

Town of Hawley, Massachusetts
Minutes of a
Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
in Person & via Zoom
February 24, 2026

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

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

1. **While waiting for the scheduled visitors from GoNetSpeed (who never did show up) the group started with a discussion of switching over to a municipal domain name like HawleyMa.gov.** Will said he had been advised by people that such a domain name was advisable. He argued that in light of the problems with the town's current server, Dreamhost.com, it might also be useful to change domain names. Tinky said that the current domain name could be moved from Dreamhost if need be. She also noted that she hadn't followed up with Dreamhost in the past two weeks because she had been under the weather. Hussain said he was willing to hear arguments for a .gov domain as time went by. Will explained that he would prefer to have an official Hawley email address instead of using his private email for town business. Tinky said that as soon as she got the Dreamhost log-in information she could create one for him. She promised to follow up with Dreamhost and report back at the next meeting. One concern about changing the actual domain name, as pointed out by both Hussain and Tinky, was that everyone was already familiar with the existing one.
2. **The board signed letters to legislators and the governor** in support of funding for rural schools. Tinky explained that Suzanne Crawford, who had requested the letters, had decided not to ask for a letter asking the Technical School to notify the town about admitted students earlier than it had planned to; Suzanne had said that the process of admitting students was now delayed by the lottery system about to be implemented. Hussain suggested that even if the school didn't know precisely who was admitted from Hawley, it might be able to notify the town of the number of students who had applied. Robert Sears, who was on the vocational-advisory board, said that was possible.
3. **The Personnel Committee and the Selectmen discussed the most recent draft of the Personnel Policy Manual.** John Sears, chair of the committee, explained that after its last meeting he had seen a number of changes needed. In the current draft he had taken out a second reference to the use of personal vehicles for town business and had changed the wording on sick time compensation to that of the 2022 version. Hussain and Will agreed to those changes. John said he had also taken out an unnecessary appendix and asked whether anyone had any other issues to address. Robert noted that Virginia had earlier expressed concern about additional time off.

Virginia explained that the Highway Department didn't have a separate budget for sick time. It just budgeted for a 40-hour week plus some overtime, and sick days, vacation days, and holidays were taken out of that budget. She said that if the town started adding other time off it might have to budget for it. John asked her to compare the draft policy with the older version. She said she wouldn't have time to look at them anytime soon. John and Hussain offered to help.

John asked whether there were any other issues. Hussain replied that in general the draft seemed to work; figuring out the math was the remaining challenge. In answer to a question from John, he suggested waiting to send the new draft to town counsel until it was finalized. John said he hoped to have that draft in two weeks. Tinky was asked to put it on the agenda.

4. **In road and grant news**, Will reminded the group that they were to meet the following Thursday with the design firm VHB and abutters to the Dugway. Tinky said that the only major abutter who had not said he could come was Mark White; Mark had asked her to tell him about the meeting after it took place.

Will announced that he and Lloyd Crawford had talking to engineers at GZA about possible culvert work on Labelle Road. The road was difficult to maneuver. The two were hoping to apply for engineering funds for that road; if those funds didn't come through, perhaps Chapter 90 funds could be used. If those funds were used, the town would probably have to rent a rock hammer.

Gary observed that it might be worthwhile to install cameras in town vehicles. Will said that many municipalities had such cameras. After the possibility of installing them in both Highway and Fire trucks came up, Hussain said that if the town were thinking of installing them in fire-department vehicles, there might be possible HIPPA violations. Robert suggested that the cameras didn't have to have audio, but Hussain countered that video could still show who was being treated for what. He also said that the town would have to consider the competing imperatives of public records laws and HIPAA, vs. the possibility of subpoenas. This would be complicated; material would need to be stored securely, and someone would need to devote time to making determinations about what could be disclosed and what would need to be redacted. Small departments didn't have this kind of staff. Will suggested it was still worth looking into. Will asked if this was a question for Town Counsel; Hussain said it might be more of a question for a data specialist. At this point, the discussion moved away from Fire vehicles and focused more on the DPW. Virginia suggested reaching out to neighboring highway departments. Tinky was asked to contact nearby towns, Rowe and Northampton in particular, and FRCOG, as well as the Berkshire County highway superintendent. Hussain observed that school buses kept recordings for around 48 hours.

Will noted that it was getting to be time to think about the budget for the next fiscal year. Virginia reported that she had emailed department heads. Will asked whether the registration had come through for the wood chipper. Gary showed that he had the places in his hand. Virginia noted that the chipper was technically construction equipment.

In other business, Robert told the group that the Mohawk Trail School Committee was putting together materials for Annual Town Meeting. He asked whether it was okay for officials to come to the meeting and speak. Hussain said that any resident (like Robert) could speak, and so could the Superintendent. Anyone else would have to ask for permission, but it would probably be granted.

Tinky said that one town resident had asked whether it would be possible to purchase a third dump sticker for the same household for \$1. The board agreed to this but suggested that in future the family not affix stickers to the car; they could be transferred that way.

Tinky shared emails from two of the candidates for Natalie Blais's vacant seat in the State Legislature asking about coming to meet with the Selectmen. Hussain said that the meetings were open so anyone was welcome to come. He added that he thought it inadvisable to host any particular candidate. Will suggested a meet and greet but decided that might be premature at the moment.

Tinky told the group that a neighbor had asked whether the town had any information about the truck that had gotten stuck on Middle Road the previous week; it had done some damage to a couple of yards. The group said this wasn't really the town's business. Tinky said the neighbor would appreciate the name of the truck's company. Chris Tirone offered to send her a photo of the truck, which had a logo, The group briefly discussed the situation with the truck.

Will brought up the question of account software. He said Virginia had told him that QuickBooks was getting ready to pull out; it would soon be time to identify new software. He observed that Bob Dean at FRCOG had told him about a couple of companies being used by neighboring towns. The state might be able to help the town purchase the software; grant applications would need to be filled out in the fall The grant might pay for the initial cost but would not pay for maintenance. Hussain said it might be useful to ask people in the towns that were using the new software what they thought. He added that it would be important to remember that software for both the accountant and the treasurer was needed. Virginia said she would send a list of her needs to Tinky, who could then talk to other towns, including Williamsburg (she could ask Ellie about that). Hussain said he would talk to Florida and to folks in Berkshire County.

Tinky explained that GoNetSpeed had told her that they were slowly replacing the WiValley systems in individual houses with other systems, primarily Starlink, in order to ensure that residents got the speeds required by the FCC. Will suggested that GNS needed to make this happen as quickly as possible; people were often desperate. Hussain asked whether people who had been ineligible for the WiValley system were going to be given the new systems; he reminded the group that 96 percent of the town was supposed to be covered. Tinky stated that she would ask the GNS people to come to the next meeting.

At 8:12, Hussain moved that the group go into Executive Session under the Open Meeting Law to discuss security measures at the Town Office. Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

Williams Cosby

Hussain Hamdan

Robert MacLean