant. He was considering a couple of options. One was to invoke the clause that said that the needed culvert should be built to the DER's length requirements "to the maximum extent practicable." Due to the cost, the original plan might not be practicable. The other was to sequence the STRAP grants somehow. Lloyd said that if Hawley's initial request for funds were rejected, maybe that rejection might give the town leverage with the state.

Will said that the problem on 8A South was being handled by the state with leftover funds from its previous emergency work in town. Paving replacement and guardrail replacement were scheduled, along with some drainage work under the road. Dean suggested that while Warner Brothers Construction was at it, the company should look at the guardrail at the corner of Pudding Hollow Road and Route 8A, which was too close to the ground.

The group moved on to discussion of the Dugway Listening Session the following week. Will explained that if the town had no plan in place for the Dugway, the State wouldn't be able to fix it well if it collapsed. The State would probably use the most recent plan on file in an emergency. Hussain suggested the group focus on more mundane details, such as who was contributing what to the meal at the session. Hussain said he would supply paper plates and cups and pick up some soda. He added that the Fire Department had grilling implements. Lloyd said he would borrow tents and pick up meats and rolls. He also had some plastic forks he could bring along. Tinky said that she planned to make a green salad and some kind of dessert, and Peter Beck was going to make a pasta salad. Hussain said that his mother, Jenn Rich, had volunteered to make a dessert but noted it might contain peanut products and those with allergies should beware. Kimberly offered to bring potato salad, and Robert Sears volunteered to contribute chips. Robert later said that he had a folding table the town could borrow if it was needed, although someone would have to pick it up.

Hussain asked what sort of graphics would be available. Will said that there would be a number of photographs of similar projects for people to inspect. FRCOG would take notes and produce a summary document. Will suggested that set up commence between 4 and 5 p.m. Lloyd said that there would be realities to deal with eventually after the planning. Hussain noted that Constance Emmett and Suzy Groden were key players since their home was right next to do the Dugway, as was the home currently owned by Henry Eggert. Will said that although the entire process could take years and years, it would be good to have a plan set up in case the Dugway underwent serious damage.

Robert asked whether the Sears Road funding (of which there was a remainder) could be applied to another project. Unfortunately not, he was told.

Hussain recalled that in the past the town had been unable to come to a consensus about what to do about the Dugway. Kimberly asked why the town couldn't give Route 8A to the state.

Will told her that the roadway had once belonged to the state, which had given it to Hawley in exchange for Chapter 90 funds. Hussain pointed out that 8A wasn't used more by townspeople than the other roads in town. It did get a lot of use from outsiders, however.

4. **The group turned to cemetery issues.** Tinky reported that she had heard from Serra and Brandon Root that flowers had been stolen from the grave of Serra's brother Richard Chasse, who had died recently. Unfortunately, the board had no ideas how to keep this from happening; the security cameras across the street only monitored the Fire Station. Tinky said she would put a note in the e-news asking people to watch out for such thefts.

Speaking of cemeteries, Hussain noted that several firefighters had asked whether Fire Department personnel got a discount for plots, and the suggestion had been made that if someone died in the line of duty, that person's plot should be free. He noted that provisions did not currently exist and offered to recuse himself from any votes to do with them. Nevertheless, he said he thought the issue should be addressed. Tinky suggested that if a discount were given, it should be open to all town employees. The group referred the question to the Historical Commission, which oversaw town cemeteries.

3. **Hussain reported briefly on the situation at Adams Ambulance.** The service was in the appeal process and the State had requested additional information. He presented a letter he had drafted to the Buckland Selectboard and Board of Health expressing Hawley's support for establishing a primary care medical practice in the area. His fellow board members happily signed it.

In other business, Tinky brought up an email from Phoebe Walker at FRCOG about the town's opioid settlements. Hussain noted that he had told Phoebe and her colleagues that the board wouldn't sign anything unless they could see the actual settlement documents. Tinky said she would forward what she had to Hussain and could ask Phoebe for the actual settlement document. Tinky noted that a session discussing the issue was scheduled for later in the week and asked whether anyone on the board could attend. Hussain said he would attend if he could.

Virginia said that Hawley had received just under \$1000 in opioid funds in the past few years. She explained that the funds were supposed to be under the oversight of Emergency Services. Hussain said that there had been no opiate overdose calls in his 10 years with Hawley EMS and that the town had plenty of protective equipment. Beyond that, it was tough to ascertain what the money could be spent on. The Fire Department already had Narcan through a different grant. Dean said that it was hard to figure out what the town could do with these funds beyond making some flyers. Kimberly suggested that the funds be offered to the schools. Hussain said this might be a good idea. Tinky wondered aloud whether the money could be used for an emergency fair like the one held the previous year in Leyden. Hussain said a class could be offered on opioids. Virginia asked whether the school system needed the funds. Tinky said she would ask.

Tinky brought up a related issue; the FRCOG was wondering whether the town would like some Narcan dispensers in locations in town. (The council was applying for funding for such dispensers.) Hussain expressed his strong opinion that dispensers near public buildings didn't make a lot of sense. Emergencies didn't typically occur close to town buildings, he observed, and in any case he wanted to encourage people to call 9-1-1 if they needed Narcan. He added that it was possible that if the dispensers were near town buildings, people would go to the buildings to get high, which presented a risk.

There would also be concerns about maintaining the dispensers, keeping medication up to date, and how extreme heat and cold might affect the supply. The other board members agreed with him that Tinky should say that Hawley was not in favor of this idea.

Tinky mentioned a survey from Green Communities asking whether the town would be interested in acquiring an electric dump truck or other vehicle. The board members said they were not interested. Hussain observed that such vehicles created a huge fire hazard.

Hussain brought up the question of appointing someone new to the position of Emergency Management Director. Dean Desmarais explained that he intended to retire from that position as of June 30 for personal reasons. He stated that he had heard that Brandon Root was interested. He described Brandon as dedicated, knowledgeable, interested, and well connected in the issue of public safety. Dean added that he fully supported Brandon for this position and offered to help with the transition and to give advice as needed. He also praised Hawley's firefighters. Hussain thanked Dean for his service, adding that he, too, supported Brandon, and that Brandon had taken many of the requisite classes already. He said that he had reached out to someone else about the position, but that person had not replied. Will and Bob both agreed that Brandon sounded like an excellent prospect. Tinky was asked to invite Brandon to the next Selectboard meeting, and Will and Bob both added their thanks to Dean. Tinky was reminded that Ben Duga needed to be reappointed as temporary police chief.

Virginia asked for an update on the mini-split and water-heater replacements. Will said he had no news on the mini-split. Hussain said he was trying to figure out a time to let his plumber friend into the Town Office. Tinky offered to do this if Hussain found himself too busy. Speaking of plumbing, Chris fixed the filter on the faucet in the sink, which had been running slowly.

Virginia noted that she had a lot of family things going on the following week and would be away a lot. The board wished her well.

Bob said he was going to a wedding in early July but would probably not miss any meetings.

Virginia asked Gary how long the road crew would be using the street sweeper; she explained that she could reduce the insurance once the sweeper left. He said the sweeping would probably finish the following week and promised to let her know.

There being no other immediate business, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

Williams Cosby

Hussain Hamdan

Robert MacLean