

Town of Hawley, Massachusetts
Minutes of a
Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
with the Finance Committee
April 14, 2026

Present: Will Cosby, Hussain Hamdan, Robert MacLean – Selectboard
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday; Virginia Gabert, Treasurer and Financial Administrator
Lloyd Crawford, Brittany Wolcott, and Ken Bertsch – Finance Committee

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

1. **Lloyd began by asking whether the Finance Committee had had a chance to review minutes.** Hussain, who was on the Finance Committee as well as the Selectboard, said he had not. Lloyd moved to approve the minutes. Brittany seconded the motion. Lloyd, Brittany, and Ken voted to approve. Hussain abstained.
2. **The rest of the discussion for the two groups centered on the budget for the next fiscal year and the Town Meeting warrant to plan it.** Lloyd asked what people had heard about the possibility of the legislature’s passing aid to towns in which snow-roads budgets for the past winter were in trouble. Ken said he had heard that funding had been approved by the State Senate. Will said he had attended the recent “Beacon Hill in the Berkshires” event, where it had sounded likely that help was on the way. Lloyd noted that since help for the snow-roads budget was not certain, the town should plan. The Finance Committee had discussed possibilities to take to the voters. The group briefly discussed how the snow-roads overage had been handled the previous year.

Lloyd said that the budget for Vocational Schools seemed to have been stabilized. If something came up as the year went on, an expense could be added to the tax rate with the voters’ approval. Returning to snow roads, Lloyd asserted that taking extra money out of stabilization could be tricky. He said the Finance Committee recommended deleting the warrant article about new capital expenditures for the Mohawk Trail School District, which the district had decided not to ask for, and putting in one that would cover snow roads from FY26 just in case. After subtracting leftover winter funds from previous years, the amount to be made up came to about \$36,100. Virginia noted that the Stabilization account had \$147,000. Hussain suggested putting in an article about transferring \$36,000 from stabilization. Hussain suggested a provision that the money be returned to stabilization if not used. Virginia suggested that the warrant article say, “in the event that state funding is unavailable.” Will asked whether the town had told the state how big the shortfall was. Virginia said that would happen later in the year. She suggested giving the state the full figure in case it became possible to hold onto the leftover money from previous years.

Lloyd stated that among the highlights in the budget was the change to three full-time employees in the Highway Department. Hussain noted that prior discussion had indicated that if this happened, the highway department was going to take over cemetery mowing and that the cemetery budget would be reduced. The group agreed that \$6,000 would be taken out of the total cemetery line (previously budgeted for \$10,000 for tree trimming and \$4,000 for mowing, this changing to \$8,000 for cemeteries generally). The group discussed the DPW's need for a mower for cemeteries (and some roadsides). At present the road crew was occasionally using employee Brandon Reynolds's personal mower. Brittany asked about liability. Hussain replied that liability might cover some personal injuries but that insurance would probably not cover repairs. Will suggested that eventually the town would need to purchase a mower. Lloyd asked whether the funds from the tractor that had just been sold could be used. Virginia said that money wouldn't be available for a while. Hussain suggested taking money out of stabilization and replacing it when the tractor funds hit free cash. Lloyd said the town didn't always remember to make such transfers.

Lloyd brought up the Highway Department's request for a truck. Hussain noted that the Finance Committee had recommended not spending the \$50,000 at this time. Virginia suggested perhaps purchasing a mower instead. Neither item was included in the warrant at present. Lloyd asked whether accounts other than snow roads had overspent in the current fiscal year. Virginia said she would look. Meanwhile, the group discussed mower possibilities (electric versus conventional) but decided in the end to talk to the road boss, Gary, and to Brandon before purchasing anything.

Virginia reported that there were a few overages in town buildings. The Highway Garage had used more propane, pellets, and electricity than expected; that budget needed about \$850, which seemed manageable. Insurance was over budget by more than \$4,000. The group discussed making sure that FY26 items were clearly separate in the budget from those for FY27. Lloyd confirmed that the town was budgeting more for health insurance for the next year. He added that the town was getting closer to its excess levy capacity, which concerned him. The group agreed not to worry about a truck for the moment.

Virginia asked whether the town wanted to continue including \$10,000 for grant-matching expenses in the budget. Lloyd opined that the money was handy, and leftover funds could be carried over. Hussain concurred.

Lloyd consulted Bob about the question of a new truck. Bob said that the town currently didn't have a spare truck. Lloyd and Hussain observed that, if the need arose, a special town meeting could be called. Virginia noted that Chapter 90 funds could be used for a truck, but Bob argued that those funds might be needed for road work. The group agreed that if the town did end up getting a truck, it would have to be a used one. Lloyd reminded those present that a capital plan for roads was essential to avoid spending Chapter 90 funds on equipment.

Another overage was for the Fire House, which needed a new heater. Hussain said that it was possible that the Fire Department might receive one as a donation but suggested putting up to \$10,000 in the budget out of stabilization for the heater just in case.

The group briefly discussed vocational schools. Lloyd noted that more students were not likely. Virginia said that the town actually had \$13,000 left in the vocational-school budget. The Smith School was about to raise tuition, however, so the next year's budget could still be tight.

Hussain asked about what appeared to be a discrepancy in school figures. Virginia replied that one of the sheets in question included carried-over figures.

Hussain asked whether more funds should be put in for vocational schools. Ken said he thought the town would be okay. Lloyd asked about any changes in the tax base. Virginia said at the moment it was difficult to determine the extent of the new growth in town. Three new houses were being built.

Hussain said it looked as though the budget was increasing by 4.3 percent. He asked about the proposed cost-of-living adjustment. Virginia said it was 2.8 percent. She added that eventually she should be able to sell some town properties. The group noted that a lot of people seemed interested in the available properties.

Hussain summed up some of the decisions: putting in the snow-roads-overage articles, taking \$4,069 from free cash for health-insurance funds needed, and budgeting up to \$10,000 for the fire-station heater. The group discussed how Tinky could get the wording for these into the town report, which she hoped to send to the printer the following day.

The Finance Committee adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

3. **The Selectmen discussed the dedication for the Town Report**, which the group wanted to feature the late George Rice, Hawley's longtime constable and a family farmer who had done a lot of equipment work for the town. Tinky called George's daughter Carla Clark, who emailed Tinky a photo of George.
4. **The group discussed the budget overall and the need to finalize the Town Meeting warrant.** Will asked whether the town should perhaps change its payment schedule for road projects. The King Corner project would probably cost a lot, he said, and the town didn't usually have that kind of money in its accounts. The state grants came in on a reimbursement basis so the town had to front the money. Hussain said he was fine with whatever schedule a contractor agreed to, provided the town could keep up its commitment. Will said the state had been accommodating in the past, but the figures here worried him. Hussain and Bob suggested talking to the vendors. If the vendors had to borrow funds, they might try to pass their interest costs on to the town if invoices were paid over a longer period.

Bob added that if the payment schedule were stretched too much, for instance to 90 days, the town might lose vendors. The group discussed this a bit more before Hussain suggested that Will ask vendors what payment schedule would work for them.

5. **Tinky asked the group to let her know what would should be discussed at the following week's meeting.** The group noted that finalizing the Town Meeting warrant was important and promised to get other ideas to her by Thursday.
6. **Tinky asked whether any board members planned to go to a Thursday meeting at Mohawk Trail Regional School.** None did.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

Williams Cosby

Robert MacLean