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

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

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

1. **The discussion began with earmarks.** Tinky explained that both Massachusetts senators (Markey and Warren) had sent letters asking towns to identify projects for Congressional earmarks … but also noting that the amount of money available and the priorities had yet to be determined. She said that the Small Town Administrators' weekly online session the following day was going to be devoted to earmarks, with a representative from Ed Markeys' office. Hussain said he would be happy to participate. The consensus was that the Fire Station would be a worthy project for application.

2. **The group considered the Town Clerk's request for the appointment of registrars.** Following her recommendation, Hussain moved to appoint Melanie Poudrier for one year, Chris Tirone for two years, Christine Kimball for three years, and Ellie Van Iderstine for one. Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

3. **Corinne Coryat stopped in to chat.** The former legislative aide to retired State Representative Natalie Blais explained that she was still working in the representative's office while running for the Democratic nomination to replace Natalie. She confirmed that she was also going to law school (hoping to finish in December) and planning to get married in June. The board asked her about legislative doings and priorities. Will began by expressing concern that the PILOT program did not appear to be advancing in the Statehouse. Corinne said that she thought it was likely that PILOT might begin to make progress in July. Will also asked about Chapter 70 (school) funding. He said he had just attended a panel discussion that had stymied him; he couldn't see why the legislature was at an impasse over such a crucial issue. Hussain suggested the present Chapter 70 formula was essentially meaningless as it was subject to appropriation, and the majority of the districts were "held harmless" for dropping enrollments. Corinne expressed a hope that reform in this area was due in the near future; such areas of legislation worked in cycles. She said she believed that legislators were becoming aware that education funding was not working, and she expressed optimism about the outcome of an upcoming visit by Ken Lewis, the co-chair of the Joint Committee on Education, to Mohawk Trail Regional School. She admitted that continued emphasis on this issue would be needed. The discussion moved on to the tech school's major expansion plans and to the need for affordable housing in the area.

Hussain brought up the vast amount of regulation surrounding EMTs and paramedics, using as an example the difficulty of giving over-the-counter drugs like aspirin to patients and characterizing many of the state's rules as "statutory nonsense." Corinne said she would be happy to work on updating the current statute, and Hussain offered to help. Will talked about the town's wish to get the DCR to cede some land for a septic field behind the Fire Station; Corinne said she would call Mackenzie Greer to follow up. She added that she was working on a bill to establish a public-safety building authority, perhaps as part of the Municipal Empowerment Act. She promised to send more information. The board thanked her for her visit and for the information she had provided.

4. **The board weighed the pros and cons of allowing early voting for the May town election.** Hussain moved to decline to conduct mail-in or early voting but to allow the normal absentee-ballot process. Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

5. **In road and grant news,** the group discussed the new signs at Middle Road and Pudding Hollow Road intended to deter trucks from driving into the State Forest.

   Will said he had talked to Matt Chase of VHB, who hoped to get survey work done at the Dugway before the leaves came out on the trees. Some of the surveying work would involve drones. Will noted that Matt would let the town know when the work would begin so abutters could be notified.

   In terms of King Corner, Will noted that the engineering work there had finally been approved by the Department of Transportation. The deadline for the MVP application for King Corner was in three days. Lloyd said he was working hard on the application, which wasn't easy. He added that the town was working on several other applications; one would go to several funding sources. The community culvert program was also a possible target for the town.

6. **In a related issue, the group discussed a possible weight restriction for Ashfield Road.** Will noted that since mud season had made the road messy again, the engineering firm GZA had suggested the restriction. Gary observed that this would help; the road had a lot of truck traffic. Hussain suggested that the sign exempt local traffic. Lloyd suggested that a temporary sign for just the spring might do the trick, but Will said he would prefer to break trucks' habit of using the route. Bob noted that in Vermont smaller roads allowed a maximum of 26,000 pounds. Discussion noted that the restriction wouldn't be enforceable without State approval but that the signs should nevertheless go up to deter overuse of the road. Hussain moved that a sign be put up that said, "No trucks in excess of 26,000 pounds. Local traffic only." Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

   Lloyd said it seemed a shame that so much money had been spent on the road only to have it get muddy again. Virginia asked whether GZA had an explanation. She was told that overweight trucks were a major part of the problem. Bob cited additional factors such as gravel and frost.

Will said the town didn't have a lot of recourse with GZA. Hussain noted that the road could have been better engineered but that that process would have cost much more money. Will added that he was getting a lot of calls about problems with East Road noting that all the dirt roads in town were muddy in spring.

7. **The group considered using FRCOG collective bidding again** for diesel in FY27. The group wondered about also using FRCOG for gasoline as well. Hussain suggested that, given the current elevated price of fuel, the town might be better off going its own way and soliciting bids around July 1 as it had in the past; perhaps the prices would go down by then if the war in Iran wound down. He also speculated that some smaller vendors who could not handle a FRCOG-size contract might bid for Hawley and offer a better deal. Will said he was inclined to agree. Tinky said she would inform FRCOG. The Highway Department had already agreed to continue to bid with FRCOG for some highway supplies but to bid on its own for sand.

8. **The next item under discussion was creating new "town of Hawley" emails**, combined with a brief conversation about dashcams on town vehicles. Tinky said she had talked to town officials in several nearby towns. No one had a group email for the Selectmen that allowed the board members to respond; Sarah in Charlemont had explained that her town had worried that having such an account might lead to unauthorized deliberation outside a meeting. Tinky said she would be happy to set up individual emails, using people's names, for anyone who wanted them. Will and Hussain requested the emails for their respective positions as chairs (Selectboard and Board of Health). Tinky asked them to send her their desired passwords so she could work on this.

   As for dashcams, none of the other towns used them except for police. Hussain suggested that if Gary wanted them for town trucks, he could use his budget for them.

9. After skipping over the contribution to the Town Report (Hussain promised to have a draft by the next meeting), **the group briefly discussed a letter from the tech school** saying that because of the new lottery system it was unlikely that the one new application from Hawley would be accepted. Current students would still be admitted.

In other business, Tinky said that Meadowsweet Farm was hoping to interest someone in investing in land the farm used for hay, registering it for agricultural preservation, and then selling the land to the Franklin Land Trust. The trick was that it might not be accepted into the agriculture program. The board declined to get involved in this and wasn't enthusiastic anyway about having more protected land since it was taxed at a lower rate.

Hussain suggested tentatively scheduling a special meeting of the Selectmen with the Finance Committee on the evening of April 14 to discuss the budget. in order to accommodate the Finance Committee's schedule and to attempt to have a reasonably accurate warrant by the time the Town Report went to press. Speaking of the budget, Virginia said she was working on figures. She looked at the snow-roads account and said that it was over budget by $58,000. Only $17,000 remained in the highway budget for the year. She noted that there was leftover winter road money from FY23 ($23,000); she and Gary suggested that perhaps that could be used.

She also noted that the road crew could temporarily go on unemployment, although that wasn't a strong solution. Tinky was asked to write to Corinne to inquire whether the state was planning to help towns with budget overflows from snow plowing. Hussain noted that MEMA had asked EMD Brandon Root to account for the extra funds spent during the recent winter storm. Brandon and Gary had provided some information, although Gary was not optimistic about reimbursement.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

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Williams Cosby	Hussain Hamdan	Robert MacLean