

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Virtual Meeting
August 18, 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 Agenda: Added committee appointments.

Reviewed Minutes: *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of August 6, 2020, as amended.*

Committee Appointments: *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to appoint Kate Peppard, Tamar Krikorian and Victoria Burrington as Post Office Substitutes and William Emmet as a member to the Energy Advisory Committee.*

Waterline: Tim Lively reported that he is buying the supplies to replace the broken water line in town center. Tom Danek will be doing the excavation and repair work. The Board extended a “thank you” to Tim for attending to this work.

MTRSD Superintendent Sheryl Stanton: Supt. Stanton stated that she has now met with the Select Boards of all eight district towns. It is her hope that the towns will work together to form district goals and then work towards them. School Committee member Budge Litchfield extended a thank you to Supt. Stanton for the “Return to Learn” plan. He added that it has been a difficult few weeks and the plan is thoughtful and comprehensive. Barbara Rode, Heath’s other School Committee member thanked the Supt. and the administrative team for advocating for internet hotspots throughout the district.

The Supt. explained that DESE required three return-to-school plans: in person, hybrid, and remote plus. For now, remote plus will mean almost entirely remote learning except for high need students who will have some in-person instruction at their assigned school. Transportation will be provided for high needs students, if needed, although many parents have indicated they will be driving their own children. The Mohawk District has a Chrome Book ordered for each child although 243 of them remain stuck in Boston because of an embargo. There was a question about having indoor learning hubs where students can have access to the highspeed internet that they require without having to remain in vehicles during adverse weather.

The results of a parent and staff survey were that the community wanted Mohawk teachers conducting remote classroom instruction. Faculty and staff are to begin training on August 31 and school is set to begin on September 16. At this time the plan is to have a hybrid return to class on November 24th. School staff are reaching out to families to find out what internet needs there are and how those needs can be met. From that the district wants to determine community learning areas. The number of hours per day that students will have screen time will be age specific with high school students having four hours per school day. How many families will need to have access to high

speed internet is unknown at this point. The Supt. stated that they do not have a collective understanding of what conditions will be needed to open school in person or, if necessary, when to close. Transportation costs are still in negotiations.

In discussing the revised MTRSD budget it was noted that Heath's assessment is approximately \$7,000 great than the amount certified last spring. The Board also commented that there is a large increase from last year's assessment which, it was said, had to do with the minimum contribution determined by the DOR with the variables of town valuation and the municipal wealth factor. Senator Lesser currently has a bill in process to modify the formula with the argument that the municipal wealth factor does not reflect what a town can actually pay.

Finance Committee Chairman Ned Wolf asked what the decrease in Chapters 70 and 71 aid percentages were but that was not known. It was explained that Chapter 70 reimbursement is based on what was spent the previous year. For the 2019-20 year, MTRSD transportation costs were about 60 percent of the what previous year had been. It was suggested that the Business Manager Melissa Dunnet could join a meeting to discuss further financial details, if that was desired. Superintendent Stanton was thanked for joining the meeting.

Highway Department: Highway Superintendent Jeff Johnston met with the Board to provide updates and discuss various projects. The \$500,000 Small Bridge Grant that was received is intended to be used for any bridge 10 feet or less in span. Jeff is in the process of getting three engineering proposals for the work for the bridge located on Route 8A near the Griswolds. This morning Jeff and Hilma met and reworked much of the STRAP Grant application for the South and Burrington Road project. The project extends over 4.1 miles of a major byway into town. After returning to his office, Jeff updated the project cost: \$1,096,000. Since the maximum award is \$1,000,000, the balance would come primarily from Ch. 90 monies.

Without knowing the warranty that would be included with a used paper compactor, Jeff said he would recommend purchase of a new compactor. He has met with one electrician but needs to obtain the electric schematics for the electrician to review before being able to obtain a quote for the work. Depending on the final analysis, it may be possible to do a transfer switch to use some of the same electric equipment that is used to the garbage compactor. The Highway Dept. will cut two pads for cement; one for the paper bin extension and the other for the relocated hazardous materials shed. Jeff has estimated the cost of the wood frame, mesh and cement to be approximately \$850. It was agreed that the expense versus funding numbers needed to be compared before a final decision was made on whether to purchase a new compactor or a refurbished compactor.

Ch. 90 work is moving ahead for the summer. Guardrail installation on Number Nine Road is completed. Crack sealing (2000 gallons) will be done on Thursday and Friday on a long section of Route 8A. Patch paving on two of the worst areas of Burrington Road is scheduled for August 31 and September 1. The gravel order has been placed. When it is delivered, much of it will be laid on some of the gravel roads.

Both Brian and Jeff will attend to the necessary repairs at the Salt Shed. Brian said he was having conversation with a South Hadley company about pre-engineered structures that would be similar to the type of salt sheds that the state has with steel frame and fabric covering.

Updates on vehicles included a confirmation that the John Deere tractor has not had any damage or need for repair. The cylinder that holds the hammers of the mower was loud and vibrating badly. The hammer cylinder needed to be replaced (\$4,600) but that has fixed the problem and the mower now

runs quietly and works well. Jason's truck is currently at Roseledge because it has an issue with starting and the fuel pressure regulation. While the truck is there, the wiring will be repaired also.

Public Comment:

Susan Gruen noted that there have been many National Grid trucks in town.

Robert Gruen thanked the Board that some ongoing items of business have been completed. He also asked why the remark was made in the August 6th meeting about Betsy Kovacs, and, if it was a complaint, why was it not addressed in executive session.

Jean Gran suggested that discussion about the Town Facilities Task Force report ought to include how the facilities will be used in the future. The discussion should also be done in the context of financial trends like what she had sent the Board of analyzing the previous six years and into Heath's future.

Bob Viarengo said he had a concern about the Green Communities Grant funds and whether the monies would be spent before the deadline.

Betsy Kovacs stated that the Board of Health was meeting on Thursday to determine whether to require masks for everyone entering town buildings, whether occupied or not. Doug Mason said that he had spoken to Erich Holan who claimed he had not been notified of the town's change in IT services.

Parks and Recreation Committee: Jenna Day joined the meeting to speak with the Board about the committee's projects and questions. The committee would like permission to install a kiosk in the town center that would contain information about the Burnt-Hill hiking trails and other recreational sites in town. There should be enough money in the first grant to purchase the building materials. One of the picnic tables in the center needs to be disposed of and there is another table that needs repair. The committee is exploring the option of obtaining metal picnic tables with benches from MassCorp.

Jenna also asked about getting some tree trimming done and the brush on the backside of the basketball court cut back. Robyn said she would talk to Jeff about this but the work may need to be done by other means. It was also noted that the basketball hoops and backboards need attention as well. If funds are needed there are two accounts from which money can be used: the Recreation Account (balance app. \$1,700) and the Recreation Stabilization account with \$2,000 in it. *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve installation of a recreation kiosk in the town center by the basketball court with the work and funding obtained by the Parks and Recreation Committee.*

Treasurer's Resignation: *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve with regrets the resignation letter of Kristi Nartowicz as Treasurer.*

Police and Fire Departments Grant Applications: Police Chief John McDonough joined the meeting to provide information. He explained that the police application included a request for a generator to power part, if not all, of the former school building. This would enable the fire and police offices to move to the building and having the necessary back-up emergency services. Both departments applied for funding to purchase and install needed radio communication towers. Gloria reminded Chief McDonough that the Board authorized a temporary move of those offices.

Police Department Computer: The Police Chief reported that he had a new computer on order. When it arrives, Northeast IT will send a technician to determine if the old hard drive is good. If so, the files will be transferred into the new device.

Letter to Board of Health: The Select Board reviewed a letter to be sent to the Board of Health explaining the appointment process and why the appointment of Betsy Kovacs was delayed. The letter also addresses the procedure that the Board will follow if they receive any complaints in that the complainant will be directed to make their remarks directly to the board or committee with whom they have issues.

Public Comment/Virtual Meeting Policy: *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the proposed Public Comment/Virtual Meeting Policy.* The policy will be posted on the town website.

Town Coordinator's Report:

- Open Space & Recreation Plan: Sent non-discrimination policy and grievance policy from the Personnel Policy to Megan Rhodes. Also emailed ADA Rep. Maya Jalbert asking if she would write the required letter of compliance.
- MLP Manager: Prepared notice for job opening. Posted on website and Sawyer Hall. Arranged for advertising in The Recorder Aug. 15 & 19.
- WiFi Hotspot: Emailed Pat Carnevale (cc. Sen. Hinds & Rep. Mark) to ask if funding for WiFi Hotspot will continue after Sept. 1. Received call from Sen. Hinds office (Jon Gould). Jon has reached out to other state entities with inquiries about this and get back to me.
- Northeast IT: Emailed Joel Mollison to inform him that ATM had approved the necessary funds to begin IT services with his company. They are able to begin work the week of Aug. 9 if they get the go-ahead. Sent emails to town offices having computers to make them aware of the restructuring and requesting usernames and passwords to enable technicians to have access for conversion. Two technicians came Aug. 13 and uploaded program to enable remote access by their company. Installed on all computers except: Police, Nurse, and Senior Center.
- TS Isaias: Spoke with Police Chief on Saturday who reported that his computer would not start. After consultation, he determined that the computer no longer worked and had to order a new one.
- Appointment List and Contact List: Updated both lists and sent to the Select Board for review.
- FY21 Appointments: Mailed appointment letters for employees and appointed volunteers.
- STRAP Application: Met with Jeff and went over last year's application. Began writing narrative for project. Spoke with Mike Cucchiara who is willing to lend support. Jeff will be getting updated costs for the construction work.
- Landfill Gate: Sent follow-up email to Berkshire Fence. They will be here on Friday to begin work.
- Treasurer Position: Prepared job listing notice for approval. Sent current job description to treasurer for review and asked to set up an exit interview with the Board.

Mail:

- MTRSD re: email & revised budget
- J. Day re: Parks & Rec. appt
- E. Nichols re: Tax Collecting computer/software
- T. Lively re: Heath Center water issue
- T. Lively re: Playground needing attention
- D. Porter re: Library Trustees use of school library
- C. Rabbitt re: Possible leave of absence
- FCSWMD re: paper compactor
- H. Godek re: brush pile concern
- MLP Manager ad for Recorder
- K. Dragon re: office move and town dog issues
- FCCIP re: denial of building permit
- KP Law re: COVID-19 Governor's Order No. 46
- B. Kovacs re: Regulations for gatherings
- S. Lively re: Facilities Task Force report
- S. Lively re: STM Art. 14 & FinCom concerns
- Treasurer Help Wanted notice
- Treasurer Position Description
- Treasurer applicant
- J. Gran re: Revenue & Expenditure Analysis

Future Meetings:

September 3, Thursday: Back to School discussion with School Committee members and Board of Health.

There being no further business to come before the Board: *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:15 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Hilma A. Sumner
Town Coordinator