

**Town of Hawley, Massachusetts**  
**Minutes of a**  
**Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting**  
**in Person & via Zoom**  
**September 23, 2025**

Present: Hussain Hamdan and Robert MacLean – Selectboard  
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday; Virginia Gabert, Treasurer and Financial Administrator  
Gary Mitchell and Chris Tirone – Highway Crew  
Ellen and Scott Purinton

**The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.** The board signed warrants and approved minutes from a previous meeting. Then:

**1. The ZBA held its hearing on the variance application of Ellen and Scott Purinton.**

Hussain noted that the ZBA hearing had been properly advertised in the newspaper and abutters had been notified. He recognized Scott and Ellen Purinton to speak about their proposed project. Scott explained that the two were hoping to add a portico over and around their front door on West Hawley Road. They had applied for a building permit, and the permit had been denied on the basis that the home's proximity to the road would make the project impossible without entering within the 60ft setback requirement set forth in local zoning. Scott explained that, depending on how one measured, the distance was either about 34 or 44 feet from the edge of the road. He showed a photograph of a porch that had stood in front of the house in his grandparents' day about a century ago; the structure had since been removed or had fallen down but, if it still existed, it would have been grandfathered under the zoning laws, which came later. He explained that he and Ellen wanted a smaller structure to cover the door and provide steps. They had a carpenter ready to do the work if the project was approved.

Hussain opened the floor for comments from any abutters. None were offered. He asked if anyone else wished to speak on the issue. Tinky said she thought the portico would look pretty. Otherwise, no comments were made. Hussain moved to close the public portion of the hearing, Bob seconded the motion, and both voted in favor. The hearing closed at 7:07 p.m.

Following brief deliberation, Bob moved to grant the variance, Hussain seconded the motion, and both voted in favor. Hussain filled in the variance form, which contained findings that literal enforcement of the zoning bylaw would cause undue hardship to the landowner since there was no way to locate the portico on the existing structure in a manner that conformed to the 60-foot setback. Also, the prior historical existence of a similar structure, the elevation of the house above the road (which made it unlikely the structure would interfere with traffic or visibility), and the fact that no objection had been made all supported the finding that the project would not have negative effects or be contrary to the purposes of the Town's zoning bylaws. The applicants would be asked to conform generally to the design outlined in the building permit application. The Board adopted and signed the variance. The group discussed the steps ahead.

The Town Clerk was required to hold the application and decision forms for 20 days. A notice was then to be recorded in the Registry of Deeds. The couple thanked the board members for their help. In response to a question from Scott, the group briefly discussed the state of roads in the State Forest. Hussain informed Scott that Middle Road was closed due to what was presently a relatively minor washout. It was still passable, but the situation could worsen if high water arrived before repairs were made. The timetable for DCR's repairs was not certain because of its complex permitting process.

2. **Tinky presented a two-year agreement for services submitted to the town by the Veterans Services District.** The agreement was essentially the same as in past years. Greenfield covered 56 percent; the other towns paid 44 percent based on population. Hawley's percentage could change slightly based on this. Hussain asked Bob whether he was comfortable with the fees involved; Bob said yes. Hussain then asked Chris Tirone, the town's representative to the district, whether he recommended staying with the group. Chris said the district was doing a fine job and was less expensive than any alternative. Bob moved to sign the agreement, Hussain seconded, and both voted in favor; Hussain signed the paperwork. Tinky said that the district had asked how many flags Hawley wanted for Memorial Day the following year; Chris asked for a gross, the usual number.
3. **Discussion moved to road work.** Hussain asked Gary how his investigation of signs to keep people from getting stuck in the forest was going. Gary said he wasn't sure about wording. After some discussion, the board suggested that the signs say something like "Forest Access Only: Not a Through Way." They agreed that not everyone would pay attention, but Hussain expressed the hope that the wording might at least keep tractor trailers from being imperiled in the woods. Hussain said he wasn't particularly concerned about marking intersections already inside the forest (such as Hallockville and Hells Kitchen) but did want clear sign placement where the forest roads met town roads.

Hussain reported that the Finance Committee had recently voted in support of using Chapter 90 funds for the recently proposed DPW equipment purchases if money were also allocated for road projects like that on East Hawley Road. The committee had suggested that the town start to work on a road-repair capital plan. For now, the Selectmen authorized Gary to begin to arrange the necessary purchases. Hussain asked whether the chipper vendor was on the state contract list and was told that it was; this meant that this purchase did not have to be put out for bid. The group agreed that the purchase of a new mower attachment would have to await a town-meeting vote as this was ineligible for Chapter 90 money. Hussain reminded Gary not to get rid of the old mowing attachments until that happened. Gary agreed to start purchasing equipment soon.

Bob moved that the Highway Superintendent be authorized to purchase a mini loader and wood chipper from vendors on the State Contract out of Chapter 90 funds as earlier detailed to the board. Hussain seconded, and both voted in favor.

4. **The group worked on the question of Good Neighbor Day** the following Sunday. Hussain noted that the forecast looked promising; the event would ideally be held outdoors. Tinky asked whether the board still wanted to host the event; she hadn't had a lot of RSVPs. The board decided it was worth trying. In addition to the regular guests, a number of town officials planned to come. Hussain was bringing diet soda. Peter Beck was contributing burgers. Bob offered to bring some drinking water. The group discussed the possibility of pressing cider that day, but Hussain ultimately advised against making raw cider available, as it could give some people an upset stomach. He suggested that someone bring pasteurized cider instead. Tinky said she would ask in the e-news for a volunteer to bring cider.

**In other business, Tinky said that the report on the old tri-town landfill had come in.** The report was long but basically noted that the results were "consistent with past sampling events." At Hussain's request, she promised to send him the full report.

**Hussain spoke briefly about shared ambulance discussions.** He recapped on the prior meeting, where local towns had agreed this was a good idea and proposed a study of different models. Recently, Colrain had reached out to the FRCOG for assistance moving the project forward, and that group had indicated that its staff members were willing to help.

**Tinky asked whether the group wanted to pay for additional detour signs** near Ashfield Road. The board deemed the existing signage adequate but reminded her to inform the school district of the imminent road closure.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday.

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Hussain Hamdan

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Robert MacLean