Town of Hawley, Massachusetts
Minutes of a
Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
April 7, 2026

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

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

1. **The board discussed the warrants.** Hussain noted that one of the items slated for payment was to the Shelburne Falls Ambulance Service for mutual aid. He reminded the group that the board had earlier decided to pay only Hawley's primary partner for ambulance coverage, Colrain. He reiterated that other towns did not pay for mutual aid and that if Hawley started this practice, it risked setting a precedent for itself later on. He moved to strike that bill. Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The rest of the warrant was signed.

2. **Lora Wondolowski visited.** The president of the Greenfield City Council, she explained that she was running for the seat vacated by the retirement of State Representative Natalie Blais. Lora explained that she had lived in Greenfield for 23 years and did not believe the status quo was working for Franklin County families. She described her professional experience, which included a lot of nonprofit and environmental work. The issues she highlighted were school funding, affordable housing, and the environment. She said she wanted to listen to the Selectmen's concerns. Hussain brought up the need for a new or improved Fire Station, stating his belief that the legislature was not taking the idea of a public-safety building authority seriously. Lora asked about the possibility of sharing services with other firefighters. Hussain explained the volunteer/mutual-aid structure Hawley had in place. Will observed that Hawley was considerably more rural than Greenfield, noting that the schools made up 60 percent of the town's budget. He outlined the costs of transportation, the possibilities for consolidation, and the town's frustration with state-aid formulas. Husain brought up two other issues, the fact that agencies like Fish and Wildlife paid nothing in lieu of taxes and the bureaucracy of the state's Office of Emergency Medical Services which restricted EMTs' ability to deliver care based on arbitrary considerations. He argued that the EMS statute needed to be amended. Lora said she would consider these issues and stayed on to observe the rest of the meeting.

3. **The group discussed a letter Tinky had drafted** asking State Senators Rodrigues and Comerford not to pursue the proposed additions to excise-tax law that would remove the current practice of barring people from renewing driver's licenses or registrations if they had not paid their excise tax.

Tinky explained that Tax Collector Betty Nichols had requested the letter; according to Betty, without this penalty, many people would not pay their excise tax. Hussain said that he had never been upset by excise taxes, which were fairly low unless a vehicle was brand new. He said he didn't see that the proposed legislation would help disadvantaged people nearly so much as it would hurt small towns like Hawley. Will agreed but noted that the legislation had actually been proposed by Jo Comerford and therefore asked Tinky to reword the letter to address this: to say that the town understood the good intentions behind the idea but ask the senators to look at the fiscal impact. Tinky said she would do so and bring the letter back for signing.

4. **In road and grant news,** Will noted that nothing was new with the Dugway and added that he hoped to have news soon about King Corner. Gary reported that the tractor the town had listed on Municibid had received a high bid of $39,900. Hussain moved to accept the bid, Bob seconded, the motion, and all voted in favor. Lloyd asked whether this money would find its way into free cash. Virginia said that it would eventually do so but not now. She added that free cash had been certified for the town that very day; it came to $23,500. The group briefly discussed the snow-roads budget deficit. Will said that Senator Paul Mark hoped something would pass very soon in the legislature to help towns with the issue. Tinky observed that former Representative Natalie Blais's office had asked whether the town was looking into using the dirt-road funds the state was offering. Will and Lloyd agreed that the pool of money was small and the work to get it very large.

   Tinky and Hussain reported that they had applied through Senator Ed Markey's office for earmark funds for the Fire Station. Hussain thanked State Senator Paul Mark and the Cummington Fire Department for writing letters of support.

5. **The group moved on to a request from the Mohawk Trail School District for additional capital expenses** for its budget. Virginia noted her objection to the way in which the request was made. Such requests generally were only issued in emergencies. Hussain added that the school should have known about the issues raised for some time and agreed there was no emergency. He cited the timing so late in the budgeting season as a problem. In additional discussion, the group agreed that the town would probably agree to the request—no one wanted to penalize funding for students and teachers—but that the district would have to do better. The board considering having Hussain draft a letter to the district before settling on a plan to invite business administrator Bill Lataille to the next Selectboard meeting. Hussain and others observed there was some lack of clarity about which fiscal year the money was actually for. In the end it seemed it might actually be for FY27, although even in that case the notice had been short. Meanwhile, Virginia promised to send the board the email correspondence she and Tinky had received on this issue.

In other business, Tinky informed the group that the heat had gone out at the Fire Station. It seemed that the heating unit needed replacement. She was asked to request an estimate from Mirabito, the propane supplier, and cc Chris, Hussain, and Greg on the correspondence.

Lloyd said he had attended a meeting with the state Department of Transportation about replacing the bridge on Route 8A near Savoy Road within the next few months. It looked as though funding would be available, and the state was prepared to take care of the problem. The bridge would be done one lane at a time. The news gratified the group.

Virginia asked whether anyone wanted to talk about the budget that evening. Hussain said he thought it would be fine to wait until the special budget meeting the following week.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tinky **Weisblat**, Gal Friday

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Williams Cosby Robert MacLean