

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Virtual Meeting
February 22, 2022

Called to Order at 6:01 p.m. with Robyn Provost Carlson, Susan Lively, Brian De Vriese (joined meeting at 6:30 p.m.) and Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator, in attendance.

Finance Committee: Tom Lively, Alice Wozniak, Bob McGahan, Ned Wolf, Will Emmet.

Others in Attendance: See attendance sheet.

Review Agenda: No changes.

Special Town Meeting: If an STM is needed, March 23rd is a probable date. Hilma will contact KP Law and request permission to delay payment of legal invoices until after the Annual Town Meeting. If Town Counsel agrees, an STM will not be held.

Heath Historical Society: Board of Directors members Ned Wolf, Claire Rabbitt, Nina Marshall and Bob Viarengo met with the Select Board. The members explained that they are interested in the parcel of land at 5 Ledge Road for the purpose of constructing a storage building to house artifacts in a climate-controlled environment. Ned Wolf stated that the building would have a desk and chair for someone to open and view documents inside the building. The building would be 20 feet by 25 feet and built on piers. If the property was auctioned as per regulations following a tax-taking, the Historical Society could bid on it.

There were many questions raised about whether restrictions could be put on the deed or the purchase agreement and whether an RFP could be issued on the property. Hilma will pose these questions to the Treasurer to obtain further information. Alice Wozniak had a conversation with the Building Commissioner who said that it is allowed in the zoning bylaws to erect a shed or storage building on a non-conforming lot. Brian and Bill Lattrell had determined that a storage building of the stated size could be built far enough away from the wetlands on the back side of the parcel. More discussion of how to proceed with sale of property will be taken up at a future meeting.

FY23 Budget Requests:

Tom stated that the Finance Committee had discussed the Highway capital requests. The request for a replacement truck was questioned as to why there was only one quote. Information was given that the Highway Superintendent had sought more quotes but this is the only response he had gotten to date. The request for a new plow for the one-ton truck was considered to be reasonable and greatly needed.

Salt Shed: Robyn and the Highway Superintendent will contact the companies that had submitted cost estimates last year and ask for total project prices to have a full estimate for the entire construction. It was suggested that perhaps the Board should view the state salt sheds located in Buckland.

Municipal Light Board: At 7:00 p.m. MLB members Art Schwenger, Ned Wolf, David Gordon and Bill Fontes along with MLP Manager Sheila Litchfield joined the meeting and called their meeting to order. Their requests for the FY23 budget were reviewed. It was explained that the Wired West

Assessment of \$1,000 may be dropped. The WiredWest board is presently rewriting their bylaws to eliminate that fee but a final vote has not yet been taken.

In regards to the drop installations, the town can apply now for the reimbursement from the state for the installations that are complete. In the spring when all installations are complete, there will be a reconciliation. At this time the Town is due to receive \$214,682 reimbursement.

Hut Insurance: Following the most recent invoice from MIIA, Sheila will be contacting the company representative to make certain that this last invoice covers all the equipment in the hut and no further adjustment is needed.

Cebula Alarm Systems: The system was installed today and will be doing a complete monitoring of the hut and equipment. It will assess safety and access as well as climate levels and temperature. There will now be a passcard access system with a security code that can track who entered the hut. The card access will be implemented in a couple of weeks. The Board reviewed the proposed contract and invoice. ***On a motion by Susan Lively and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the Cebula Alarm Systems contract for the fiber hut.***

Current status of the construction shows that there are 14 pending drops in FSA's 1, 2 & 3 with 12 cold drops installed. FSA 4 (Mohawk Estates) has 68 pending drops with 10 cold drops.

Backhaul Sharing: The towns of Rowe, Heath, Charlemont, Colrain and Leyden are meeting to work on an agreement and approach for developing a backhaul sharing system. There is an opportunity to apply for a Compact Community Cabinet grant in the amount of \$500,000 to help with the cost of building such a system. Colrain has agreed to take the lead in writing the grant application. ***On a motion by Susan Lively and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve jointly applying for the above-mentioned grant with the towns of Rowe, Charlemont, Colrain and Leyden.***

The 5-town agreement needs legal review and four of the towns use KP Law as town counsel. It is proposed that these towns, along with Heath, jointly use KP Law and share the cost of this review. ***On a motion by Susan Lively and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve jointly sharing legal counsel KP Law with the expense paid for from broadband accounts since it is related to the operation of the network.***

MLB office space: The Select Board has not made any decision.

Broadband Loan Repayment: Finance Committee recommended the 18-year payment schedule due to the lower annual repayment and less impact on the overall tax rate for the Town. They did acknowledge that it will mean overall payment of more interest over the course of the loan. Tom explained that, even though they recommend the 18-year repayment, the actual commitment is to one year. The majority of the committee voted in favor of this plan at least until the CAF2 funds are received and subscription numbers are finalized so the Town will have a more accurate understanding of what the overall financial picture is.

DOHED funding: From talking with Bill Ennen, there may be a possible source of grant funding for the outstanding debt through DOHED with federal infrastructure monies. The MLB will continue to research this possibility.

7:56 p.m. the MLB adjourned their meeting.

MTRSD FY2022 Assessment: A recap was provided by Hilma that the Town’s FY2022 assessment for the MTRSD operating costs that had been miscalculated. In a letter from Superintendent Stanton she explained that the error originated with leaving off all of the elementary students who are enrolled in Hawlemont for this school year thus using 10 students as the Heath enrollment rather than 43 students. Tom noted that the error was not done by the Town while it was also noted that MTRSD has a “rainy day” fund and TMS, the accounting firm, would be bonded to cover errors made in their office. Since the letter did not contain a request for action on the part of the Town, the consensus of the Board and Finance Committee was to wait until there was further communication from the District.

8:21 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