

**MEETING MINUTES**

Town of Heath  
SELECT BOARD  
Virtual Meeting  
December 15, 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 Pro Forma, Community Hall Insulation.

**Public Comment:**

Margaret Freeman voiced her appreciation that Robyn has put an apparent great deal of thought into stating her opinion that town offices should relocate.

Jean Gran stated that she thinks the town is divided on how to use town buildings and that the Select Board has a moral obligation to keep their word and the promise to do a town meeting vote.

Bob Gruen said he knows that the Board has the sole power to determine use of property but that the Board promised a public process.

Heather Hathwell voiced agreement with Jean Gran and Bob Gruen and said that other towns such as Greenfield and Montague are closing their offices, not moving.

Doug Mason also voiced agreement with what the previous three speakers.

Pat McGahan thanked the Board for their work, stated that common sense needs to prevail and asked that town offices move to the former school building.

Bob Viarengo reminded the meeting that his wife had helped get the historical designation for the center buildings and he is concerned that moving the offices would hollow out the center.

Alice Wozniak stated that employees working in Sawyer Hall cannot maintain a six-foot distance much of the time, the bathrooms are used by the public and some must use the elevator. Other towns have separate office space for different employees, and it seems to her that public safety is taking a back seat.

Sue Lively said that people cannot do everything they are accustomed to doing and consideration should be given to different ways that the work can be accomplished.

Barbara Rode said she was at the Board's meeting last week and said nothing is the same this year as last year.

Don Freeman stated that it is a simple matter since the reality is that there is a health crisis while it is hypothesis that the center of town will be negatively impacted if offices move.

Margaret Freeman commented that the Board did commit to a public process but not to a town meeting.

Claire Rabbitt commented that a move will not change people's behavior.

Mike Smith asked if offices would move back once they move out.

Barbara Travers raised questions asking if the post office will move and if the town is conducting any in-person meetings.

Amy Krane said that that financial aspects and longer-range concerns need to be addressed.

Jesse Weigand said that stores and the post office are still open and that makes the move suspect.

Bob Dane said he considered Claire Rabbitt as the person with common sense.

Jean Gran commented that moving to the same building as the learning hub was putting children at risk.

Pam Porter stated that there would be no greater risk to children because of how the space is used.

Betsy Kovacs said that the Board of Health was reviewing Jonathan Diamond's request and the County Health Agent was concerned about multiple groups using the same space. Dave Travers commented that the ventilation needs repair at the former school building.

**Review Minutes:** The Minutes of the December 15<sup>th</sup> meeting were reviewed. Because of lengthy amendments, the second draft will be reviewed at the next meeting.

**Building Maintenance:**

Salt Shed: Brian met with Carson Ovitt to view the repairs needed. Carson will prepare an estimate for the work.

3 Ledge Road shed: Robyn reported that the Board must notify the Building Commissioner with a date that they intend to have the shed demolished. He will then notify the property owner so that they could take it down. Once that date has passed, the town can take the shed down, if that decision is made. Robyn will ask Jim Hawkins how much time he needs to send the letter. ***On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to have Robyn convey to the Building Commissioner that the town intends to demolish the shed and instruct him to send a second letter to the owner.***

Sawyer Hall Railings: Hilma reported that the company owner stated that the railings were being fabricated and should be installed by the end of the week.

**COVID-19 Concerns:**

Sawyer Hall Concerns/Relocation of Offices: Brian stated that he considers that a town office move would be an emergency measure to be taken now. Because of the pandemic, different considerations exist. Gloria said that the front doors of Sawyer Hall cannot be locked because of the post office but she does not think that moving upstairs offices will solve the downstairs situation. She also expressed concern about having multiple groups at 18 Jacobs Road building. Robyn stated that she has heard from employees who are concerned about the work environment and different standards being held for different employees. Brian will talk to the post office manager to ask about the possibility for getting an outside kiosk for mailboxes. Robyn asked Hilma to find out information about IT costs and transferring phones and get an update from Jamrog about the ventilation repair. Robyn stated that it was important for the Board to look at the office space in Sawyer Hall and realize that there is one large room that needs to be divided for public safety, security and privacy. There is no safe second egress and no ventilation system. There will be a cost for making all those building changes. Robyn and Hilma will contact employees and ask for responses such as what would each need for an immediate move, where would they meet with someone, if needed, and can they work from home.

**Pro Forma Update:** Assistant Assessor Alice Wozniak reported that DOR approved sending third quarter preliminary tax bills. She had several phone conversations with DOR personnel in preparing the necessary documentation. They said they had received three-to-four calls from town officials and wanted to remind the town that everyone needed to go through the local chain of command before contacting them. Secondly, they questioned the town making a \$200,000 transfer from an interest-bearing account to another account that did not bear interest and saw that as a point of concern. Next, they asked about the town's approach to the broadband organization and stated that most towns did it as an enterprise fund. Lastly DOR officials stated that they were aware of Heath's finances but do not issue opinion on resources.

Next steps for the town are to determine when the collector will be mailing the tax bills and then for the Assessors to sign the warrant authorizing the mailing.

**Community Compact Center IT Grant:** *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to accept the \$45,000 grant.*

**Budget Calendar:** The Board will wait to see if there is feedback from anyone else on the financial team.

**Budget Memo:** Finance Committee will review the memo at the meeting tomorrow and the Board can approve the final draft at their next meeting.

**Continuity of Operations Plan:** Robyn and Hilma are working on this.

**Heath Historical Society Request:** No update.

**Green Communities Update:** The Board reviewed the Community Hall insulation bid packet. *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the Request for Quotations for the Community Hall insulation construction.* Robyn and Gloria issued a thank you to Brian for the work he had done in helping to prepare the packet.

**Town Coordinator's Report:**

- MTRSD & CARES Act funding: Spoke with Marco Peschiera of The Management Solution who is the current business management entity for MTRSD. In particular, he was calling about the extraordinary COVID-related expenses that the district is incurring. The areas that directly impact Heath students are the purchase of Chromebooks, PPE, and ventilation system repairs at the middle and high school building. He was calling to get a better understanding of the history of conversation between Heath and the former business manager. Hilma stated that the town would be looking for an accounting and documentation that the materials had been received and that the repair work had been done. Hilma also informed him that she and the Board were aware that school districts had received separate grant funding for COVID relief and would want to see an accounting of how those funds had been spent as well. Marco responded that they were in the process of organizing, doing major clean-up, and mapping the financial records and it would be a period of time before they could issue reports.
- Budget Memo: Updated memo to reflect this year's dates and information. Emailed to Finance Committee requesting their review at their December 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Northeast IT: Communicated with technicians regarding details of what would be included in the CCC IT grant. Documentation in mail. Also emailed with them concerning needed changes if the offices were to relocate. They will be in contact next week about this. Technician Joe is scheduled to be in town tomorrow to transition email from Crocker to their system.
- FY21 Tax Rate: Pro Forma rate approved, and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter preliminary tax bills may be processed.
- Sawyer Hall Railings: Spoke with Mr. Gorey today. He said that the main plant they deal with had to shut down last week which delayed their schedule. The work crew is fabricating the railings today. They will be painted tomorrow and then installed by the end of the week.
- Indoor Hotspot: Held phone conversation with Cornell Robinson, Technical Director, MBI, concerning installation of an indoor hotspot for public use at 18 Jacobs Road. He stated (and affirmed via email) that any unusual expenses incurred because of the hotspot would be paid by

MBI/MassTech. He also asked if the Town would be willing to open the space to people in neighboring communities without highspeed internet which Hilma deferred to a Select Board decision.

- Website Assistance: Pat McGahan volunteered to assist with building a page through which videos could be posted. She has been working with Mik Muller at Montague WebWorks to accomplish this and learn more about improving and enhancing the site.
- FRCOG Wage Salary Survey: Began updating the survey sent from FRCOG with FY 2021 wage and salary information.

**Mail:**

- R. Gruen re: opinion on recent meeting
- W. Emmet re: town office move support
- L. Perry re: town office move support
- D. Briggs re: town office move support
- V. Burrington re: town office move support
- L. Lively re: town office move support
- V. Lively re: town office move support
- S. Lively re: town office move support
- D. Blackburn re: town office move support
- B. Rode re: desire to have SB & FinCom meet on diff. nights
- P. McGahan re: volunteer with website
- FCSWMD re: Receipt of \$8,000 paper compactor grant money
- FCSWMD re: change in landfill inspection
- Town Coordinator re: email sent to SH 2<sup>nd</sup> floor employees
- M. Peschiera, The Management Solution re: MTRSD, CARES Act, accounting
- B. Rode re: response to above email
- S. Litchfield, B. Litchfield, L. Rodriguez re: BB to families
- W. Ennen re: Dec. call notes
- KP Law re: fraudulent unemployment claims
- K. Leistyna, K. Brooks, J. Gran re: opposition to town office move
- B. Travers re: wait to make decision
- R. Viarengo, N. Marshall, B. den Ouden, D. Stowe, R. Dane, J. Palmer, B. Gordon, J. Dane, C. Wilkins, W. Gran, P. Charow, S. Hannay, K. Peppard, C. Luis-Schultz re: opposition to town office move
- P. Porter, L. Johnson-Fuller, Th. Lively, D. Freeman, G. Gilbert, D. Porter, R. DeLisle re: support town office move
- H. Sumner re: request to consider employee safety
- B. Travers re: follow-up on Hilltown Theatre request
- M. Peschiera re: COVID-related costs for Heath MTRSD students
- K. Nartowicz re: thank you for gift card
- Hawlemont News: Dec. 11, 2020
- M. Cucchiara re: town offices & possible CDBG money—Brian forwarded this email to Brian McHugh of Franklin County Regional Housing Authority with questions about the possibility of temporary government use negatively impacting receipt of a CDBG grant in the future. Brian McHugh will research this.
- E. Lively re: Services for seniors & location

- L. O’Dea, B. Rode, R. Jenkins, M. Roche, N. Thane, H Griswold re: support town office move
- T. Lively re: emergency training space
- C. Tallen, M. Hobbie, A. Emmet, J. Cerone re: support town office move
- DOR/DLS re: FY21 Pro Forma Recap approved
- C. Robinson, MBI re: indoor hotspot
- A. Woods, FRCOG re: CH insulation bid schedule
- NE IT re: CCC IT grant work proposal

**Budget Review Future Meetings:**

December 29<sup>th</sup>: Select Board will have a general discussion

January 12<sup>th</sup>: Discussion with Finance Committee

**Future Meeting: December 29<sup>th</sup>**

Agenda Items: Town offices concerns, 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 9:04 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Hilma A. Sumner  
Town Coordinator