Minutes of a
Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
in person & via Zoom
November 6, 2024

Present: Will Cosby, Hussain Hamdan, Robert MacLean – Selectboard
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday; Virginia Gabert, Treasurer and Financial Administrator
Gary Mitchell, Chris Tirone, and via Zoom Madison Scofield

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. Minutes from previous meetings and warrants were signed.

1. **The meeting began with discussion of the Town Clerk opening.** Will reported that he had received a letter of interest from a Charlemont resident who would like to meet with the board to discuss the position. If that person were to be brought in, she would have to be appointed until the May election as interim Town Clerk. If she wanted to be permanent, the question of making the post appointed rather than elected would have to go before the voters. Hussain noted that the position of Town Clerk would still have to appear on the May ballot. Will suggested that perhaps a special town meeting could be called to settle the nature of the position before the election. Virginia observed that anyone running for the position would have to live in Hawley. Hussain said that the board would have to be honest with this candidate if it appointed her as interim; it could make no promises of permanence. He added that current interim Pam Shrimpton would have to resign before another interim could be appointed. Virginia said that even if the town called a special town meeting to consider changing the position from elected to appointed, the question would also need to appear on the annual election ballot. The matter was complicated.

   Will said that he would talk to the candidate and make it clear that nothing could be promised beyond May. He said he would ask her to come to the next Selectboard meeting. Tinky looked up the status of the clerk's position and found that the current term ran until 2026. Hussain noted that past practice in Hawley, however, was to only fill an elected vacancy with an appointment until the next town election, so there would be a vote in May. If no one ran or accepted a write-in, the appointment could of course be extended.

2. **The group turned to construction updates.** Will started with King Corner. He noted that the engineering for the project was in the permitting stage. However, problems lurked on the horizon. The State Department of Transportation considered Route 8A a town-owned road with a state number. This meant that although the state was not required (or apparently willing) to fund repairs on the road, it could nevertheless set requirements. The original specifications for King Corner had not called for borings that were deep enough; the state insisted that this be remedied before work could proceed. Virginia noted that the original anticipated project had been for a smaller span, and thus the deeper borings had not been necessary at the time.

The contract with the Department of Ecological Restoration for the engineering was scheduled to end on the last day of the current year, which left very little time in which to get the borings done and amend the plans' submittal. Will said he planned to ask to have the contract extended to the following June. The engineering firm, GZA, said there were enough funds left to do the boring. Will said he imagined he would get the extension since he was asking only for more time, not more funds.

Virginia asked whether Will thought the project at King Corner would eventually be funded. He replied that he was not optimistic. The project as envisioned at present called for a large span, a bridge really, that would cost about $2.2 million. The state did not tend to fund projects with more than $1 million. MVP funds were perhaps a possibility, but they would require significant matching funds, which would strain Hawley's tax base. He said the issue was challenging. Hussain said perhaps the group could talk to legislators. He mentioned the work done on Savoy Road. Bob noted that that work had been funded by the Federal government.

Bob asked what would happen if the culvert in place failed the following day. He was told that in that case it could be replaced with something comparable and more reasonable. Nevertheless, Bob noted, if the dam failed, major issues could ensue. Gary added that if the current culvert collapsed and the road were closed, the state would probably step in to help.

Will said that the project could potentially be put on the Transportation Improvement Program list with FRCOG. Hussain noted that the Dugway was also a possibility for this program, and that the state was unlikely to fund both projects.

Will moved on to Ashfield Road, which he said was in better shape. Davenport Construction was returning to the project and was prepared to lay down the final 1300 feet of road the following week. Hawley's road crew had recrowned the road and put drainage along parts of the sides. Hussain asked whether the new, smaller gravel was being installed on the top layer of the road at the same prices as the old gravel. Will confirmed this. Hussain observed that the group had been wrong at its previous meeting, when it had thought that the smaller stones were more expensive. Will explained that the smaller gravel would be used to cover the whole road, not just the newer section. Hussain opined that it would be helpful to have this work done before snow fell. Will said that the culvert for Ashfield Road, which would be installed later, was envisioned as fairly simple, adding that residents should be able to get into their homes when that construction took place. He added that the town was in the early stages of developing a bid for the culvert.

3. **The group passed over the school-committee opening and the ambulance situation**, saying that they would be discussed at the next meeting. Hussain briefly noted that Adams Ambulance had offered Hawley a truck. He said that since the town was unlikely to use the truck and had no place in which to store it, the Fire Department had refused the offer politely. Tinky reminded the group that Hawley's state legislators had said they would try to help when the time arrived to form a regional ambulance service.

4. **Tinky briefly reported on the election**, saying that although election workers had had to stay late into the night, Pam Shrimpton had done an outstanding job running the day smoothly. Berkshire Pizzeria had generously donated pizza and cannoli to the election workers for both lunch and dinner. Tinky was asked to compose thank-you letters to both Pam and the pizzeria owners, the Rowehls.

5. **Tinky brought up Arts Council business.** First, she presented a conflict-of-interest form she had filled out because she was both on the council and applying for a grant. In the form, she promised to recuse herself from decision making on her own application and to inform the rest of the council that they were not to take her feelings into account in making a decision. Hussain moved to accept and approve Tinky's disclosure. Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. Next, at Tinky's request Hussain moved to appoint Maggie Speier of West Hawley Road to the Arts Council. Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

In other business, Tinky read an email from Martha Thurber of the Mohawk Trail Regional School Committee asking for a representative to attend an upcoming personnel session that would select a negotiator for the upcoming contract talks with paraprofessionals. Will said he would attend the meeting but asked Tinky to forward him the email so he would have all the information in his laptop**.**

Hussain asked his fellow board members to sign a thank-you letter to the town of Monson, which had been generous to Hawley's firefighters when they had traveled to the town on a mutual-aid call**.** The group signed.

Hussain also noted that he had been asked by residents why Brandon Reynolds had had the town truck at his house. He wondered whether this action followed road-crew protocol. Gary acknowledged that this had happened and said that it made sense while Gary was on vacation because Brandon's house was conveniently located at similar distances from both East and West Hawley.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

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Williams Cosby Hussain Hamdan Robert MacLean