

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Virtual Meeting
February 8, 2022

Called to Order at 6:02 p.m. with Robyn Provost Carlson, Susan Lively, Brian De Vriese and Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator, in attendance.

Finance Committee (FinCom) Members: Tom Lively, Ned Wolf, Alice Wozniak, Bob McGahan and Will Emmet.

Others in Attendance: See attendance sheet.

Finance Committee meeting called to order at 6:03 p.m.

Review Agenda: Added schedule future budget hearings and letter in the Recorder.

Finance Committee will next meet on February 17th.

Special Town Meeting: The most concerning account is the lack of funds in the Legal Fees due in large part because of the amount being expended for the AT&T lawsuit defense. It is possible that the Town will need an additional \$20,000 in this fiscal year. Hilma will contact KP Law to ask if they can provide an amount for the January expenses incurred. FinCom will discuss at their next meeting.

Highway Department Budget Hearing: Superintendent Jeff Johnston joined the meeting to review his budget requests for FY2023. He stated that he submitted a level-funded highway operating budget due to the uncertainty of pricing and inflation. A concern was expressed about the need to also consider inflation in budget planning.

Next, he gave a report of equipment that needs replacement or refurbishment.

- Snow Plow on Truck #4: in need of replacement; priced at \$7,700.
- Jason's Truck: due to multiple repairs, it is in sound condition for the time being but is the oldest truck in the fleet. When it gets replaced, Jeff said he would like to see a smaller truck purchased that would better accommodate plowing of the narrower side roads on that particular route.
- 2012 International Truck: Repairs totaled \$17,000 in FY21 and \$12,000 thus far in FY22. Now parts are unavailable and are not being built. Jeff presented a request for a capital purchase of a replacement truck which he priced at \$282,000.
- Grader: Although the machine is still operational, it needs replacement or refurbishment. Cost for a new grader is approximately \$400,000. A refurbishment would also be expensive and would entail an additional expense of \$100,000 annum for leasing a grader to use while the town machine was worked on. Some of the key issues are dried hydraulic lines and the motor. The cost for rebuilding the transmission a couple of years ago was \$60,000.

Some of the difficulties that the department is facing is the fact that parts cost about three times more than they used to, two years ago. Most machinery has to sit outside in the elements because there are only three bays in the garage.

Jeff stated that both Maintenance/Utilities and Sand and Salt budgets may run short of funds this year because of the cost of repairs and the winter weather. He also reported that due to the transfer station shed having an electric heater, the bill has been approximately \$300 per month for the winter months. A railing needs to be installed in front of the metals bin for safety.

Bridge Project: In an update about the Route 8A Small Bridge project, Jeff reported that the engineers are estimating that the cost will be over the amount of the grant by at least \$110,000 due to the sharp increase in construction costs. The question was raised as to whether the Town could petition the state for additional funding to complete the project.

Burrington Road Culvert: Likewise, the work to be completed this year on the reconstruction of this culvert is estimated to exceed the grant by \$18,000. Jeff stated that possibly Ch. 90 monies could be used for the balance needed.

Materials Pit: Jeff recommended that the Town begin planning to find a new location to store materials. The current location may not always be available for the town to use in future years.

Salt Shed: According to Jeff, the building is not in sound condition and needs to be demolished. To rebuild, trees would need to be removed to clear the needed space for a new structure. A new concrete foundation would need to be poured followed by a hut. Jeff recommended a Quonset-hut-type structure at least 60 feet in height. In determining construction specs, the wind formula would need to be factored. The Department could do the tree removal, land grading, and demolition but not the concrete work.

Fire Department Budget Hearing: Fire Chief Nick Anzuoni joined the meeting to discuss his FY23 budget requests. He stated that he was level funding all accounts except for the Maintenance/Utilities account. He is asking for an additional \$2,000 to purchase the yearly subscription to new software that will expedite data entry for report preparation following an incident response. The current program requires him to manually enter all the response information while the new program will automatically enter information from other departments that have responded and reported. The switch to the new system will take a period of time, however, neighboring town departments are already converting to this system.

Chief Anzuoni stated that he is not requesting any capital expenditures assuming that the fire vehicles will continue to hold up. The chief's car is showing wear but he is hopeful that there will not be any issues during the coming year. He also reported that the department received a grant with which to purchase three sets of turnout gear.

Colrain-Heath Shared Capital Costs: Hilma reported that the Colrain and the Heath Select Boards met on February 2nd to discuss future shared capital costs for the Colrain Central School facility. The two boards agreed that the agreement would be based on an average enrollment of students from each town. School Committee Representative Barbara Rode added that she would report to the entire Committee at tomorrow's meeting and would recommend the agreement. Bob Gruen thanked the Board for getting terms of cost-sharing accomplished so quickly.

Additional Budget Hearings:

Municipal Light Board and MLP Manager to discuss annual budget requests and the broadband loan repayment schedule.

MTRSD School Committee members: request hearing after district operating budget is approved by the Committee itself.

Police Department Budget Hearing: Police Chief John McDonough presented his proposed FY2023 operating budget. He is requesting an additional \$2,000 in the Salary account to help pay for the additional hours needed for one officer to complete the required training for the Bridge Academy. The Chief explained that this is a one-time training that is now required of all municipal police officers. It takes an additional 240-250 hours to complete. This year FRCOG gave the Town a \$2,100 grant to assist with training. Besides this new requirement, each officer will be required to complete the annual 40-hour in-service training. Brian questioned whether a separate account should be created to pay for the additional training.

According to Chief McDonough the cruiser is in good shape both mechanically and in the body condition. It receives a regular undercoating for protection. With 33,000 miles, it has low mileage for the 2015 year of manufacture. The chief stated that he plans to keep this vehicle in use as long as possible.

Potential Capital Costs:

Salt Shed: Robyn stated that she will coordinate the research for possible plans and estimated costs for demolition of the existing shed and construction of a new shed.

Sawyer Hall: It is possible that a Community Development Block Grant could be obtained to fund repair of the accessibility ramp. Cost estimates would need to be obtained for other renovative work that will be needed. An assessment of the furnace can be done by White Heating.

Community Hall: Replacement/rebuilding of upstairs windows needs to be assessed.

Robyn suggested that a useful factor in the building use conversations would be to bring in a professional to look at the various needed renovation projects and provide cost estimates and recommendations for the work and future usage.

Excess Land: The town-owned parcel at 5 Ledge Road was introduced as a possible property that could be disposed. The Heath Historical Society has expressed interest in either leasing or purchasing the property on which to construct a storage building to house some of their archives. The Society will be invited to meet with the Board in the near future to discuss this. The benefits and drawbacks of each option need to be evaluated. The property was obtained through a tax-taking so it can be sold through public auction and does not need town meeting approval.

Finance Committee adjourned their meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Resident Letter: A letter from a town resident appeared in the February 7th edition of the Greenfield Recorder addressing concerns and dismay over the Board's role in the AT&T lawsuit. Brian remarked that the letter alleges criminal conspiracy on the part of the Board and he believes these accusations should not go unanswered. The Board agreed to seek town counsel's opinion and possibly meet on Friday to discuss this. Robyn will contact the town's attorney.

Next Meetings:

February 15: Building use, overview of position grading, grading of Senior Program Coordinator and Board of Health Clerk job descriptions, Green Communities update, Covid concerns

February 22: Budget hearings

8:08 p.m. *On a motion by Susan Lively and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.*

Respectfully submitted,

Hilma A. Sumner
Town Coordinator