

**Minutes of a Special
Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
in person & via Zoom
October 3, 2024**

Present: Will Cosby, Hussain Hamdan, Robert MacLean – Selectboard
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday; Virginia Gabert, Treasurer and Financial Administrator
Peter Mitchell, Chris Tirone, Peggy Travers, Jim & Kathy Walsh, Madison Schofield,
and by telephone Pamela Shrimpton

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

1. **Peter Mitchell came before the board to ask its blessing for holding Cider Days again at his orchard/cidery at 112 Forget Road on November 2 and 3 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.** Cider makers, dairies, and even a cookbook author would be participating. He noted that only closed, sealed bottles of cider would be sold and that tiny tastes would be given out. He added that there would probably be fewer people attending than in previous years and that he was not bringing in a food truck. Hussain recalled that the Town had earlier given a perpetual permit for this event which did not need to be renewed each year; others confirmed this. He observed that this event had never caused any problems for emergency services. Hussain moved to authorize the event, Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.
2. **The group moved on to the main topic of the evening, the resignation of Town Clerk Donna Desmarais Lemoine.** Her resignation letter was dated September 30 and had taken effect immediately. Hussain moved to accept Donna's resignation, Bob seconded, and all voted in favor.

Former Town Clerk Pam Shrimpton joined the discussion by telephone. She stated that she was willing to take on the position temporarily to get Hawleyites through the election. All three Selectmen thanked her enthusiastically, and she thanked them for their appreciation. Hussain moved to appoint her, Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. Virginia asked who would handle vital records. Tinky said she and Pam would work that out. Hussain swore Pam in as temporary Town Clerk.

Tinky suggested that the town needed to think seriously about the compensation for the position of Town Clerk. It was minimal, and the State piled more and more duties on that position every month. Hussain said the Finance Committee ought to be alerted to this and consider the matter. Tinky asked Pam whether she had discussed her pay, and she agreed to do that with the Selectmen soon.

Peggy expressed a hope that everyone would treat the next Town Clerk with respect and appreciation. She said she thought Donna had given the job a good shot. She asked whether the board could require an exit interview to get feedback. She also noted that it seemed that Hawley had gone through a few town clerks in a short time; she was curious whether there were reasons for this. Hussain noted that there were some common themes, such as the ever increasing burden of State regulations, but there were also individual situations for each of those who had moved on lately, including the fact that one had moved out of town. Tinky asked whether elected positions could have contracts requiring notice.

Hussain stated that elected positions were defined by statute, and the Selectboard could not require interviews or a certain amount of notice prior to resignation.

Virginia said she understood that for certain positions the incumbent was required to serve until his/her term expired or a qualified candidate could be found. She also suggested that the board write to legislators to say that the requirements of the Town Clerk posed an undue burden on small towns like Hawley.

Hussain noted that a lot of new responsibilities had been added to the Town Clerk's position, including early voting. Tinky said that she believed that the Selectboard could request fewer early voting hours if it did so long before the deadline to set those hours. Unfortunately, as Hussain noted, this request had not been brought to the Selectboard in timely fashion in the current year. Virginia suggested looking into the matter in future.

Will suggested that perhaps the position of Town Clerk could be changed from an elected to an appointed position and be opened up to people who didn't live in Hawley. Virginia noted that such changes would require a vote at Town Meeting. The group agreed that it could appoint anyone from anywhere to the interim slot. The town counsel had confirmed this. Hussain suggested the group wait and see whether anyone filed nomination papers in the spring to run for the position. If not, a change could be considered, the group agreed.

Hussain said that the Town Clerk had two primary responsibilities: running elections and maintaining public records. There was institutional memory for the first (the election workers), he noted, but not a lot of institutional memory for the second. Interviewing whoever applied for the position would be crucial. Communication between the Clerk and the Selectboard and other office staff was also crucial.

Virginia suggested that word should be put out saying that Hawley was looking for a new Town Clerk. Tinky was asked to look for the job description she and Pam had drafted when Donna was first appointed.

In other business, Tinky said that Lark Thwing had informed her that presidential-campaign lawn signs had been removed from his property. The board expressed their dismay. Hussain suggested that Lark call in the State Police to investigate.

Virginia said she had some reimbursement paperwork to present. She and Will decided, with the Board's assent, they could handle that after the meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

Williams Cosby

Hussain Hamdan

Robert MacLean