

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Virtual Meeting
January 12, 2021

Called to Order at 6:00 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: Minutes were tabled.

Public Comment:

Sue Lively: Concerned about safety issues at Sawyer Hall. Glad to hear that SB offered employees choices.

Bob Gruen: He called the Attorney General's office and found out that sign-in sheets are a public record.

Betsy Kovacs: Wanted to let Board know that Board of Health wrote to us today after their meeting and wanted to make sure it was in SB mail.

Sue Gruen: Noted that there were many bags of garbage removed from the shed at 3 Ledge Rd. and wanted to know who the exterminator was prior to the demolition.

Building Maintenance

Salt Shed: Brian had a conversation with Carson Ovitt; the Building Commissioner wants drawings before issuing a building permit.

3 Ledge Rd.: Brian noted that the work is progressing. No rodents were found and the garbage bags were intact.

Community Hall Doors: a quote is on the way.

Community Hall Outside Stairs: The Facility Committee is working on it. Robyn got an estimate of \$4,000 for complete replacement plus rails. She will forward this to the Facilities Committee.

Inside Doors at Sawyer Hall: A quote has been requested. The fire rating needs to be considered.

Budget Discussion

The Select Board, the Fincom, the Accountant, and the Town Treasurer all took part in the discussion.

Article 3/Budget Spreadsheet: Ned noted that it was important to receive regular updates of the spreadsheet. Last year Gloria input data and updated the spreadsheet with information from Hilma and sent it out. Robyn said that Hilma will input the data on the spreadsheet this year. Gloria asked Dave why some departments were deficit spending as this has not been done in the past. Dave noted that he keeps on eye out on all the accounts and is aware if a department has the money in another account to cover any deficit spending and said that this is common practice. He pointed out that this mitigates the need for multiple special town meetings to transfer funds. The funds that need to be transferred can be done at one special town meeting or as year-end transfers as is done in most towns. The Town Coordinator will be asked to remind departments if they are overspending. Gloria said that she would e-mail Dave the final FY 21 budget spreadsheet so he could view the comments for

different line items. Alice recommended minimizing the account lines so that each department head has fewer accounts and the ability to spend as necessary, not be restricted by line items. She noted that this would cut down on transfers. After discussion, the Select Board asked the FinCom to make a recommendation on reducing the budget line items in concert with the Town Accountant.

The participants reviewed the existing expense reports. Gloria noted that it appeared that not all the accounts were reconciled, including FY 21 accounts but especially the end of year report for FY 20. Dave will send out the final FY 20 General Fund and Other Expenses reports so that the Board and the FinCom will be readily able to see how much was spent from each account last year. This will help inform the Board and Fincom when reviewing FY 22 budget requests. Ken brought up when updated spreadsheets are sent out. He requested that there be a mechanism for the FinCom and Board to have immediate access to updated information. A suggestion was made to put this information on the town's website. Gloria was wary that townspeople would be unaware that this was a work in progress and not the final numbers. Ken suggested the use of Google Docs for sharing information between and among Board and Committee members and the Town Accountant and Treasurer.

CARES Act Spending: The Other Fund reports include a line for CARES Act expenses. Towns now have until December 31, 2021, to spend the money that they have been allocated. Until the town submits these expenses for reimbursement, it is a running deficit on the town reports. Gloria expressed some concern whether everything that has been spent will be considered reimbursable and that the town will not know until probably early 2022. Ned noted that there was to be a regional meeting of Finance Committees on January 14 and that they would be discussing the CARES Act.

Future Schedules: Discussed future meeting dates for joint Board/FinCom meetings. It was decided that the Board will meet with the FinCom every other week. Town department budgets are due January 21. The next joint Board/FinCom meeting will be Tuesday, February 2, at 6:15 p.m.

Hawlemont-Heath Regionalization

Bob Gruen joined the meeting to discuss the renewed regionalization efforts. (Budge Litchfield was unable to attend because he was attending another Mohawk meeting.) Bob noted that it has been over a year since the last meeting and that in that time a new superintendent had been hired and COVID happened. The group had its first meeting and listed what has to happen in order for Heath preK-6 to join the Hawlemont District. 1. DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) needs to give approval. 2. Hawlemont (Hawley and Charlemont) has to give permission. 3. OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits) needs to be figured out. 4. Three pieces of special legislation need to be enacted. 5. DESE needs to approve Heath as a 7-12 member of the Mohawk Trail Regional School District. 6. Hawley, Charlemont, and Heath all have to vote to approve Heath joining Hawlemont. 7. All the Mohawk towns have to approve the move. Bob asked, and was granted, approval to contact Town Counsel when necessary. The committee is going to start by refreshing and reviewing all the financial information and students numbers as they are a year old. Bob noted that Mohawk has a new financial group that replaced the Business Manager. The committee wants to have articles ready for the town meeting warrant; Robyn noted that there is not yet a “drop-dead” date for submission of articles. Robyn pointed out that according to the original agreement the time period for this to happen has passed and wondered if that would be extended. Bob said that Martha Thurber, chair of the school committee, and the superintendent have agreed to extend the deadline because Heath has been making an effort and operating in good faith, but that they would like it to be done this year. Bob noted that there are new SB members in Charlemont, a new superintendent, and a new financial team and wanted to make sure that the Board is still in agreement. ***Gloria Cronin Fisher moved and Brian De Vriese seconded to recommend support for Bob and Budge moving forward with the regionalization effort. Robyn asked for discussion.***

Barbara Rode, Heath school committee member, reported that she had been attending Hawlemont school committee meetings and that she had questions about the Hawlemont School

District. She thinks that the Mohawk District is further ahead and noted that Hawlemont does not yet have a hybrid learning plan. She expressed concern for our students.

Brian said a decision needs to be made looking toward the long-term and that if we are a part of the Hawlemont District, then we will have an equal say. He would like to ask Ken Rocke if he is willing to be kept apprised of the negotiations and if he would be available to give the Board his opinion. Bob said he and Budge will have all the educational and financial information to present to the town for a decision. *The vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.*

Robyn mentioned being made aware of an efficiency in regionalization grant program and wondered if the Board should look into this for the Hawlemont regionalization effort. Brian mentioned that he thought all three towns should be on board with this and suggested asking Town Counsel for an opinion. Robyn will send the informatin to the Select Board. Robyn thanked Barbara for her comments.

COVID-19 Municipal Protocol, Concerns, Updates

Robyn reached out to Sawyer Hall employees regarding the temporary closure of the upstairs while the post office is open. She informed each employee of the three options: work when post office is closed; work from home; or move to Jacobs Rd. and what they would need if moving. She noted that this was a temporary move and that it would be revisited in June. The Select Board will continue the discussion about use of town buildings. Gloria summarized her conversation with Charlene, post office manager. Charlene is okay with people moving out of the building as long as it is temporary and said she felt safe as long as the Gruens were next door. She has been making an effort to keep people moving right along. She has been serving people mailing or picking up packages through the front window as well as inside; she has no problem selling transfer station stickers through the window. Charlene did mention that she needed use of a copier (as would the Library) and wondered how it would work for submitting timesheets and other items. She already has a routine worked out with the Treasurer. She was glad that everything was removed from the bulletin board. Brian said the assistant assessor will be an easy move and that we need to talk to Hilma about her move, which won't be for a while. Alice said she can work without the use of the copier. The accountant and the treasurer need to be at the same place since they share a computer; they could stay at Sawyer Hall since they are there when no one else is. Mary Sumner, Board of Health clerk, hopes to work from home but that will depend on her internet connection. Claire and Jeff need to figure out mail and dropping off invoices. And Betty is already working from home.

The number of school age children at Jacobs Rd. has decreased. Robyn has been working on the IT piece. Brian wondered if VOIP can work at Jacobs Rd. for the phone system. Discussed next steps. Alice can move whenever she wants to; she has people who have volunteered to help her. She doesn't need her file cabinets and doesn't want the partners desk. She asked to use a desk at the former school building. She needs a phone.

The Board recognizes that all policies and procedures for COVID safety must be in place for Jacobs Rd.

Indoor Internet Hot Spot

The state is willing to provide a temporary indoor hotspot to the town for use by residents through the Massachusetts Broadband Institute. It was noted that there is already a hotspot at Jacobs Rd. but that the state is willing to pay for dividers, desks, whatever it takes. They also want to know if the town is willing to open up the hotspot to residents from neighboring towns. Brian said the router works in the building but that it could use boosters throughout the building. He thought that since there is not much human density in the building that it would be okay to add more people to the space. Robyn mentioned that she has mixed feelings. She wants to provide services and a safe environment for employees and she believes Jacobs Rd. provides that. But she has heard the concerns of people about

multiple users. Gloria thinks adding more people to the building, whether from Heath or elsewhere, is not safe for anyone. Robyn and Brian are not warm to the idea of it being a regional indoor hotspot.

Robyn is ready to move forward with relocating employees. She noted that the SB should be sending a letter to all employees explaining what is happening.

A request has been made of the Building Use Committee from someone who would like to relocate to Heath but has need for internet for a class. They would like to rent a space in Community Hall. Since there is no internet now in Community Hall, it was recommended that the committee inquire if that person would like to use Jacobs Rd.

Other Business

Green Communities Grant: bids are due January 19 for the insulation project, but only one company has looked at it. There is a concern that the bid will be too high. Discussed extending the bid due deadline. *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Board voted unanimously to extend the bid due date by two weeks.* Brian will notify the FRCOG.

Town Coordinator's Report: None

Mail

Part 1

- °L. Johnson: letter of support – 1 page
- °B. Rode: suggestion for bulletin board relocation– 1 page
- °A. Emmet: Letter – 1 page
- °P. Porter: Learning Hub update -1 page
- °J. Weigand: Letter of concern – 1 page
- °J. Weigand: comment – 1 page
- °J. Weigand: comment on PO – 1 page
- °J Weigand:2 part letter of concern – 2 pages
- °B. Travers: Use of spaces for rent clarification – 1 page

Part 2

- °S. Stanton : In person Hybrid update for Mohawk – 2 pages
- °M. Maloni: Next FRCOG COVID roundtable reminder: 1 page
- °MTRS meeting notice – 1 page
- °MTRS meeting notice – 1 page
- °Upper Pioneer Valley Veteran's Services: Annual report – 1 page
- °MA Dept of Energy Resources: Info on Green Community 2021 Grants – 2 pages
- °Letter from Melissa Cryan: Update on open space plan – 2 pages
- °Commonwealth of MA: Community Compact Cabinet program update – 2 pages

Part 3

- °S. Litchfield, re: Drop Policy revision – 11 pages
- °S. Litchfield, re: MLP manager report to MLB for 1/7/21 -5 pages
- °S. Litchfield, re: EFT – 3 pages

Part 4

- °K. Noake MacPhee re: quarterly report MVP project – 4 pages
- °S. Litchfield, B, Kovacs, R. Provost re: COVID vaccine for Heath – 4 pages
- °Meeting follow up: Finn Com/SB meeting – 4 pages
- °Carson Ovitt Proposal – 1 page
- °NEIT summary of possible office location change – 3 pages

°C. Robinson MBI indoor hot spot – 1 page

Part 5

°S. Litchfield re: updates on MLP/BB – 5 pages

°J. Weigand, B. Gruen re: concerns – 3 pages

Part 6

°P. Porter , T.Lively, M. Sumner, R. Provost re: sanitizing at Sawyer Hall – 5 pages

°KP Law, State of MA re : Covid and CARES updates- 9 pages

°Emails responses to Temporary close of Second Floor- 6 pages

Part 7

°MA DESE re Memorandum on Pooled testing in schools – 3 pages

°R. Gruen re: updates on Hawlemont regionalization work/meeting – 2 pages

°S. Stanton re: superintendent updates – 2 pages

°P. Porter re: learning hub updates- 2 pages

°Hawlemont weekly news letter 2 pages

°MTRSD re notices of meetings – 3 pages

Part 8

°K. Noake MacPhee re: Heath MVP Draft schedule – 3 pages

°L. Scarbrough re: Electric Vehicle program info. – 2 pages

°ADA, MMA re: flyers on upcoming workshops – 4 pages

°12-16-20 Minutes of Facilities Committee - 2 pages

°Select Board report for the Heath Herald – 2 pages

°Letter being sent to residents- broadband reminder – 1 page

°B DeVriese re: emails on insulation – 3 pages

°B DeVriese re: email on solar proposal – 2 pages

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 8:57 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Gloria Fisher
Heath Select Board