

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Virtual Meeting
March 2, 2021

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: Golden Cane Designation moved to 7:00 p.m.

Public Comment:

Bob Dane read a statement he had written about the town office move/relocation to 18 Jacobs Road. In his statement he was concerned that the Select Board was spending about \$10,000 to temporarily move offices and have functioning internet. He asked where the money was coming from and wasn't it illegal spending for the Board to pay for that work to be done without town meeting approval.

As chairman of the Board, Robyn responded to Mr. Dane's remarks. She stated that the emails he included were not the entire chain of correspondence and that the remainder clarified that the IT technicians had confirmed that offices could move temporarily without any changes or upgrade. Robyn also stated that no funds had been spent on moving any offices to a different location.

Bob Viarengo shared that he had spoken with Dave Howland today and that he expressed how much he wants to return to his home in Heath.

Betsy Kovacs stated that on Fridays from 3:00—5:00 p.m. there will be a list of links on the FRCOG website through which people can sign up for a vaccination appointment.

Hilma Sumner said she had gone to the vaccination clinic at Mohawk High School and had been very impressed with the organization and with the number of volunteers from Heath and other area towns.

Budget Hearings: Held with Finance Committee members Ned Wolf, Jan Carr, Alice Wozniak, and Will Emmet.

Treasurer Melanie Medon: The Tax Title Revolving Fund shows a negative balance and has done so for over a year. Even though there are properties that should go to land court and other steps taken due to lack of tax payments, there is no money by which to proceed with legal actions. In researching the history of the fund, Melanie discovered that the fund was established with \$15,000 to begin with to pay for legal costs. However, few delinquent tax payments or money from tax-taking auctions have been deposited into the account to reimburse what was spent. The treasurer said that there were properties in tax title that the town should process if there was money available. She suggested putting \$15,000 in the account for FY22 and another \$15,000 for FY23 because there would be no auctions in FY22 to raise revenue for the account.

Melanie reported that she had revised a few of the numbers on her budget requests because she had received more accurate figures. Health Insurance is now the number based on the level that employee subscriptions are at now.

Fire Department, Chief Nick Anzuoni: It was explained to Nick that the internet account was eliminated and that cost is now a part of the Maintenance and Utilities account. In response to a

question from the Board, he explained that fire truck age is measured by years and can last 20-25 years. The Board agreed that fire vehicles need to be included on the replacement schedule. The chief also reported that the department has had seven new members join in the previous few months and that some were young adults which is the reason for the increase in the Firemen's' Incentive Awards request.

The communication radio changeover is scheduled to happen later this year, hopefully July. There has been a \$2,500 grant received already to help purchase the new equipment. The Chief has applied for another grant to help pay for expenses since the truck portables and base radios all need to be upgraded.

Fire department volunteers have constructed a roofed attachment to the rescue truck garage to provide cover for the police cruiser. Jim Cerone provided the guidance for the project.

Golden Cane Designation: Town Clerk Hilma Sumner presented to the Board that David F. Howland has become the town's oldest resident and, as such, is worthy to receive the Honorary Golden Cane Award. Dave turned 95 in January. *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to award the Honorary Golden Cane Award to David F. Howland.* Although David was not able to be present for the award, his daughter, Martha Rose, was present for the award and to hear the many complimentary remarks made by the Select Board, Town Clerk and others who were present at the meeting.

Police Department Budget Hearing, Chief John McDonough: Chief McDonough explained that he has requested an increase in the police expense account so that it is back to \$4,000 as it was two years ago. He has also requested an increase of \$1.00 for the hourly wage for himself and all officers. He put in an order today for new communication radios. Some of the equipment will be provided by the state and the rest he believes he can pay for out of his expense budget. There have been few vehicle expenses although it is possible that the radar unit will need to be replaced next year.

With the new police reform regulations, every officer will be required to complete mandated training. It is unknown at this time who will be funding this training. There has not been much information published yet.

Wrap Up Discussion with Finance Committee: It was agreed that at the next joint meeting in two weeks, there would be budget discussions with School Committee members, an update of the research into regionalization with Hawlemont, and a budget discussion with the Municipal Light Plant Advisory Committee and MLP Manager about broadband expenses and what would need to be included in the town budget and covered elsewhere. Finance Committee would also bring their proposed line-item combinations for Article 3 accounts. At another meeting in the near future, there needs to be discussion about the options for long-term borrowing for the broadband loans. The Board would also like to have the Building Facilities Committee come in to discuss their finds and any possible capital expenses they recommend for building work.

Concerns with Constitutional Rights: Jesse Weigand came before the Board to voice concerns that he is not allowed to exercise his Second Amendment Constitutional rights due to having to pay for a firearms permit. He expressed his dismay that the Board has not acted on his concerns. Brian and Gloria responded to him that his request was not within the purview of the Board.

Building Maintenance:

Salt Shed: Brian reported that he sent the engineer an email asking for his report.

Community Hall doors and Sawyer Hall doors: Robyn reported that the locksmith, John Lively, will be contacting the town coordinator when he is able to assess the door hardware.

COVID-19 Concerns: Robyn asked for clarification from the town coordinator about any expenses involved in the temporary relocation of any town offices. Hilma affirmed that, as far as she was aware, there had been no extraordinary expenses as she had not seen nor submitted any related invoices.

Mass Cultural Council Grant: *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to accept the \$4,800.00 Mass Cultural Council grant.* Monies from this grant will be awarded by the Heath Cultural Council to local entities promoting the arts.

Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Grant II: The town coordinator reported that an estimate from town counsel was likely to be the same or similar to the law company that had been proposed by the Parks & Recreation Committee: Attorney John H. Brunner and recommended that the Board approve the work for that attorney. *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the title search proposal and quote form Attorney John H. Brunner.*

Municipal Light Plant Advisory Committee (MLPAC): The Board reviewed the qualifications provided from the three residents who had expressed interest in serving on the committee. They also reviewed the recommendation from the MLP Manager and the MLPAC. Based on the review of credentials and the recommendation of the MLPAC and MLP Manager, *on a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to appoint Anne Emmet and Paul Dabrody as members to the MLPAC.* This appointment is until the Annual Town Election in May. The third applicant, Karen Brooks, will be issued a thank you and invitation to volunteer in another capacity.

Green Communities Update: The contract from Energia was reviewed but it was noted that no Attachment A or B was included and the agreed quote for the work was not included. The town coordinator will contact FRCOG to ask about the incomplete contract. *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the Energia contract contingent upon receiving Attachments A & B.*

Brian reported that the engineer's report about Community Hall energy analysis had arrived today.

Board of Health Email Re: Use of Buildings (from 1/19 mail pkt.): Robyn requested that this item be tabled again because she has requested some information from town counsel. Brian responded that he wants to send a reply to the Board of Health but is willing to wait for the attorney's information.

Review Minutes: *On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the February 23, 2021 minutes as amended.*

Town Coordinator's Report:

- Northeast IT: Town email issues have been addressed with the various users and, to date, are all corrected. Work was done in a very timely manner.
- Northeast IT: After notifying NEIT about the Board's approval of the upgrade quotes, they have begun ordering the equipment and Microsoft Office Standard 2019 licensing. When the hardware has been obtained, they will schedule a time to install on site.
- Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Grant 2: Conferred with Assistant Assessor Alice Wozniak regarding actual parcel of land. She does not find it conclusive who the actual owner is although it is most likely the party that has been paying taxes on the parcel for many years. Town Counsel is hesitant to give an actual quote for the title search due to the imprecise boundary descriptions in the deed. Such work might run into thousands of dollars, depending on the difficulties encountered. In emailing with Mike Cucchiara, the firm he had gotten a quote from includes title insurance which is important in this situation. This parcel does not abut Catamount State Forest and will not provide the trail connection that was originally hoped for.
- MIIA Online Classroom Orientation: Attended a virtual training conducted by MIIA personnel about the many online trainings that they offer to their customers. Trainings cover areas of employee safety, welfare, interpersonal communications and other topics. When an employee successfully completes a training, reward points are assigned for the town which translate into a reduction in policy cost. There is no charge to participate.
- MVP Grant: With great support from Allison Gage (FRCOG) two news items announcing the upcoming work for the MVP/HMP work were prepared. Pat McGahan lent her expertise in building a new page on the town website for this work and posted the statement there. I sent The Heath Herald a news item that will appear in the April 1st issue. I have begun to review the HMP that was written and approved in 2014.
- Heath CPO: Word has just been received that the post office will close to all retail business at 1:15 p.m. each day. The office will remain open until 1:30 p.m. for a person to pick up packages but that is the only business that will be transacted during that 15 minutes.

New Mail:

- J. Weigand re: Constitutional rights
- J. Weigand re: appointment with SB, HAS explanation of mtg process
- Energia re: agreement for services & insurance cert
- S. Gruen re: thanks for COVID care recognition
- B. Kovacs re: thanks to S. Gruen for COVID vaccination care
- R. Dane re: IT Costs with office move to 18 Jacobs Rd.
- J. Weigand re: response to HAS' explanation of meeting procedure
- K. Brooks re: MLPAC resume
- P. Dabrody re: MLPAC resume
- A. Emmet re: MLPAC resume
- T. Lively re: broken sign—add to future agenda
- M. Griffin re: School District Regionalization grant award
- M. Andre (DLS) re: Free Cash certification
- S. Lively re: concern of three Finance Committee terms elected simultaneously
- C. Rabbitt re: February Town Nurse report

- K. Dragon re: FCSO Regional Dog Shelter year end meeting invitation
- KP Law re: Statewide Reopening Plan
- Hawlemont News: February 26, 2021
- K. Thwing re: FHMS Broadband Network Comm. Special Permit withdrawal, application for Request for Grant of Location, legal opinion—add to future agenda
- KP Law re: notice of rate increase
- KP Law re: determination for representation
- Mass Cultural Council re: letter of grant award
- M. Reich (KP Law) re: cost of title search

Next Meeting:

Classification Hearing

Utility Pole Application

Broken Sign

Salary Survey from FRCOG

Facilities Task Force recommendations, costs, compare to BFC reports

On a motion by Gloria Cronin Fisher and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Hilma A. Sumner
Town Coordinator