

Town of Hawley, Massachusetts
Minutes of a Special
Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
in person & via Zoom
May 28, 2024

Present: Will Cosby, Hussain Hamdan, Robert MacLean – Selectboard
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday; Gary Mitchell & Chris Tirone, Road Crew
Randy Crochier, Brandon Root, Lloyd Crawford, Jacob Desrosiers, and Jacob Gilbert

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. Minutes from a previous meeting were signed.

- 1. The group talked to health agent Randy Crochier about training possibilities and his recommendations for changes to septic and tobacco rules for the town.** Noting that it could be hard for boards of health in small towns to do a lot of training, Hussain said that nevertheless the board would appreciate Randy's suggestions. Randy observed that it was helpful within the first year or two for board of health members to take a couple of classes. He recommended Incident Command Systems 100 and 700, which could be taken either online or in person and might take a couple of hours. He explained that incident command systems helped groups organize themselves and respond more effectively during emergencies. Hussain said that, if people wished, arrangements could be made for training to take place in the Town Office. Randy's other suggestion was a longer course called Foundations for Public Health. It took 36 hours but could be done a little at a time.

Hussain stated that he understood that the trainings could be linked to grants. Randy said that his own work was mostly funded with grant money and that keeping up certification in these courses and others was important for him. Hussain asked whether the state kept track of which boards had done training. Randy said that it was possible that the Office of Public Emergency Management did so. Randy briefly digressed to describe parts of his job that had required specialized training, including lead-paint issues and hoarding. Hussain asked Randy to send the board an email detailing the training options.

The group moved on to septic regulations. Randy explained that he recommended two changes to the town's regulations. One changed a paragraph about paying on the spot for Title 5 inspections; the practice was now to pay in advance, he said, and the rules should state this. The other change stated that if a private-well water-quality test was deemed necessary, the inspector's approval would be conditional until the test took place. Hussain asked, and Randy confirmed, that this requirement only existed where a well test would otherwise be required; wells that in good standing would not require the test. Will asked whether there were any other changes, and Randy said there were none. Randy said that the changes would entail scheduling a hearing (and announcing it formally through the newspaper, an announcement he would handle) and then holding the hearing and voting on the changes. The group agreed to schedule the hearing for Tuesday, June 18, at 6:30 p.m.

Hussain asked about tobacco regulations. Randy noted that in 2020 the state had increased the fines for selling tobacco illegally. Given the fact that Hawley had no tobacco sales, Hussain inquired, could the town not just subsist under the state laws?

Randy confirmed this. Hussain also expressed his view that it was unfair that an 18 year old could be drafted into the military (or join it), but was forbidden from buying cigarettes. Randy agreed, noting that it was illegal for young people to purchase tobacco but not to smoke it. He didn't push Hawley to enact any special regulations. The Board agree to hold a hearing only on the septic regulations.

2. Before Randy left, the board introduced him to Brandon Root, the proposed new emergency management director. Randy left with the group's thanks. The Selectmen then spoke briefly with Brandon, who said he was willing to take on the position but would need guidance and support, both from outgoing director Dean Desmarais and from the Selectmen. Will told him that the board was always willing to help. Brandon affirmed that he knew quite a few people on the local EMS scene and said that Dean had offered to introduce him to even more. They had just been waiting for the board to confirm that it wished to appoint Brandon. The group said it would be happy to appoint him at the next Selectboard meeting; his term would start on July 1.

3. The group discussed the proposal for a shared conservation agent. Hussain said he would like to make some minor changes to the agreement's language. He noted changes that specifically related to an issue with confusing wording in the withdrawal provision, another wording issue pertaining to "acts of God or the enemy" (two concepts he asked be separated), and a final issue mandating that the venue of any legal action be in Franklin County. He moved that once the changes were made, the chair could ratify the agreement. Bob seconded, and all voted in favor. Hussain read aloud the job description that accompanied the agreement, as it had not been attached to the original draft.

Will noted that the seven towns involved had a grant to pay for the first year of the agent's work; after that, he said, he hoped that Hawley could pay its share of the cost from fees. The group agreed that Hawley's share of the fees sounded reasonable. Lloyd said that the Selectboard and Conservation Commission would ultimately be responsible for supervising the agent in Hawley.

4. Lloyd updated the board on his work on STRAP applications. He said the application deadline was fast approaching. He reported that he had been working on the King Corner culvert-replacement grant. He said he would like the board to authorize the chair to sign the grant application when it was ready.

Lloyd said that the cost of the King Corner project was estimated at \$2.1 million and reminded the group that STRAP grants usually topped out at \$1 million. He said that he was asking the state to pay for the big-ticket items in this preliminary application. He hoped to apply again another year if possible. If they town didn't receive the necessary funding, the Selectboard could approach its state legislators for help.

Lloyd noted that he was also working on a STRAP application for culvert replacement on Ashfield Road.

On a motion by Hussain, seconded by Bob, the Board unanimously voted to allow the chair to sign STRAP grant applications on behalf of the Board. Hussain noted the chair already technically had the authority to sign documents on behalf of the Board that did not create new contractual obligations, but the vote would ratify this.

Final approval, if the grant were awarded, would be subject to a vote by the Board. The Board asked Tinky to write a document attesting the chair had been so authorized.

On the subject of roads, the group briefly revisited refreshments for the Dugway listening session the following evening. Tinky, who was under the weather, said that she might not bring the green salad she had promised but thought there would be enough salads. She said she wasn't sure she was going to be able to purchase ice the next day. Will offered to do this.

In other business, Tinky read aloud a message from Virginia Gabert, in which the financial administrator observed that she was willing to continue overseeing drug and alcohol testing for the town but didn't really have the time to read up on all the conditions the testing company seemed to want to impose. Hussain said that an outside company had no right to tell the town how to maintain its personnel files, and the group agreed to have Virginia continue in the role.

Tinky said that she had been contacted by a representative from the Nature Conservancy about an event the group planned at the Hawley Bog on Tuesday, June 11. The representative had wanted the town to know that the event, which was expected to draw quite a crowd, was on the horizon. The board asked them to park carefully, avoiding blind spots, and wished them well.

Tinky also asked who the contact person should be for opioid funds, and she was told that Virginia was the right person.

Tinky asked whether the board members had any matters to put on the agenda for the following week's meeting. Will asked her to put an update on road work on the slate.

There being no other immediate business, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

Williams Cosby

Hussain Hamdan

Robert MacLean