

**MEETING MINUTES**

Town of Heath  
SELECT BOARD  
Virtual Meeting  
January 5, 2021

**Called to Order at 6:02 p.m.** with Robyn Provost Carlson, Gloria Cronin Fisher, and Brian De Vriese. Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator, was not in attendance. The Chair noted that the meeting was being recorded.

**Other Attendees:** See attendance sheet.

**Review Agenda:** Post Offices survey and Records Request were added to the agenda.

**Public Comment:**

Margaret Freeman: Comments on assertions that the Select Board has acted undemocratically when deciding to use Jacobs Rd. mentioning the town meeting vote and that information meetings cannot be held now. Also questioned the civility in town. Applauded Robyn and Brian for their work.

Pat McGahan: thanked the SB for all the hours put in and their safety concerns for employees.

Voiced her support for closing Sawyer Hall and moving town offices to Jacobs Rd.

Bob Gruen: noted what he viewed as the use of inexact words that he thought were misleading, e.g., voted to keep the school. Also asked why Jacobs Rd. building could be used but not Sawyer or Community Halls when each failed ventilation inspections. Brian responded to Bob's questions.

Barbara Rode: Thanked Margaret for her comments and called on civility for townspeople.

Will Emmett: Thanked the Select Board for their hard work and called for more civil conversation in town.

Bill Fontaine: questioned COVID safety in both Sawyer Hall and Jacobs Rd. and mentioned that he thought an accessible emergency exit needed to be made safe in Sawyer Hall.

Pam Porter: agreed with Bob Gruen that the town never had a vote to keep Jacobs Rd. but that we should use that building and not think of that as making a final decision.

Alice Wozniak: said that as an employee in Sawyer Hall she is insulted by the suggestions that have been made to keep Sawyer Hall safe. She is amazed at the animosity coming from people and noted that she is not feeling safe in Sawyer Hall.

Crystal Smith: voiced her opinion that the town will have the same safety issues with Jacobs Rd. as there are in Sawyer Hall because people's behavior can't be changed. She noted that she has a hard time believing that moving offices to Jacobs Rd. is just a safety issue.

Bob Gruen: stated his understanding was that more than one classroom was being used prior to the ventilation system being fixed at Jacobs Rd.

**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 December 29, 2020, as amended.*

**Building Maintenance**

Salt Shed: Carson Ovitt quoted \$2,978 for the job and indicated he's ready to start.

3 Ledge Rd.: Betsy as Board of Health chair asked whether any vermin would be removed from the building before it was demolished. Brian will follow up with Carson. The building commissioner said that no building permit would be required for the demolition.

Community Hall Doors: It was noted that we are still waiting on a proposal.

Other: Brian noted that the town has received one site visit (from DA Sullivan) for insulation at Community Hall and that a walk-through was scheduled for January 6. Discussed asking for other quotes if we receive just one bid. He forwarded the quote and the bid information to the Facilities Committee and asked everyone to be mindful of sending that kind of information to David Travers. Brian also mentioned that both emergency egresses at Sawyer Hall need looking into.

### **COVID-19 Municipal Protocol, Concerns, Updates**

Sawyer Hall Concerns: Brian sent out a floor plan of Jacobs Rd. with possibilities for use of the rooms by town employees. He noted that his number one priority is safety and his number two priority is to keep the town functioning with as little extra cost as possible. Brian expressed his concerns with Sawyer Hall - that there is only one way in and out, that people can't tell if someone is at the post office before they enter the building, and that there is no control of people coming and going. He was also concerned about people congregating by the post office. Gloria pointed out that the bulletin board could be a big part of the problem and volunteered to take off all notices posted on the board. The Board agreed that would be a good idea.

Robyn suggested the temporary closure of the upstairs of Sawyer Hall when the post office is open in order to avoid congestion. She mentioned the opportunities she sees at 18 Jacobs Rd., including space, mechanical ventilation, open and overseen M-F 8 a.m.-3 p.m., closed rooms, visibility at the front entrance, electronic front door latch, good wifi, and a possibility for window service. She noted that she thought the town coordinator and the assistant assessor would be better off at Jacobs Rd. Gloria questioned whether it would be a problem that 18 Jacobs Rd. has a Charlemont zip code, and said that she still has concerns regarding the safety of moving a few people from one building to another building with even more people and about the cost. Discussed how a move would work and who would move. Since there was office space reserved for both police and fire departments on the diagram, Gloria asked if the antennas and the generator, from the grant we were awarded, had been installed. They have not because the antennas are back ordered and transfer switch is needed for the generator. Other grants are being looked into. Discussed what might be needed to move offices. We may need a copier at each location, and Northeast IT sent a report that while the internet at Jacobs Rd. is sufficient for a temporary move, the building needs new cabling to access hi-speed internet. Also discussed telephones.

Robyn outlined a possible plan for town employees: close the upstairs of Sawyer Hall until 2:00, M-Sa. Employees would have options: they could work upstairs after 2 p.m., could work from home, or move their offices to 18 Jacobs Rd. Discussed moving furniture and equipment with volunteer help, the cost of temporary IT services, and the cost of occupying space at Jacobs Rd. Robyn suggested that we spend the next week figuring it out. Robyn will contact town employees and talk to Tim; Gloria will have a discussion with Charlene. Brian noted that this would be a temporary situation until June 30 and that we need some policy decisions. Robyn pointed out that the Board needs to update the current COVID protocol; people can't just come into the building, everyone has their own space, and bathrooms are assigned.

***On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board voted two to one to move forward with the process of closing Sawyer Hall until 2:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday, to notify employees, and to give them time to make a decision on whether to move to Jacobs Rd.***

Post Office: Discussed sanitizing at the P.O. and outside window service. It was noted that Charlene said just using the outside window would not be allowed by USPS. Alice pointed out that when Charlene is selling transfer station stickers, the p.o. is busier than normal. Gloria will talk to

Charlene about the concerns and ask her for suggestions. As requested, Gloria visited three post offices to see how they control traffic. Colrain is a very small post office; they had no signs nor any directional or space stickers. Charlemont has a sign on the door and a sticker six feet from each station. Shelburne has both signs and directional stickers on the floor. Heath appears to have instituted a more robust effort to control post office traffic.

### **Other Business**

**Budget Discussion:** discussed meeting with the Finance Committee on January 12. Agenda items set for that meeting include Heath's financial history, deficit spending, what was spent in each account last fiscal year, and learning what each town department sees coming in the future. The FinCom will be asked for their feedback.

**Heath Historical Society Request:** Wetlands are a problem. Bill Lattrell will help with that once the weather gets better.

**Green Communities Grant:** Need an estimate to rebuild the Community Hall windows.

**Records Request:** Robyn reminded the Board of the records request and said she would work with temporary Town Clerk Nancy Thane to get that out by January 8.

### **Town Coordinator's Report:**

◦ **Minutes:** Prepared draft minutes of 12/29

◦ **Mileage Rate for 2021:** Federal mileage rate for 2021 has been set at 56 cents per mile. <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-issues-standard-mileage-rates-for-2021>. Please vote to approve the town mileage rate for the same. *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Board voted unanimously to approve the mileage rate for FY 21 at 56 cents per mile.*

◦ **Annual Town Report:** Contacted Liz Canali who has agreed to format the report as has been done in previous years.

◦ **Landfill Inspection:** Sent Dan Hall (DEP) information about having inspection done by analysis of drone photography asking if this approach would be acceptable.

◦ **Budget Worksheets:** Sent out all department worksheets and budget memo to appropriate employees and committee chairpeople.

◦ **COVID Work:** Thank you to the Gruens for loaning the use of two large, hefty sandwich boards on which signs will be posted. Papers are removed from bulletin boards and green shelf. Hilma is very concerned because people keep reading through the contact log. Her understanding is that, out of respect for people's privacy, the log is not to be read through unless there has been confirmation of a positive COVID case in the building. It may be removed.

\*Robyn checked with Town Counsel and found out that the log is a public record.

◦ **Medical Leave:** Both Mary Sumner and Nancy Thane have been oriented about their respective tasks while Hilma is out. Mary will be coming daily, mid-day, to read and deal with email and phone messages. She will also get and distribute mail, do the agenda and mail packet routines, bill scheduling and other things. After Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>, when Hilma should be home, she will communicate with her as she needs to.

◦ Read and responded to numerous emails and phone calls as well as in-person inquiries.

◦ Prepared all billing for warrant including Sawyer Hall, Community Hall, Heath School accounts, etc. and assisted other department heads as needed.

**Mail:**

**Part 1**

- H. Griswold re: moving Assessors' office—1 pg.
- C. Rabbitt re: Nurse December report—1 pg.
- G. Singley re: salt shed repair—1 pg.
- M. Freeman re: response to Dec. 29 meeting—2 pg.
- M. Peschiera re: MTRSD & CARES Act—1 pg.
- Dept Housing & Community Development re: CDBG grant award (2copies)—2 pg.
  - \* Discussed using some of the CDBG grant money for 18 Jacobs Rd.
- KP Law re: temp revision to COVID-19 measures—3 pg.

**Part 2**

- P. Porter: hub information and volunteer schedule – 1 pg.
- B. Kovacs: Monday morning contract tracing report – 3 pg.
- Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans Service District: Memorial Day 2021 flag purchases – 1 pg.
- E. & A. Nichols re: opposition to erecting pole on S. Schoolhouse Rd – 1 pg.
- B. Dane re: comments on 12.29.2020 Select Board meeting – 1 pg.
- B. Gran re: concerns about moving town offices to Jacobs rd. - 1 pg.

**Agenda January 12:**

FinCom 6:15

Building Maintenance

Progress on Relocation/Reconfiguration of Town Offices

Post Office Update

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 8:16 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Gloria Fisher  
Heath Select Board