

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Sawyer Hall
April 2, 2019

Call to Order at 6:01 p.m. by Brian DeVriese with Robyn Provost-Carlson, Gloria Cronin Fisher, and Kara Leistyna present. See attendance sheet for others present.

Review Agenda: 3/26 minutes to be reviewed at next scheduled meeting.

Clark Rowell and Brianne Susel, UniBank: Sheila Litchfield, Jan Carr, Ned Wolf, Art Schwenger, Bob Bourke and Kris Nartowicz joined the conversation to discuss broadband borrowing, debt exclusion and Clark's upcoming retirement. Brianne Susel, Assistant Vice President for UniBank Fiscal Advisory Services, Inc. was introduced. Brianne will be taking over when Clark retires. Clark has assisted Heath for many years and best wishes were extended for his retirement.

Broadband Financing: Discussed options. Clark explained the difference between serial notes and bonds. He recommends one-year notes for 10 years with State House Loan Program and then rolling into a 5-year permanent serial loan for 15-year amortization. There is a risk of interest rate varying however that can be addressed with an Interest Expectation Stabilization account so funds are on hand if needed. Bonds requires annual audits and they add significantly to the cost of borrowing over 15-20 years. Although, an audit is important and gives banks assurance that Town is in good standing. Clark shared a suggested amortization schedule but it's up to the Town to make decisions. There are issuance costs for notes. Bond Counsel will charge for services. It's roughly \$1,000 for 5-year serial loans. Interest rates are not contingent on credit "worthiness" of a Town. Questions were asked about receivership. Clark responded that communities cannot default because the Dept. of Revenue would ensure that towns pay. If rate nears \$25, DOR will address it before it hits that amount. DOR will not certify a town's rate and in turn, towns are asked to reduce budget. Revenue is important to maintain fiscal health. State is not looking to step in – but rate will not get certified and therefore tax bills will not be issued. Debt Exclusion is a tool that towns use to pay for a project outside levy limit. Clark opined that it's in Heath's best interest to debt exclude. Heath has little flexibility with levy limit and it puts Heath in better position to borrow for broadband. Select Board has already voted to put a question for debt exclusion on this year's ballot. Kara will send to bond counsel to ensure wording is accurate. Discussed options for borrowing and when to initiate it. Treasurer will need three weeks lead time. Clark and Brianne are happy to assist. Clark clarified that a bond anticipation note is another name for state house loan program – in anticipation of permanent financing.

CAF II Funding: Anticipated FY2022 or 2023 - \$56,000 annually. This money is for construction or operation of the network. 95% of the entire state Census Block Group (CBG) is built and certified by WG&E and sent to USAC (Universal Administrative Service Company). Disbursements will not commence until WG&E certifies that 95% of the entire CBG is completed. Bob Bourke will find out if it's a reimbursement program or funds are sent directly to Town.

Kris Nartowicz will determine borrowing and what to put, if anything, on FY20 budget. The State wants towns to exhaust all grant funds prior to borrowing. Heath still has \$468,783 in Last Mile Account plus third disbursement of \$154,000 and final of \$22,000.

Thank you to Clark and Brianne – Best wishes for your retirement!

7 p.m. Clark Rowell and Brianne Susel left meeting.

Broadband related: Heath will soon receive the PPR (Premise Planning Report) once Make Ready costs are available. This will help Heath determine Drop Policy. Once invoices are received from utility companies, they will need to be paid promptly. 13 invoices per utility will be issued.

Public Comment Period:

- Eric Sumner: Eric requests that ATM be held at former school building, in the gym. He feels it will be easier due to predicted high attendance. Select Board agrees.
- Sheila Litchfield: Pre-K registration is this week. Requested an All Call to make announcement. Also, a reminder that Heath is in need of a school committee representative.
- Bob Dane: Prepared a letter to Select Board suggesting that a negotiating committee be assembled to prepare for the negotiation process should the Board have authorization after ATM. Preparing beforehand will ensure efficient movement forward. Bob suggests six members, all who have extensive knowledge and skills to serve in this capacity. Heath needs to have a fair and equitable agreement for both parties. Would like input from police, fire, highway, planning board, select board, finance committee, board of health, etc. The Select Board has a history of putting together advisory groups and this request is an extension of that practice. We need to be prepared in case this vote passes. Select Board will discuss.
- Sue Lively: Need a little more information on what to present next week. Would like factual information; an outline of particulars each group plans to present on 4/13. Prior review will enable Select Board to catch any inconsistencies. All numbers presented will be reviewed by Select Board and Finance Committee. The format of meeting will be discussed later tonight. Also, Finance Committee needs to draft an explanation of debt exclusion for voters.

Thank you.

7:30 p.m. Select Board business:

Meeting: Gloria has asked Dena Briggs, a new Heath resident to facilitate the meeting on April 6. Discussed format – introduction, establish meeting rules, presentation, Q&A, and announcements. Format will be 30-minute presentation followed by Q&A. Announcements to include debt exclusion, election, ATM.

Mail/ Email:

- Bob Dane re: Proposal for Advisory Group
- James Mullaney re: Heath RFP
- Sue Lively re: Citizen Group proposals/presentation material for April 9
- Gloria Fisher re: Childcare
- Phoebe Walker re: Regional ACO
- Tracey Baronas re: Enterprise Fund
- Megan Rhodes re: Heath Open Space Recreation Plan
- Eric Sumner re: Info Meetings and ATM
- Claire Rabbitt re: Monthly Report
- Alyssa Larose re: Designation Grant Submission
- Letter to Jeff Johnston for April 3
- Letter to Mike Shattuck for April 3
- Senator Hinds re: April 9 Hearing Rural Schools
- Ned Wolf re: Broadband Borrowing
- Jim Barry re: Designation Grant Submission Received
- Copy of letter re: ballot wording to Hilma Sumner
- Sheila Litchfield re: shared Police Services update
- Gloria Fisher/Ned Wolf re: questions posed by resident

Other Separate Documents for review and/or signatures:

- TC Report
- FY20 Draft Budget Spreadsheet: Revise ACO expense budget to \$200.
- How to Adopt an Enterprise Fund
- Town Clerk Budget Request FY20 and related documents
- Green Communities Designation Grant contract documents

Finance Committee:

- Warrant: Add article for Enterprise Fund – Sheila will bring MLP Advisory Comm. recommendation on accounting method April 9.
- Salaries
- Free Cash
- OSHA: Robyn attended Friday's on-site assessment. Heath was applauded for seeking a visit. A list of necessary changes and a full report will be issued. Some postings are needed to ensure that policies/procedures are accessible for employees. Some costs are needed for compliance but manageable.
- Vehicles: Working on cost for multi-purpose vehicle that was approved at STM on 3/5/19. \$125,000 is needed to purchase a 5500. Next FY, may need cab and chassis for #3 which is roughly \$110,000.

9:00 p.m. Town Clerk Budget Hearing: Finance Committee asked Hilma about expense account and status of on-going project. Hilma says the project was completed about two years ago. Discussed salary line and request for increase. Any salary increase should go through the classification system for a fair and equitable review that considers a variety of aspects of the job to determine equitable compensation. Several years ago, the job description was revised and re-rated which resulted in it remaining at the same grade. If new changes need to be made, the same process should be followed. Fees collected may be retained or turned over to general fund. Hilma is proposing to increase her fees and then turning them over to general fund to offset her increase request. Discussed Hilma's petition for an increase. Board does not approve using a petition as a means for increase in salary. This sets a precedent and they would rather meet and negotiate salary. A number of employees this year have requested increases which puts positions over grade. If increase is due to additional responsibilities, job descriptions should be revised. This can be monitored through annual reviews however elected personnel do not have a review. Discussed State Certification and what that means. Group will meet on Monday, 4/8 at 4 pm to further discuss salary request. Need to ask Town Counsel how salary is appropriated if the Town Clerk's request is defeated.

Assessor's budget hearing is April 9.

Other Business:

- Shared Police: Sheila offered update. If the Town wants further exploration for shared policing, need to inform police chief that the Select Board wishes to continue discussions to complete identifying ways to share certain portions between towns for efficiency and review of mutual aid agreements. Benefits of shared services have not been fully explored.
- Kara will prepare documents for tomorrow's meeting with highway personnel. Discussed grade and compensation effective April 4, 2019. Eventually, superintendent position will need to be re-classified.

Signed documents.

There being no further business to come before the Board: *On a motion by Gloria Fisher, and seconded by Robyn Provost-Carlson, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:15 p.m.*

Respectfully presented,

Kara M. Leistyna
Town Coordinator