

**Town of Hawley, Massachusetts**  
**Minutes of a**  
**Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting**  
**in Person & via Zoom**  
**September 9, 2025**

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

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

1. **Will began the meeting with road and grant news.** He said he had spoken with a state official named Gwen about the failure of the MVP grant application. The primary reason the application had not been accepted, she had indicated, was the state Department of Transportation's failure to complete the Chapter 85 review. She had added that she would also like to see more community engagement about the issue. She had encouraged some kind of session to explain matters and solicit feedback from the community, noting that purchasing food was a legitimate use of grant funds. She had also indicated that the waiver of matching funds for MVP applications would probably continue. Will said he had talked to Nate at GZA about the Chapter 85 question. Nate hadn't seemed to understand precisely what was needed. Hussain observed that it might be time to bring in the town's state legislators to help, suggesting that perfection in this case seemed to be the enemy of the good. Will agreed that the project (and Hawley's role in it) seemed a poor solution for what used to be a state highway. He said that he was hoping to meet a culvert application deadline soon.

Discussion turned to Ashfield Road. Will reported that the pipe for the new culvert was due to arrive around September 29, although changes in the schedule were always possible. He said he wanted to wait to close the road until the date for the pipe's arrival was fairly certain; the road could be closed five to seven working days before to allow the construction company to dig the hole for the pipe. He added that it was always unclear what precisely was underneath any portion of the road.

Will said that there was still no news about the STRAP grant and noted that the FRCOG was applying for a similar federal grant.

He said he wanted to follow up with Lloyd about getting the Finance Committee to schedule a meeting. Gary said he would be happy to meet with the committee at its members' convenience. Hussain said he still wasn't sure what the Finance Committee's role was in advising about Chapter 90 expenditures.

Will asked whether the Selectboard should ask for voter approval to purchase large pieces of capital equipment. Hussain said that would be necessary if town funds were being used. Virginia added that such matters might have an impact on capital planning and that balancing equipment purchases and road projects could be tricky. She noted that it generally made sense to consult the Finance Committee but that the Selectmen were within their rights just to tell the Finance Committee that they had approved necessary items. Hussain said that in some prior cases, when consulted about DPW spending, the Finance Committee had said that operational matters were not its business.

Virginia noted that the town's current capital plan did not involve using Chapter 90 funds for equipment, just for road work. Will emphasized the connection between the needed equipment and fall road work. Gary observed that if the mini-loader were purchased to replace the tractor, the town could sell off the tractor accessories.

When asked, Gary confirmed that the mini loader would replace the tractor, which had been scheduled for replacement for some time. Hussain said he didn't think the Highway Department generally changed its priorities very frequently. He said he preferred not to add additional steps to decisions, (such as having a meeting to discuss Gary's priorities when these had already been made clear), noting the time sensitivity of prices and the costs of ongoing maintenance of worn out equipment.

Will said he suggested setting aside \$200,000 using \$300,000 for equipment, and using \$400,000 for road repair. Gary reminded the group that the new mower could not be paid for out of Chapter 90 funds, although all the other equipment he was requesting could. Bob asked about the power unit. Hussain asked Gary to firm up the exact numbers needed for new equipment; Gary said he would do so. Equipment from vendors on the State Contract (such as the mini loader) would not need bidding. The used chipper, quoted by Quality Fleet at \$107,000, would need to go out to bid. For the moment, Gary said he would rent a chipper for \$1800 per week; the vendor had indicated that the rental would count toward a possible purchase.

2. **Discussion turned toward signing a letter of support for the town of Oakham's fight against large battery units in within its borders.** Will said he had looked into the matter and that he believed the state was usurping local control in this case. He added that battery fires could be dangerous and that since there hadn't been a lot of those no one was quite sure how to extinguish them. He said he supported signing the letter, even if it might not do much good; it would register Hawley's objections with the state. Hussain agreed, adding that towns needed access to funding, training, and resources for this issue. The letter would help call attention to this. He moved that the letter be signed, Bob seconded, and all voted in favor.
3. **The group spoke briefly about Good Neighbor Day.** Hussain asked Tinky to get people to commit to coming if possible so the numbers could be narrowed own. He also suggested that she invite the Sons & Daughters of Hawley to get involved. He offered to bring diet soda to the event.
4. **Tinky asked the group to nail down wording for the construction signs for Ashfield Road.** The signs might allow as few as eight characters per line with three lines per sign; the message could change over time, however. The group decided that the first three lines should read: "Ashfield Road Closed"; the second group should list the date of closure; and the third should say "Use Alt Route."

**In other business,** Will said he had talked to the DCR's economic-development forester and had mentioned that the Fire Department was interested in expanding its building. The two had discussed a possible right of way, land swap, or land donation to provide space for a septic system. It had sounded as though the new commissioner of the DCR, Nicole LaChapelle, might be receptive to such ideas. Hussain wondered aloud whether any deal would need approval from two thirds of the legislature. He said that he had spoken with Randy Crochier, the health agent, who had said the Fire Department could install a tight tank, although a septic tank would be better. Placing the septic beneath the currently used landing zone behind the building would make sense; helicopters that landed on the property were too light to damage the tank. Will asked Hussain to talk to Fire Chief Greg Cox about the issue and get a formal request for action from the department. Hussain asked whether any town-owned properties might be eligible for a land swap. Gary said there might be something on Hunt Road. Virginia said there were 40 acres of property there for which the owner was unknown, although there were right-of-way issues. She suggested a parcel at the top of West Hill Road abutting forest land. It had been purchased recently, but changes in frontage had made it unbuildable. The group agreed that perhaps the town could negotiate to purchase that property and swap it with the state.

**Tinky and Virginia brought up a recent memo about Continuity of Operations work and classes** sent out by MEMA. Hussain said that a great deal of emergency planning had been done, although some plans were seldom looked at. He suggested inviting EMD Brandon Root and Greg Cox to an upcoming meeting with all three Selectmen. Tinky was asked to invite them for October 21. In the meantime, he said he would talk to Brandon about the classes.

**Tinky reported that Lark Thwing had resigned from the Historical Commission** although he was willing to stay on as a member emeritus. Hussain moved to accept his resignation, Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. Tinky was asked to thank Lark.

**Virginia noted that Animal Control Officer Chris Tirone had just completed two days of training and asked how he would be paid.** The group agreed that the funds would come out of the Continuing Education budget. Chris said he needed to be sworn in by the Town Clerk, after which Virginia could notarize the form.

**Gary observed that the upper end of West Hill Road was washed out** and asked whether the road crew needed to keep up maintenance there, beyond the last residence. Hussain said he would be in favor of leaving it. Will asked whether the road would become impassable if the damage continued. Gary said it would. Will suggested waiting and seeing.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday.

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Hussain Hamdan

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Robert MacLean