

Town of Hawley, Massachusetts
DRAFT Minutes of a
Selectboard / Board of Health / Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
June 16, 2026

Present: Will Cosby, Hussain Hamdan, and Robert MacLean – Selectboard
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday; Virginia Gabert, Treasurer and Financial Administrator
Elizabeth Van Iderstine, Town Clerk
Gary Mitchell and Chris Tirone – Highway Department
Rob Greene, Viola Hoyt, Paul Norcross, Rita Norcross, Suanne Croawford, John Sears,
and (via Zoom) Michael Miller

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

1. **The evening began with a pole hearing** involving poles to be installed (and in some cases moved) on West Hawley Road. Rob Greene of National Grid explained that most of the poles in question were jointly owned with Verizon, although one belonged solely to National Grid. He said that the reason for this action was to act on lessons learned from recent years, particularly in the winter of 2025, when power had been out for some time in Hawley. Having poles closer together would give the wires additional tension and therefore make them more able to withstand falling branches. He used maps to indicate where the new poles would be. Paul Norcross said he was particularly concerned about a guy wire near a pile of dirt to which he needed access. Rob said he would be happy to meet with the Norcrosses and shift the location of the new poles if needed. He gave them his card. Another abutter, Viola Hoyt, said she had only learned of the new poles from the town's mailing but had observed after looking at the map with Rob that the poles in question would be across the street from her home, not right on her property. The Norcrosses asked about ropes they had seen tied around trees carrying wires. Rob observed that that was probably a temporary measure. Hussain asked whether those lines were power or telephone lines; the answer was the latter. Rob explained that Verizon needed to take care of that situation so it might take a while. Will expressed the town's overall frustration with the lack of response from Verizon, and Rob apologized (even though he had nothing to do with the problem).

Viola asked whether the only pole owned solely by National Grid would interfere with a water line crossing the road. Hussain said it didn't look that way, but the Selectmen asked Gary to flag the water line so that it would be visible in case there were any questions. Hussain moved to approve the proposal as discussed with the qualifications noted. Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

The hearing ended – and the regular meeting began – at 6:44.

The board signed minutes from a previous meeting. After a question from Virginia about paying school-committee members, as well as the moderator and auditor, the board signed warrants as well. Then:

2. **Jennifer Jason, the expected guest, did not show up** so the board passed over talking with her.
3. **The group turned to the question of adopting of General Law - Part I, Title VII, Chapter 44, Section 53G**, about hiring consultants. Will explained that he and Lloyd Crawford had recently attended a session about the state's new energy-siting regulations, at which towns had been urged to adopt this legislation in order to be able to hire expert help to navigate the regulations. He added that he thought the adoption would give the Selectmen additional flexibility. In the discussion that followed, Will echoed that position while Hussain argued that adoption was premature; the state had yet to issue its sample bylaws, which he believed needed to be in place before the town adopted any rules to apply to those bylaws. Will stated that the state regulations would take effect on July 1. Virginia noted that it was possible that any permits involved would have to be issued by the Planning Board, not the Selectmen. Both Hussain and Will reiterated their arguments; Hussain said he was concerned that hiring a consultant without having a framework for regulations could open the town to the possibility of a lawsuit. Virginia reminded the group that it had at least another meeting before July 1. Tinky was asked to put the issue on the agenda for the next meeting.

In other business, Will noted that the contract for the King Corner culvert had arrived from the state. It needed to be reviewed and signed by June 22. Hussain moved to authorize Will to sign the contract as chair if he deemed it appropriate, pending review. Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. In discussion, Virginia asked whether the town would need to borrow money for this project. Will answered that borrowing might be necessary eventually, but not yet. It would take a while to get the project organized. He suggested using GZA as clerk of the works for the project.

Will highlighted the problems on Forget Road, noting that that road might need a new culvert after the recent beaver damage. He suggested that the next round of STRAP grants might be a good source of funds for this.

Hussain described a pattern of partying on South Road on property belonging to the Ashfield Rod and Gun Club. He said there appeared to be illegal fires there almost every weekend. The Fire Department had been called in several times, and the previous weekend trucks had been seen going in late at night. The State Police had come once, only to find that the people partying had left, and although a young person cleaning up had been found once that had led to nothing. Hussain noted that the gun club had been informed but had not blocked off the area. He explained that the firefighters were concerned about the possibility of a forest fire. Will asked whether the road could be blocked off. Hussain explained that the gun club could do this but not the town. He didn't know that the Selectmen could do anything about the problem, he said, but he felt they should know. Tinky was asked to write to the Rod and Gun Club to ask them to take measures to keep the behavior from continuing.

Suzanne Crawford gave a brief report on school-related issues with the school year ending. She reported that Mohawk Trail Regional School had recently hosted a showcase of civics projects created by Eighth and 10th Graders. Like the school's capstone projects, these creations gave students the ability to hone their voices and their interests. Tinky echoed Suzanne's

enthusiasm; she, too, had seen the civics project. Suzanne added that she was grateful that the school budget for the next fiscal year had passed. The state was getting ready to finalize reconciliation so Hawley had one last chance to write a letter pleading for more funding, she noted. Will said it would be helpful to find out how much Hawley paid per student; Virginia suggested finding out how many students there were at each school and then dividing the budget by that number. Suzanne added that she thought there would be four vocational students for the next fiscal year and thanked them for their time.

Tinky noted that Wilder Sparks from Charlemont would like to attend the next Selectboard meeting to speak briefly about moneys owed to Hawley and Charlemont by the school system and the possibility of getting a state earmark from Paul Mark to pay those funds. The board said Wilder was welcome to talk to them briefly.

Tinky explained that the tax collector was getting ready to send out her mailing and asked the board whether they wanted her to include anything in the mailing other than the information about the tax hearing on September 16. Hussain suggested that she check to see when the health surveys had last gone out to townspeople. If they had gone out two years ago, it might be time to include those as well. Tinky promised to send the board a draft of the letter for the mailing.

Tinky asked about plans for the July 4 event at the Town Office. Hussain noted that John Sears would probably read Joseph Hawley's historic letter to John Adams. He said he also thought it might make sense to read aloud the Declaration of Independence. Tinky said that the latter reading was planned for Hawley Day, but she was told that it could be read twice; July 4 was after all its anniversary. Tinky would ask townspeople what they might bring to the party. The Fire Department would be grilling meats, and those plus drinks would be provided. People would be encouraged to bring salads, side dishes, and desserts.

Will asked Gary whether he had ordered necessary signs, and Gary replied that he had.

Virginia told the group that a new bill had arrived from VHB. Will signed the reimbursement request for state funds for that.

Hussain moved to go into executive session pursuant to Open Meeting Law to conduct an initial personnel interview. Bob seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The executive session began at 8:03. John, Virginia, Ellie, and Tinky were asked to stay.

Respectfully submitted,
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday

Williams Cosby

Hussain Hamdan

Robert MacLean

Town of Hawley, Massachusetts
DRAFT Minutes of a
Selectboard Executive Session
June 16, 2026

Present: Will Cosby, Hussain Hamdan, and Robert MacLean – Selectboard
Tinky Weisblat, Gal Friday; Virginia Gabert, Treasurer and Financial Administrator
Elizabeth “Ellie” Van Iderstine, Town Clerk
John Sears, Personnel Committee

The session began at 8:03 p.m. Will thanked Ellie for coming. He said he would like to bring her further on board and using the current budget ask her to assume the responsibilities of the assistant to the Selectboard, taking over Tinky’s duties.

Hussain said that he was happy with the work that both Ellie and Tinky had been doing. Virginia said that she had come up with this idea knowing that Ellie was currently looking for more work. Ellie explained that she was indeed unemployed as of June 1. Tinky said she didn’t think the idea was a bad one; she just thought she should have been consulted about it earlier.

Hussain observed that Ellie had covered for Tinky in the past, suggested that Tinky could serve as Ellie’s backup and still be involved in town work to some extent. Will said he knew Virginia needed help as well, and the financial issues Virginia handled were not Tinky’s specialty. John, as head of the Personnel Committee, said he hoped the group could make something work, noting how hard it was to find good help. He said he thought the town had an excellent team at present.

Tinky suggested that if Ellie were to take her job, it be renamed “executive assistant.” She said she would consult with Ellie and Virginia and get back to the board. Will moved to adjourn the session and the meeting, Hussain seconded the motion, and **the meeting ended at 8:25 p.m.**

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

Williams Cosby

Hussain Hamdan

Robert MacLean