

Town of Hawley, Massachusetts
Minutes of a
Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
in Person & via Zoom
July 15, 2025

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. Warrants were signed, the board approved minutes from previous meetings. Then:

1. **The board discussed the letter Hussain had drafted to send to townspeople about unregulated housing.** Will asked whether the reference to FRCOG should be more specific, but Hussain argued that since people might be inquiring about a variety of projects, being general made more sense. The group discussed the potential cost of sending the letter. Virginia said she had a list of property owners; there were just over 300 of those. Hussain suggested that if people who got the e-news could be compared with that list, those people could be contacted digitally. Tinky was asked to compare the two lists within two weeks. Chris suggested that another reminder about numbering houses might be a good addition, but the group appeared to think that the housing issue should be left to dominate. Hussain suggested that the upcoming (but not yet scheduled) special town meeting would be a good place to spread the word. In addition, Bob noted, copies of the letter could be posted outside at the Town Office and be made available inside the office.
2. **The group moved on to delays in making sure that Hawley's electrical and telephone poles were ready for the upcoming broadband project..** Tinky explained that State Senator Paul Mark had responded immediately to the Selectboard's request for help with the issue and that his chief of staff, (Paige Dolinski), had confirmed that National Grid was working on the issue and should have news for the town within a few weeks. Tinky added that she had spoken to Bob Ide of National Grid, who had confirmed that Paul Mark's involvement had impressed the company. Bob had told her that a meeting was to take place the following day and that he should have some news by the end of the week. Will urged her to stay on top of this issue and remind Bob and others that this issue was crucial to Hawley's future. He also asked whether she could find out who at the Massachusetts Broadband Institute was involved in meeting with National Grid; he thought it might be Michael Baldino or Cornell Robinson.
3. **Tinky presented a letter about the battery-storage issue in Oakham,** which Hussain had suggested she prepare in case the board cared to sign it. Hussain said he generally supported the letter as large battery-storage systems, especially those involving lithium batteries, could present safety issues for communities.

Will expressed skepticism that writing would do any good. Hussain noted that the town did sometimes get involved with advocacy, particularly through the Mass. Municipal Association and the FRCOG; he recalled that Trina Sternstein had suggested getting involved when the matter of who regulated such installations had been up for debate in the legislature. He and Bob said they didn't see any harm in signing a letter. However, the board did note that the request for the letter of support had come from an organization of Oakham townspeople, not from the town itself. The Board asked for clarification about what (if any) position the Town of Oakham had taken. Tinky was asked to inquire about the Oakham Selectboard's official position on the matter.

4. **The question of municipal attachments to utility poles was dealt with** briefly. Husain reminded Tinky that this item had been in response to a question from Bob Ide of National Grid about such attachments in terms of Fire Department Equipment (such as alarm lines). Hawley had none. Tinky was asked to make sure that National Grid was aware of this.
5. **In road and grant news, Will reported that FRCOG had finally made some progress on the Ashfield Road Culvert issue.** Western Earthworks had been asked to submit the necessary paperwork. He said he hoped to have a bid to sign within the next week or two. There was no news on other road projects at present. Chris reported that the road crew's new pressure washer had arrived.

In other business, Will reported that it seemed that it was not going to be possible to exchange the new laptop sent for the treasurer for a larger one, which she needed for her work. However, the laptop she was currently using was fairly new, had been continuously updated, and was very secure. He recommended giving up on the exchange and asking the Finance Committee to plan to replace the laptop within the next year or two. Hussain said this sounded reasonable. The group asked Virginia to check on the computer budget and report back at a future meeting.

Virginia asked about the checks to Colrain and Shelburne Falls for ambulance work.

When asked if another clarifying letter was needed, Hussain said he didn't think it was and Virginia noted she had marked the items as donations in the check memo. Hussain added that going forward, Colrain was the town's primary ambulance service; other services might give mutual aid but should not be paid for it.

Tinky reported that she was unsure how to proceed with Dreamhost, the town's server for email accounts. She said that Anne Hamilton-Kean was out of the country but did not want to deal with any lawyers or courts to resolve the issue. Hussain asked Tinky to involve him in future dealings on this issue, noting that perhaps the town could do something with the probate court.

Tinky said that the town had received an email from the state about Animal Control Officer training, which had indicated that Chris Tirone was required to take the training. A course was to be held in Northampton in early September; it was also viewable online. Chris said that he would prefer to take the class in person. Virginia suggested that the continuing-education budget be used to pay Chris for his time taking the course, which was free.

Tinky said she would enroll him. There was some discussion about state mandated classes (including for other departments like the Assessors) and the practicality/repercussions of complying with these strictly.

Tinky told the group that Ellie, the Town Clerk, was having a lot of trouble with the state. John Fay had died at the end of June. The new vital-records system did not recognize Ellie's log in, however, so she was unable to issue a death certificate for the family. She had spent hours emailing and telephoning the state about this issue with no result so far. Will suggested that the board send a letter to the Secretary of the Commonwealth on Ellie's behalf. Hussain suggested that perhaps the board could advocate for legislation allowing clerks to issue paperwork in emergencies without going through the state system. He said he and Tinky would work on drafting a letter.

Hussain observed that the bike group that had recently organized a ride through Hawley (JAM bike group), should be recognized for its excellent planning and preparation. Everything had gone smoothly, he stated. Tinky said she would reach out to the group.

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

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

Williams Cosby

Hussain Hamdan

Robert MacLean