

Town of Hawley, Massachusetts
Minutes of a
Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
in Person & via Zoom
December 16, 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

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. The board signed warrants and approved minutes from a previous meeting. Then:

1. **The group discussed the priorities list sent to FRCOG the previous year**, which the council had suggested updating. Hussain noted that most of the priorities, which included public-safety buildings, regional ambulance service, and many road projects, were unaccomplished. The group noted that some progress had been made on the large project that was the Dugway in the form of a grant for initial design work. The group agreed on keeping the same priorities, mentioning the slight change with the Dugway and Tinky was asked to communicate that.
2. **Gary explained that several pieces of town equipment could be sold on Municibid.** Tinky said she would need descriptions and approximate values for the items; he said he could provide those. Bids would be submitted to Town Hall. Hussain moved to authorize the Road Boss to advertise the equipment and set reserves for the sales. Bob seconded, and all voted in favor.
3. **The group discussed the status of broadband installation in town.** Tinky read a letter from Michael Baldino at MBI, which said that he was pushing the utility-pole owners to get the poles ready for Charter Communications but also noted that winter was coming and progress was slow. Will observed that Verizon had been moving its lines down on a number of poles in town, which was probably part of the process. The group was unsure why no new poles were being installed at this point; Hussain speculated that that step might come later, observing there were several groups of poles still in various stages of the evaluation process with the utilities.
4. **In road news**, Will said that he had received the Dugway-design contract from the state and would like to move forward with it as soon as possible. He asked Hussain whether Hussain had had a chance to look at it. Hussain had not read it in detail, but thought it looked like the fairly standard state contract. He moved to authorize the chair to sign the contract, Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. Will explained that once the contract was signed, submitted to the state, and returned, the town could move forward with the design firm, VHB. He asked Tinky to put the issue on the agenda for the next meeting.

Will explained that he was meeting soon with Municipal Vulnerability Program officials to discuss possible strategies for applying for grants for the King Corner project. He predicted that the cost of that project, estimated the previous year at \$2.2 million, would probably go up.

Tinky asked what the group would like to do about the annual request from FRCOG to participate in its highway program. The board members decided to look over the paperwork for that and make a decision at their next meeting.

5. **The next topic was sand,** Will noted that a contractor working on a project on Pudding Hollow Road had been coming to the Town Garage to fill trucks with sand. He reminded his colleagues that the sand was for town residents and the highway crew, and that town residents were expected to fill buckets, not trucks. He reported that he had spoken with the property owners and the builder, who now understood that contractors had to purchase their own sand. He asked whether there should be a stronger policy or whether perhaps a sign at the Town Garage might be needed. Hussain framed the conversation in terms of whether this was a single incident with a misunderstanding or a more widespread situation involving multiple parties; it seemed to him to have been the former. The group briefly discussed one local plow who was allowed to get sand at the town garage. They noted that Hawley-based plowing outfits were allowed to do this, provided they paid the Town the cost of the sand, only used the sand for Hawley residents, and had the sand loaded at convenient times for the road crew. The Board concluded that the current policy was adequate for the present. The group noted that Gary had administered the situation well. Tinky noted that the people to whom the highway crew had delivered buckets of sand had been grateful.
6. **The group looked over the estimates the Waterwright Company had presented** for fixing water issues at the Town Office, the Highway Garage, and the Fire Station. These costs were not covered by the current budget.

Will argued that it might be important to have potable water in all three buildings at times when the power went out for long periods of time; with no working pumps, residents would be unable to get water. Hussain noted that both the Fire Department and MEMA stockpiled water and could supply it in an emergency. He added that boiling water and using chlorine tablets or stockpiling small household filters were possible options as well.

The group discussed less expensive options than Waterwright. Hussain said that he believed that Chris knew of someone who worked with water filters and might be able to help. Will suggested that Hussain's friend who had installed the hot-water heater in the Town Office might be another possibility.

Hussain observed that perhaps the town could get a grant to purchase portable filters for emergencies. Tinky said she would also ask Randy Crochier at FRCOG whether grant money might be available to do the water work. She stated her opinion that the town should have potable water in all its official buildings.

Bob suggested that perhaps a well could be dug at the Town Garage. The group discussed the ways in which topography and proximity to the road, river, and other existing installations might complicate this idea.

Will said he had talked to Fire Chief Greg Cox, who had thought that the firefighters might be able to replace the pressure tank themselves at the fire station; the tank might be related to some of the problems and possibly even to the bacteria found in the water. Hussain suggested that if the tank were being replaced, the building could get hot water, too. The possibility of an on-demand system was discussed. Will suggested tabling the water question until more information was obtained.

In other news, **Tinky shared an announcement from National Grid about the scheduled implementation of smart meters in Hawley.** Hussain explained that this process would take a while; the network had to be installed first. He suggested that Tinky note in the e-news that residents would probably be seeing more power trucks in the area soon.

Tinky presented a letter from FRCOG about its efforts to get member towns included in the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District. The letter suggested that towns send a letter to legislators supporting earmarked funds for the district-membership fee. Hussain recalled that a number of years back the town had discussed a state proposal for spraying for mosquitos; the idea had been strongly opposed by the majority of those at the hearing. He also noted that after the initial earmark, the town would be forced to pay the \$2000 fee for participation in the district. Will observed that EEE was a dangerous disease that had in fact shown up in neighboring towns. Hussain agreed but asked what membership in the district would get the town beyond what the town and FRCOG were doing already. He stated that the only real options were educating people, (which was already being done), and the spraying. Tinky was asked to contact FRCOG with that question.

Will reported that the Ashfield Road contract was being wrapped up and had come in under budget. Hussain congratulated Will on a job well done. Will said that in a few days, when rain was forecast, townspeople would see how the road held up.

Chris Tirone told the group that he wanted to be appointed constable; the previous constable, George Rice, had died. The board members said that they had appointed Tinky constable at the previous meeting, when Chris had been plowing roads. Tinky said she didn't care about being constable; it had just seemed convenient since she always posted the warrants at the Town Office anyway. Observing that there was no reason Hawley could not have two constables and that this might actually be useful (especially with Chris regularly at the Garage and Fire Station posting sites), Hussain moved to appoint Chris constable as well. Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. Chris was reminded that he had to be sworn in.

Virginia announced that she probably wouldn't be in the office through the rest of the week. Unless anyone objected, she would work remotely.

Will asked whether the town had received titles for its new equipment. Gary said the titles were coming.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

Williams Cosby

Hussain Hamdan

Robert MacLean