

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Via Conference Call
May 5, 2020

Called to Order at 6:00 p.m. with Brian DeVriese, Robyn Provost Carlson, Gloria Cronin Fisher and Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator, in attendance.

Other Attendees: See attendance sheet.

Review of Minutes: *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of April 28, 2020 as amended.*

On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of April 29, 2020 as read.

FCSWMD: Jan Ameen met with the Board and Finance Committee to discuss where additional funds could be obtained to pay for the paper compactor. She had prepared a spreadsheet which listed different sources including two years' worth of the annual RDP grant and the balance in the recycling revolving account. She also provided cost estimates for hauling, both with and without compacting. The balance that the town would need to pay would be recouped in two to three years. Jan added that there would need to be a three-phase electric converter installed and the cement pad would need to be extended 10 feet. Brian stated that fewer hauling loads tied in to the town's Green Community philosophy.

Building Cost Analysis: Finance Committee presented spreadsheets that they had prepared with the expenses for the present fiscal year for Sawyer Hall, Community Hall and the 18 Jacobs Road building. Gloria said she had prepared a list of possible repairs needed at each building which she would send out. Ned asked about the projects that were pending to be done with money from the Special Projects account. The Board stated that some of the projects would get done but that mitigating the moisture in the Sawyer Hall basement would take much more than the amount of money that was allocated due to the fact that the correct solution was to put drainage on the outside. It had been deemed that there was also the high risk of compromising the integrity of the building's foundation if that work was attempted.

Finance Committee also plans on mailing a letter to taxpayers concerning the overall budget.

Northeast IT: Joel Mollison met to discuss questions that the Board had regarding an IT upgrade. He explained that the current type of email system lacks many important controls because it is an older model. By IT standards the 2007 equipment is ancient and the subscription for ongoing firewall support has not been renewed for two years. The Fire Department, because of HIPPA regulations, should be segregated from the Highway Department and have its own firewall.

Joel recommends migrating to a server-based network for continuity across all town offices. There is no central server at present and limited controls. He said that by 2025 Microsoft will end all Windows 10 support and the town will be forced to make other provisions if they have not made modifications before then. He suggested the town consider an RDS or terminal server. The school building wiring is CAP 5 which does not support the higher speed of fiber internet. He suggested contacting Franklin County Technical School to have them rewire the building. The Library would need slight changes; primarily to migrate their services from CWMARS.

Option 3 includes a complete Microsoft software package. Email is archived and storage is iCloud based. There would be a monthly fee for subscription services to the software. Implementation process of any option would be a few weeks waiting time after an agreement. The transition process and work would be an additional 2-3 weeks. There is ongoing tech support with an assigned team that could be called 8:30-5:00 during the week.

COVID-19 Municipal Items:

Meeting Platform: Hilma presented information about three different meeting platforms: Zoom, GoToMeeting and Google Meets. Brian said he will ask his son who works in IT. The Board will make a decision next week and the new platform will be used beginning two weeks from tonight if arrangements have been made.

Upon recommendation from Moderator Eric Sumner and based on prior discussion, the Board agreed that the Special Town Meeting scheduled for May 14th needs to be postponed. ***On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to recess the Special Town Meeting scheduled for May 14, 2020 and continue it on June 13, 2020 at 8:30 a.m.***

WiFi Hotspot: Brian read a statement he had prepared (See Attached). School Committee member Barbara Rode stated that her concern for the location was that it provides safety. MLPAC chairman Art Schwenger stated that the question of location came quickly at their April 24th meeting and that they did know too much at that time. The wifi signal is expected to go approximately 200 feet. He also said that putting the router in a cafeteria window would mean that the gym wall would block part of the parking area. Betsy Kovacs stated that the Board of Health had not discussed the matter. The Board commented that the router could be placed either in a window of the library or the gym to reach the entire parking lot. ***On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board voted two to one (2-1) in favor of locating the state-financed WiFi Hotspot at 18 Jacobs Road.*** Gloria C. Fisher voted against the motion.

Annual Town Election:

Location: A recommendation from Town Clerk Hilma Sumner stated that the election polling place be changed to the former school building at 18 Jacobs Road so that an election may be held entirely inside with a one-way flow of traffic. It is also the only building in town that has two fully ADA compliant egresses which will maintain social distancing and eliminate congestion. ***On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to move the location of the election polling place in Heath to the town-owned building at 18 Jacobs Road.***

Polling Hours: Special legislation has been issued following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that allows for changes in the hours a polling location has to remain open. Because of this, the Town Clerk requested that the polling hours for the Annual Town Election be held from 12:00 noon until 6:00 p.m. ***On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to change the polling hours for the Annual Town Election to be open from 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m. on Friday, June 12, 2020.***

Highway Department: Robyn presented an update from Jeff Johnston that, because of the wet and snowy weather, the department was behind in its spring road work. There were also child care issues which kept Jeff working from home two days per week.

Town Coordinator's Report:

- COVID-19: Prepared and read the R911 message. Attended EMT meeting and prepared minutes. Responded to multiple phone calls and emails about various aspects of town status and functioning. Conversation with B. Kovacs with concerns about ATE & ATM with follow-up email from BOH.

- MT Woodlands Partnership Grant: Spoke with Mike Cucchiara regarding orders to obtain materials covered by this year's grant. He will contact Jeff Johnston about ordering gravel to extend and widen town road for parking, will order lumber and building supplies from Cummington Supply. These will be delivered to Mike's house and friends will store in a secure location. He has ordered trail signs which will also be received by friends.
- Rentals: Emailed both Sampsons and J. Diamond. Sampsons have requested that the Select Board waive the rental fee for May and June due to building closure and state issued mandate for closed schools. Jonathan responded that he will get back to me by the end of the week about his intentions. ***On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to waive the Sampson's rental fee for May and June.***
- FCSWMD: Received \$715 for 3rd quarter scrap metal sales which goes into revolving fund.
- STAM Conference Call: Attended today's remote STAM meeting held with Sean Cronin, DLS Senior Deputy Commissioner who talked about the Senate bill with temporary emergency legislation for holding town meetings and preparing 1/12 budgets for FY2021.
- Cemetery Issues: Spoke at length with Jerry Gilbert regarding redrawing unoccupied lots in North Cemetery, sales, and a headstone dilemma in Center Cemetery. Referred both issues back to Cemetery Commission to resolve.
- Online Meeting Platforms: Research yielded the following information:

GoToMeeting	\$12 per month, option of first 2 wks. free
Zoom	\$15 per month
Google Suite	\$15 per month, GSuite needed to get Google Meet

 All plans had monthly renewal with anytime cancellation, similar host features, dial-in accessibility
- FY 2021 Budget: Conversation with Ned Wolf regarding overdrawn accounts, tonight's appointments.
- Town Report: Continue to request & collect reports. Drop-dead due date of this Friday morning.

Mail:

WiFi Hotspot: Following review of several emails regarding this matter, the Board asked Hilma to research what would be needed to upgrade the WiFi at the center to get faster service.

Fire Department relocation: Emails were reviewed that supported a fire department move to the former school building.

Police Department: Monthly reports received for February, March and April.

MIIA: Email clarifying insurance credit of \$6,441.76.

Town Nurse: Report of April submitted.

Documents to Sign: Payroll and Vender Warrants, Letters.

There being no further business to come before the Board: *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and seconded by Brian DeVriese, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Hilma A. Sumner
Town Coordinator

Attachment to Select Board May 5, 2020 Minutes

Statement from Select Board Chair at the 5/5/2020 BOS meeting regarding decision on the location of the temporary "Hot Spot".

This evening the Select Board has responsibility for making a decision about the location of a temporary, state funded hotspot to serve the citizens and students of our town and that best protects their health and safety during the Covid-19 emergency.

The Select Board has responsibility for all municipal property. The location and installation or upgrade of internet capability on municipal property requires a majority vote of a quorum of the Board. We were prepared to vote on this matter at our meeting on April 28 but because there were members of the Broadband Committee and the School Committee who wished to address the Board about it and who could not attend that meeting we agreed to delay the vote until this evening.

We intend to make this decision on the basis of the most accurate information we have been able to gather from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Authority, from Rich Carnall at Westfield Gas and Electric, from School officials, and members of the School Committee and the Broadband Committee. We will consider what we deem are good reasons for choosing one of the two viable locations in the town of Heath. Good reasons are those that serve the interests and protect the health and safety of our citizens and children.

In making this decision, we do not intend to entertain or be swayed by insults, baseless accusations or attacks on the motives, competency or character of any committee members or town personnel. We have had enough of these things. They are hurtful and destructive. There is no place for them in civil discourse. People disagree. That is normal and we accept it. People can become upset and disappointed, even angry when things don't go their way. That is human. But it doesn't mean we have to allow ourselves or others to use these feelings as an excuse to hurt each other or disrupt our work on behalf of the whole town.

Here is some background on the decision before us.

First, as you know, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, Governor Baker recently continued his stay at home orders and extended school closure through the end of this school year.

Subsequently, the Baker-Polito Administration announced a plan to expand access to high-speed internet for underserved cities and towns that do not have a completed last-mile broadband network. In the announcement of this plan it was stated, and I quote, *“These WIFI hotspots will provide communities with temporary 250 megabit per second hotspots allowing increased broadband access to residents, families and students impacted by Covid-19. The program will be offered free of monthly charge to eligible communities until September 1, 2020. Citizens who use these hotspots must follow social distancing protocols and [there must be] clear signs with Department of Public Health guidance.”*

The Town of Heath was listed among the eligible towns and the announcement stated that communities with independently established hotspots are still eligible to receive a hotspot as a part of this program. This is good news for us. And it means we have a choice. We can either upgrade the external WiFi in the center of town or keep that external WiFi in the center and add a hotspot in a second location. In other words, it is possible for our town to have external access to WiFi in two locations.

Lastly, the announcement named Westfield Gas and Electric as the internet service provider responsible for launching the hot spots in eligible communities on a rolling basis over the next several weeks.

Within a few days of the announcement to provide underserved cities and towns with a temporary, free hotspot, we received word of one new announcement. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or DESE, declared to Massachusetts Public School the directive to initiate new learning for all students via remote access. This is a change from previous guidance from DESE. Up until the time of this new directive, the focus had been on the review of previously taught material rather than on the introduction of new learning.

In a communication dated May 1, 2020, MTRHS Principal Marisa Mendosa indicated that the district is working on a proposal for a new remote learning plan for the final 5 weeks of school which will be available by the end of week of May 11. Meanwhile, all students will continue to have access to their assignments either via the internet or by receiving written materials from their school.

For those of you who do not know, Heath students at Mohawk and Hawlemont access lessons from their schools either by downloading them on a portable laptop if they have internet access or by receiving a packet from the school of written assignments and materials. The introduction of new learning via these methods introduces a new level of challenge for students.

All Mohawk and Hawlemont students have school issued laptops. But not all students in Heath have access to the internet at home. Each week those who have access, download their new material on to their laptops so they can complete their assignments. A 250 megabit hotspot will make a big difference in the speed with which students can access their lessons. This could be helpful both to students with home internet and those who rely on external Wifi. Currently most homes that have internet might operate with 1.5 to 3 megabits. The external access in the center of town has 5 megabits. A 250 megabit hot spot is not only a big boost for students, it will also be helpful to many townspeople who are working at home during the pandemic.

We have been in contact with Richard Carnall of Westfield Gas and Electric about where and when the hotspot can be installed. The two possibilities are at Sawyer Hall and at 18 Jacobs Road, the former school. Neither place will cost the town anything and there is no need for the hotspot to be near the Broadband equipment hut located at the town center. It does require an MBI line which Rich has verified is available at either Sawyer Hall or the former school. While installation of equipment can begin sooner at Sawyer Hall, the completion of the build out at either location will take two to three weeks from tomorrow morning when we give them our decision.

The job of the Select Board this evening is to make an informed and well-reasoned decision about the most advantageous location of the temporary, free hotspot for the town as a whole and in particular for our students who need safe access to remote learning in order to complete the requirements of their education while schools are closed.

It should be clearly understood by all that in no way does the decision we are making have any bearing on the location of town offices now or in the future either at the town center or anywhere else. In no way does this decision have any relevance to anyone's personal preference for the Center over the former school building or the former school building over Heath Center. It is simply a matter of how best and most safely to increase broadband access for as many of our residents, families and students as possible while the community is impacted by Covid-19.

We are prepared to hear from members of the School Committee, the Broadband Committee and the Board of Health any new information or considerations that they believe are relevant and helpful to the Board in making this decision. In the interests of time there will be no public comment. When you are invited to speak I ask that you address your comments to the Board. The board may ask for clarification, but otherwise we will receive what you have to say without comment or debate. Following your comments the Board may have a discussion of the issues that will allow for some back and forth, but only among the Board. Following this, we will take a vote.

Brian De Vriese