TOWN OF HEATH
PLANNING BOARD — MEETING NOTES

September 2, 2026

Called to order: 7:01

Attendance:

Douglas Mason, Peter Charow, Peter Maitland, Bob Dane, Will Emmet and Mary Lynn Sabourin.

Meeting Summary

The Board discussed a special permit renewal for events at the Crowningshield conservation area, received an overview of state battery energy storage system (BESS) permitting changes, and considered related zoning and floodplain matters.

1. Crowningshield Conservation Area — Special Permit

- Public hearing scheduled for October 7, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.
- The application concerns renewal of an existing permit for a 47-acre farm area, including occasional conservation workshops, member picnics, and possible small events such as a Christmas tree sale.
- Reported existing permit conditions: up to 250 attendees overall.
- Douglas: prepare the abutters list and notification letters for the volunteer handling mailings.
- Peter Charow to send notices by certified mail at least two weeks before the hearing.

2. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)

- The Board received a briefing on changes under the Massachusetts 2024 Climate Act, including state siting jurisdiction for larger projects and a consolidated local permitting pathway for eligible projects. The specific thresholds, deadlines, and default-approval provisions should be confirmed against current state rules.
- The discussion identified the need to designate a local government representative for the new permitting process; an October 1 deadline was mentioned.
- Members favored developing a standalone BESS bylaw rather than incorporating BESS into the existing solar bylaw, to avoid weakening BioMap Core Habitat protections.
- A principal local concern is establishing protections and appropriate setbacks for private drinking water wells.
- Board members: review the approximately 25-page model bylaw and send concise comments to Douglas.
- Allison Gage (FRCOG): consolidate comments and prepare a town-specific draft incorporating drinking water provisions.

3. Floodplain Bylaw and FEMA Mapping

- The floodplain bylaw may require updates to align with state floodplain management requirements and preserve National Flood Insurance Program eligibility.

- A final FEMA map determination was anticipated in January, with town adoption discussed for June; exact dates and requirements need confirmation.
- Allison: provide a checklist of needed amendments for Board review.

4. Other Business

- BESS information session: members discussed attending a presentation by Mike Hugo in Leyden, reportedly on Thursday the 10th at 6:00 p.m.
- Town center kiosk: reported removed and stored at Jacobs Road. Reinstallation postponed pending an ADA feasibility study.
- Board membership: Peter Maitland was reported to have been appointed to the Planning Board

Meeting Adjourned: 7:42pm. Bob moved, Peter M seconded, unanimous.

Douglas Mason – Heath Planning Board Chair