

HARDWICK SELECTBOARD MEETING

**307 Main Street
Gilbertville, MA 01031
July 17, 2023**

Attendees: H. Robert Ruggles (HR), Chair; Kelly Kemp (KK), Vice Chair; Eric Vollheim (EV), Clerk; Nicole Parker (NP), Town Administrator; Edward Pollock (Citation Recipient); Police Chief James Ayotte; Judith Kohn (JK); P.Mailhot (PM); P. Tinker (PT).

Meeting was called to order on July 17, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Citation Presentation

Hardwick Selectboard conveyed their sincere thanks to retiring Officer Edward Pollock and presented him with an appreciation certificate recognizing his years of service. Officer Pollock expressed his sincere thanks.

Renewal Cable Television License for the Town of Hardwick

NP stated agreement was reached for all requests made by the Town of Hardwick.

Motion

KK made a motion to accept the cable television license for Hardwick with terms from 7/15/2023 to 7/14/2033.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (3:0)

Other Old Business

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations: NP stated there are 2 proposals; however, noted there is a 1-year warranty for \$120 instead of \$480 for 4 years. The Town had to pay \$1,446 originally for each one with warranty and then annual maintenance for one year. It's not going to be \$5,000 but it is going to be \$3,000. Currently we plug EV's into the wall outlet via an adapter. Alternative would be to remove EV charging stations.

NP stated a grant for \$40,000 is available to remove and replace new charging stations with Hardwick being responsible for approximately \$3,000.

Motion

KK made a motion for NP to apply for grant knowing that the out-of-pocket is for an estimated \$3,000.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Visitation – Police Chief Regarding Opening and Renegotiating Employment Contract Request

Police Chief James Ayotte distributed copies of his contract to the Selectboard for discussion of 3 items:

- **COMPENSATION:**

- 10. C. Chief Ayotte addressed working throughout the year and the need to report overtime details to the Selectboard on a quarterly basis. He requested his contract be amended to eliminate the need to do so. *(Item 1)*
- 10. B. Chief Ayotte requested the addition of the same *Seven (7) administrative days* as noted in Lieutenant Landine's to his. Previously denied. Chief asked for reconsideration. *(Item 2)*

Chief stated currently he is allowed to work details out of town on time off and asked for reconsideration for details in-town as well. Chief stated he would have a greater presence in the Hardwick community with that option due to the Police Department being relocated to New Braintree. *(Item 3)*

HRR stated he has no issue with items as requested.

KK disagreed with HRR. Mentioned all was worked out a year ago. Not everyone's contract is the same and is individualized to each person.

EV moved to have reporting in during off time removed, and added he would like to see the Chief have a greater presence around Hardwick. Noted contract was written prior to EV being on Board.

NP stated when negotiating the Chief's contract, she wanted the Chief to have the best contract because he is the highest level of employee in the Police Department (e.g. The Chief's vacation time is different, and his buy back time differs as well - all of those are elevated.) NP stated it was in her opinion it was a better contract at the time. She also explained the original idea behind reporting to the Board was to be a temporary item to revisit.

Motion *(Item 1)*

EV made a motion to do away with the need to report in pertaining to what the Chief does during his off time.

KK seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Tabled *(Item 2)*

HRR suggested taking this item under advisement. EV suggested item be tabled providing time for EV to familiarize himself with the contract in order to make an educated decision and the Chief could represent.

Motion (Item 3)

EV made a motion to allow the Chief to perform details in Town assuming they do not interfere with the Chief's normal duties as set forth in his contract giving fellow officers first dibs.

KK seconded.

Motion passed (2:1:0) Kemp.

Visitation Board of Health: Leicester Agreement

A lengthy discussion ensued. JK stated intent to discuss Leicester Regional Public Health Consortium stating Ernest Warburton was not in attendance. Leicester asked and required a newly elected person on the Board to engage with them. Hardwick chose Ernest Warburton.

PB attended Board of Health meeting with Leicester. The finalization the Board of Health was going to accept Leicester back for the remainder of the one-year contract with certain stipulations. Leicester agreed to stipulations and was supposed to send a contract for review, discussion and signature; however, PB stated no contract was received. Concern expressed over other departments being involved.

NP stated as of July 8, 2021, Board of Health and Board of Selectmen signed a contract that expires on June 30, 2024 with an extension of another 3 years. KK stated Stan signed contract as Chair of Hardwick Board of Health. NP stated Board was never out of agreement.

HRR stated there needs to be an easier way to access permitting information. Recommended everything should go to the Board of Health clerk. He stated the process needs to be streamlined for the public. JK stated all permit monies will be deposited into a revolving account. Leicester needs to be brought in for clarity. NP will contact Leicester and have them reach out to the Hardwick Board of Health.

End of Year Transfers

NP stated Highway, Police, Treasurer and Town Administrator did the rest of the budgets. Accountant had told all departments to send reports to Marcum – that didn't happen, so they were done inhouse.

Motion

EV made a motion to accept the transfers.

KK seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

CMRPC FY24 Fuel Awards

NP distributed contracts to Selectboard for signature.

MOA between West Brookfield Rescue Squad and Town of Hardwick

NP submitted to Selectboard for signature.

Amendment #1 Agreement for Legal Service between Hardwick & KP Law, P.C.

NP stated Agreement for legal services for USDA had a not-to-exceed amount of \$125,000. KP Law exceeded that amount, so invoice was revised to \$90,000. NP submitted to Selectboard for signature.

Town Administrator Report

NP presented the following:

- NP stated the contract for USDA equipment for project 2 has been awarded to Aqua Aerobics Systems - Goods and Services contract was sent for signature to Selectboard via email.
- Wheelwright Wastewater Treatment plant should be going out to bid in the next couple of weeks. Debt repayment is still being discussed. NP has reached out to numerous state agencies to try to get anything other than betterments because it is a utility, so no parcel in town is exempt from paying for utilities. But per the State and attorneys there doesn't seem to be a way/possibility for Hardwick to assess tax exempt properties, because there's nothing in Massachusetts that allows that besides a betterment. Betterments are difficult to manage. Looking into trying to make it fair for the Town because it is a Town utility.
- RFPs and Whitewater Wastewater want to meet soon to go over what the Board wants and maybe give a price proposal. HRR stated they are a subsidiary of R.H. White, therefore, would assume R.H. White would be bidding on the plans. Still be able to get some information. KK stated someone is needed with the knowledge and experience to understand the process and just oversee as a liaison, an extra set of eyes. EV stated it's a question of having someone to keep an eye out, i.e. Graves Engineering, to check in periodically and expressed other processes Graves could provide. KK said contractors will need to be prequalified first. EV will reach out to Graves, and NP will reach out to Blue Heron as requested by HRR.
- NP stated Marcum wrote to terminate services by July 31st. Laurie Dell'Olio resigned from Marcum. NP requested Laurie's contract with Marcum be amended allowing Laurie to come on board thus allowing her to work for the Town of Hardwick. Human Resources is reviewing the contract and will get back to NP.
- Streaming equipment is repaired and working.
- NP stated the Planning Board is discussing having their meetings recorded and uploaded to YouTube in the future. Any other boards are encouraged to have meetings in this building in order to have the availability for recording.
- New vehicle charger stations will be pursued.
- Flooring: Basically the work in the Municipal Building is pretty much complete.
- NP stated a vote needs to be taken authorizing NP signing privileges.

Motion

KK made a motion to allow NP to sign the Goods and Services contract with Aqua Aerobics.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Selectboard Roundtable

There was a discussion pertaining to an accountant and shared services. NP noted Hadley expressed interest in doing shared services. Specifics would need to be addressed.

Question raised from the floor regarding apartment properties and property conditions. EV stated another option is to reach out to Assessor's Office for property owner information and then write a letter expressing concerns. A letter could be drafted for residents to sign.

A question arose regarding solar panels and grants for apartment buildings. NP possibly reaching out to the community development office in Ware or Trinity Solar.

Adjournment

KK made a motion to adjourn.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.