

Town of Hawley, Massachusetts
Minutes of a
Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
in Person & via Zoom
February 10, 2026

Present: Will Cosby (via Zoom), Hussain Hamdan, and Robert MacLean – Selectboard
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday; Virginia Gabert, Treasurer and Financial Administrator
Gary Mitchell, Chris Tirone, Greg Rowehl, Suzanne Crawford, and via Zoom Lloyd Crawford

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

1. **The group began with a discussion of the Dugway information meeting** scheduled for Thursday, February 26, at 6 p.m. Will explained that the meeting was visualized as a time when abutters could ask questions about the survey work and how it might involve engineers crossing onto their property. Tinky asked whether refreshments were needed. Hussain offered to bring some soda to serve.

Greg Rowehl asked whether the town was aware of the previous studies that had been performed on the Dugway. Hussain explained that the board knew that multiple studies and surveys had been done but that the Department of Transportation wanted recent information. Greg mentioned that on the apron side of the Dugway the gully had a problem; he had blown out a tire there. Will said that unfortunately there were many places in Hawley in which one could damage one's car if one strayed from the road surface. Greg noted that lines were needed on West Hawley Road and particularly on the Dugway section. The board observed that it was hoping to get funding for lines soon. Greg added that three cars had been overturned on West Hawley Road in the past year; they had been driving too fast. Hussain said that in at least two of those three cases, the drivers had been operating under the influence so lines would probably not have deterred them, although he agreed that lines were desirable. Lloyd asked whether the town was in line for the DOT municipal paving program. Gary replied that this had been added to the town's FRCOG wish list. The group briefly discussed ways to get speed data.

Hussain suggested moving onto a later agenda item, the speed signage, as it was related to the current discussion. Tinky said that she gathered that Hussain had information about more accidents than the DOT survey mentioned. Hussain said he would be happy to provide photos of accidents. Tinky said she would appreciate having some time soon with Hussain and Gary to work on the speed-signage application. Will suggested she find out whether the town could purchase its own signs if it didn't get the two signs it was requesting. He wondered whether there would be a municipal price break.

2. **The next point of discussion was the annual appointment of the animal control officer.** Chris Tirone said he was willing to fill this position again. Tinky said she could forward the form to fill out online for the appointment to Hussain as the chair of the Board of Health. He said he would prefer that she printed the form out for his signature. She offered to bring the form to the next meeting (on February 24). Will moved to approve Chris's appointment, Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.
3. **The group expressed concern that no one knew exactly who had keys to the Town Office.** Hussain said that this had been the case as long as he had been a Selectman and even before. Tinky suggested that if the town was going to change the lock, a deadbolt be installed on the front door. Gary said he could get one and install it. The group decided that it would be best for the list of people with keys to be pre-approved by the Selectmen. Chris talked about the possibility of installing a "shield" on the front door like the one at the Fire Station. Hussain reminded the group that an attempt had been made to break into the side door at one point. He noted that the town had purchased, but had yet to install, a video surveillance system for the Town Office and suggested it be put up. It would monitor comings and goings in and out of the building.

The group decided to hold an executive session at its next meeting to discuss the question of who should have keys. Tinky offered to compile a preliminary list for the board. Greg asked whether keys could be used on both sides of the doors; Hussain said he wasn't sure that was legal in a municipal building but offered to look into the question. Will asked whether it made sense to obtain locks of a type where the key could not be easily duplicated at retail sites, but only by a professional locksmith. Several people observed that those keys in fact often could be duplicated. Hussain said that the doors could be unlocked with a code; he added that a key backup would be needed for such a system, which would in turn require multiple people to have the backup and sort of defeat the purpose.

4. **Suzanne Crawford gave a brief overview of expected school assessments** for the next fiscal year. She said that although the Mohawk and Hawlemont school districts were looking into probable overpayments for several years by Hawley and Charlemont, that situation was unlikely to lead to refunds. It would take a lot of effort to calculate how much the towns were owed, and the other towns would have to agree to repay those funds. Hussain agreed that the calculations could be difficult and observed that there had already been several iterations of supposed errors from the involved time period. Suzanne observed that at the moment it looked as though Hawley's school assessments would go down slightly the following year, although she emphasized that nothing had been finalized. She asked for help from the town in the form of two letters. First, she noted, she would like the Selectmen to write to the technical school, which didn't want to let towns know who had applied to go there until April, too late for effective budgeting. She asked the board to request information earlier. She also reminded the group that the rural-school aid budget was making its way through committees in the state legislature; she asked for a letter of support. She said she would provide information about both of these letters to Tinky so that a letter could be drafted for the next meeting, in two weeks.

There was also mention of a proposal, earlier communicated by email, whereby one Hawlemont School Committee member had asked whether Hawley might agree to pay more than was required. Hussain asked if this amounted to giving Charlemont a break on its assessments (which were rising as Hawley's fell), to which Suzanne replied affirmatively. Hussain noted that in different years Hawley's assessment might be higher. The idea was not pursued further.

5. **Internet and website issues came up next.** Hussain said that he had received a reply to his email from Michael Baldino of MBI. Baldino had said he was planning to meet with GoNetSpeed in the near future; he would like to talk to the Selectmen after that. Will observed that the board couldn't control MBI's handling of an agreement between MBI and the vendor. Hussain said that his issue was with the process with which GoNetSpeed seemed to be making changes; after all, the town owned much of the infrastructure involved in the current system, and GNS ought to communicate with town officials. Will felt that any conversion to Starlink by GNS shouldn't affect the municipal assets, but Hussain said he wanted clarification and was not sure whether GNS realized there were parts of the system it did not own. Hussain reminded the group that WiValley hadn't informed the town in advance when it had ceded its work in town to GNS. He wondered aloud when customers would be cut loose from GNS, which was currently offering Starlink at a favorable rate. He argued that a long-term plan was needed.

Tinky said that she had heard from Bob Ide at National Grid that its make-ready work was underway and might take until August. Bob had no information about Verizon, however.

Tinky added that she had finally received a copy of Rick Kean's will from Anne Hamilton-Kean and was endeavoring to get Dreamhost, the town's email server, to let her back into the system. (She had been kicked out when Rick, the primary contact for Dreamhost, had died.) Hussain noted that if necessary the probate court could be involved. He urged Tinky to stay on top of Dreamhost. Will wondered whether the town might be better off finding another email server; Greg suggested Gmail. Tinky said that she understood that there was no guarantee that old emails could be transferred successfully to a new system. She said that Dreamhost required an email address for contacts that was not related to townofhawley.com; the group suggested that the town's Gmail account be used.

In relation to the question of making Hawley's website more accessible, Tinky reported that the FRCOG was helping area towns (with Shelburne serving as lead town) apply for a grant to facilitate this process, which could save Hawley a lot of money.

In other business, Gary reported that he had managed to repair the truck that had been in an accident a few days previously. It could get back on the road to plow and sand, he noted, but its longevity was unclear. Hussain asked about the status of the green truck behind the salt shed, which Hawley had bought from Shelburne. Gary replied that it needed significant investment and should probably be sold as surplus.

Hussain asked whether the town should be on the lookout for another cheap backup truck. Gary said he and Bob had been looking. Hussain asked whether the finance committee should add funds to the budget for another used truck. The group agreed that \$5000 (the amount paid for the Shelburne truck), was too low; anything purchased for that amount was unlikely to last long. Bob noted that the Shelburne truck had been a good investment and had definitely paid for itself, but something newer should be sought going forward. He also suggested possibly looking for slightly smaller trucks that did not require a CDL. Bob suggested that the Finance Committee ask townspeople to fund up to \$50,000 for a good used truck at Annual Town Meeting. The Sterling could be a backup. Will asked Lloyd to consider this at the next Finance Committee meeting, Lloyd said he would need something specific to propose. Hussain suggested that preliminary wording could be to allow up to \$50,000 for a sanding-capable truck, probably below 26,000 pounds. Lloyd said he would talk to the committee. Hussain noted that the ideal situation would be always to have a backup truck in reserve.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

Williams Cosby

Hussain Hamdan

Robert MacLean