

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Virtual Meeting
December 8, 2020

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

Other Attendees: See attendance sheet.

Review Agenda: Added Continuity of Operations.

Public Comment:

Betsy Kovacs reported that COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts and across the country continue to rise. Governor Baker has announced new safety standards with the entire Commonwealth being rolled back to Phase 3, Stage 1, with some modifications.

Review 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 December 1, 2020 as amended.*

FY2021 Tax Rate: The Board met with Accountant David Fierro, Tax Collector Elizabeth Nichols, Assistant Assessor Alice Wozniak, Board of Assessors Chair Heidi Griswold, and Treasurer Melanie Medon to discuss what needs to be done for third quarter tax bills. Alice has prepared a letter asking permission of DOR for the town to send third quarter preliminary tax bills. The letter needs to be signed by both the Select Board and Board of Assessors

Alice explained that she had emailed her state supervisor, explained about the computer crashing five weeks ago and her inability to continue the work preparing the forms required to get the tax rate set. Elizabeth stated that the extra supplies for doing an additional mailing would be about \$700. The other option for the town would be to wait and send the third and fourth quarter bills together with the same due date of May 1st.

The Treasurer stated that the town did not have the cash flow to carry the town until May. Heidi commented that most people will not pay anything until they receive a bill, and the town should not anticipate people paying taxes until they had received a bill.

On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to send preliminary third quarter tax bills and to sign the letter asking permission to do so for the Department of Revenue (DOR).

Discussion followed about the need to send a note of explanation with the bill. Elizabeth said that the bill itself will have one third of it blank where a note can be printed. It was agreed that the Chair of the Board of Assessors would draft a note and send to Hilma. *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to enclose a note of explanation with the tax bills.*

Special Town Meeting Article 2: The Board discussed whether they had agreed to place Article 2 on the warrant but they did not vote to approve this article. It was agreed that, although there was

discussion, the funds would not be needed for several months and they would recommend not to approve the article. *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to make a motion and recommendation that voters table Article 2 at the Special Town Meeting.*

Financial Audit: The Board reviewed the three audit proposals that had been received. Gloria reported that she had spoken with Matt Andre of DLS. He recommended that the town wait and have the audit done in winter of 2021-22 on FY21 because of COVID-related grant funding. Both the Accountant and the Treasurer stated that they would prefer an audit done on the FY21 records and that, hopefully it could be done in the late fall. Due to the proposal price and the information that the Accountant, Treasurer and Assistant Assessor had favorable impressions of previous work with Scanlon Associates, the Board agreed to offer the work to Tom Scanlon. *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to accept the proposal of Scanlon Associates for performing an FY 2021 financial audit for \$16,000.00.*

Building Maintenance:

Salt Shed: Brian has been in contact with Carson Ovitt who said he has time to do work for the town. They will meet at the Salt Shed to go over what work is needed to be done for the repair.

3 Ledge Road shed: The Board does not yet have the authority to have any demolition work done at the property since the Building Commissioner had given the owner 30 days in which to complete the work. The Commissioner will be called to find out if there is an appeal period after the initial thirty days. Gloria will do a review of town accounts to present proposals of where money can be obtained to pay for both the Salt Shed repair and the clean-up at 3 Ledge Road.

Town Facilities Task Force Report: Hilma had attended the Building Facilities Committee meeting held on December 2nd and reported that the committee will be doing site visits to all the municipal facilities to become more familiar with the maintenance concerns and current appearance and condition of each building.

Sawyer Hall Concerns: The Select Board received an email from the Board of Health in reference to concerns that were received about non-compliance with social distancing at Sawyer Hall. During certain times of the day there is congestion in the entranceway and around the post office despite the signs posted outside and in the entry. Robyn continues to hear about issues with people around the Post Office area and employees having to work in the same space as other employees. One employee has not worked in Sawyer Hall due to safety and health needs since the beginning of the pandemic and will not work in the office until safer conditions exist. Robyn requested that the Board look at one possibility of moving the second-floor employees to the former school building to help decrease the congestion on the first floor. It is a location that contains the space for employees to work in separate areas It also allows for the building to remained closed and service to residents can be done through a window, if required.

Conversation among the Board members included the importance of looking at the costs and the savings for instituting such a move. Part of this would be to research if any expenses could be covered by the CARES Act funding. There was also discussion about whether there would be room enough for the offices, Triwire and the learning hub. It was requested that Hilma contact each of the offices and ask what each person would need for the immediate move to begin work in a new location. The Board agreed that this would be a continued discussion with more information needed.

COOP: The Board agreed that different department Continuity of Operation Plans need to be reviewed. Robyn and Hilma will work on a COOP for the Select Board office. Due to increases in

Covid cases, Governor Baker is requiring s tightening of protocol across the state. This will include a mandate change requiring workers to wear masks when being in a shared spaced even if other people were not there.

Community Compact Center IT Grant: The Board agreed that they want to review what the grant will cover. Hilma will get information from Northeast IT.

Last Mile Amendment to Agreement: The Board reviewed the amendment to the agreement which allowed for the reimbursement for some broadband construction expenses. *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve and sign the amendment to the broadband agreement.*

Heath Historical Society Request: Brian reported that the 5 Ledge Road parcel was a shallow lot with wetlands to the west. There would need to be a building variance to be able to build on the parcel.

Heath Town Finance Review: Gloria stated that she had spoken with Matt Andre at DLS. There is a large backlog of requests from towns who would like DLS to review financial practices. He told Gloria that DLS was aware of Heath's Financial situation. She also reported that Matt had said he did not think the town can afford to keep the school.

Robyn stated that she would like to see the financial team meet on a regular basis to maintain open communications. Alice Wozniak, Assistant Assessor, remarked that DLS was hearing from too many town entities that were not necessarily involved in the process.

Budget Calendar: Hilma will send the draft to other town offices and Finance Committee for review and input before the Board finalizes it.

Green Communities Update: Brian is working on the specs for the Community Hall insulation bid document. He has told FRCOG that the town wants them to prepare the RFP for the work.

Municipal Light Board Report: The MLP Manager is working more than 10 hours per week currently. The Select Board agreed that all hours worked should be included on the timesheet and paid.

Town Coordinator's Report:

- Hut Meeting: Wednesday morning met with Robyn, MLP Manager Sheila Litchfield, Building Maintenance Coordinator Tim Lively and Highway Superintendent Jeff Johnston to discuss aspects about maintenance needs for the fiber hut. Sheila will obtain more information from WiredWest about some of the regular monitoring that will need to be done once the hut is operational.
- FEMA Webinar: Attended a webinar about seeking FEMA reimbursement for COVID-related expenses incurred after Sept. 15th. Training went through changes for what FEMA will approve in this second phase.
- Disposal Policy: Researched MGL Ch. 30 and reviewed policies from other towns regarding disposal of surplus property. Wrote proposed amendments/additions to Heath's policy.
- Budget Prep Calendar & Important Dates List: Updated the Important Dates List and prepared a draft Budget Preparation Calendar for review/revision.

- Northeast IT: Further coordination with Assistant Assessor regarding her computer and slow processing speed. Contacted NE IT who will have a technician call Alice on Wednesday morning to troubleshoot.
- FY21 Tax Rate: Communicated with the Assistant Assessor, Accountant, Tax Collector and Board of Assessors' chairman in preparation for tonight's meeting and coordination of information.
- Audit contacts: Communicated with Tom Scanlon and with Tanya Campbell of Melanson Associates. Both have submitted brief proposals with prices and are willing to send complete proposals, if requested. None of the three accounting firms can complete the field work until next spring (approximately April-May).
- Sawyer Hall signs: Made and hung new signs for Sawyer Hall which state that only one person should be inside at a time and to look before entering.
- Sawyer Hall Railings: Spoke with Mr. Gorey who said they can probably get the railings fabricated and installed this week.
- STM Email Notice: Prepared email notice of STM with article explanations.

Mail:

- E. Nichols re: mailing of tax bills
- T. Scanlon re: audit proposal
- ANF Office re: True-up monies contract and amendment
- CCC IT Grant re: Contract
- V. Burrington re: volunteer for Building Use Committee— *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to appoint Victoria Burrington to the Building Use Committee.*
- S. Lively re: volunteer for Building Use Committee
- B. Kovacs re: people in Sawyer Hall
- K. Brooks re: P.O. complaint regarding rules & policy
- R. Gruen re: financial opinion
- D. Mason re: video & cost analysis opinion
- M. Medon re: November treasurer's report
- P. Porter re: Hilltown Theatre proposal to use 18 Jacobs Road
- Hawlemont News Dec. 4, 2020
- A. Wozniak re: tax bills
- Assessors re: letter to DOR
- T. Campbell, Melanson re: audit proposal
- S. Hannay re: Request for appointment to Cultural Council— *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to appoint Rachel Grabelsky to the Heath Cultural Council.*

Future Meeting: December 15th

Agenda Items: Budget memo, budget calendar.

On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Hilma A. Sumner
Town Coordinator