

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Virtual Meeting
May 24, 2022

Called to Order at 6:00 p.m. with Robyn Provost Carlson, Susan Lively, Brian De Vriese and Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator, in attendance.

Others in Attendance: See attendance sheet.

Review Minutes: *On a motion by Susan Lively and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of May 17, 2022, as amended.*

Public Comment: Jesse Weigand asked the Board to state whether the town offices were in a temporary location at the Jacobs Road building. He also commented that he had heard twice that the vote of the people was “illegitimate” because some people were not present at a particular town meeting. He stated that a vote should not be considered as such.

Kristen Weigand asked if the Board had considered the growing evidence of health risks among children and families living in close proximity to cell towers before they settled the lawsuit with AT&T.

Summer Meeting Schedule: All Board members confirmed their availability to meet every other week during the summer on the dates of June 7, 21; July 5, 19; and August 2, 16 and 30.

In-Person Meetings: According to the Governor’s current ruling, all governmental meetings will need to resume in-person meetings beginning July 15th. The Board agreed that they needed to have continued discussion about what future in-person meetings would be like and that clarity was needed as to what people could expect. The possibility of broadcasting and/or recording meetings would need to be researched. Possible sources of information to consult would be the FRCOG and NEIT. The first meeting that would need to be in-person would be July 19th.

The town policy of a board or committee member participating remotely will be sent out as well as a reminder that July 15th is the cutoff date for holding remote meetings.

Town Office Hours: Susan Lively queried as to whether it was time to request the public town officials to resume posted hours that they would be available to the public. It was agreed that a memorandum needed to be sent out asking that they each reply with when and where they would each hold their office hours.

Juneteenth National Independence Day: After review of the current Personnel Policy section regarding paid holidays and acknowledgement that June 19th was declared both a federal holiday and a state holiday in 2021, the Board took the following action. *On a motion by Susan Lively and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted that Section 4.11 Holidays of the Personnel Policy would be amended to include Juneteenth National Independence Day as a paid holiday for benefitted employees.*

On a motion by Susan Lively and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to change “Columbus Day” in Section 4.11 Holidays of the Personnel Policy to “Indigenous Peoples’ Day.”

Boards Clerk: The Board reviewed the job description draft for this new position. It was agreed that the position needs another level of oversight which would be the Town Coordinator. This will be added to the job description. With that addition, the Board gave tentative approval. Hilma will send it to both Gene Garland, Board of Health chairman, and Doug Mason, Planning Board chairman, for their review. The Board also reviewed the job posting and agreed that, to begin with, the position should be posted on the town website and bulletin boards and shared with the STAM email group.

Library Trustees Appointment: Chairman Deb Porter and Library Director Kate Barrows joined the meeting to discuss with the Select Board the evaluation of the report of the Office on Disabilities as it regarded the library location in Sawyer Hall. Deb commented that the Trustees had met and discussed the report. They presented a letter of their thoughts which included acknowledgement for everyone to have patience while the situation was evaluated and a permanent location was determined. They also suggested that an ad hoc committee be formed to study options. Deb stated that whatever has to happen, something has to happen; what can’t happen is nothing. Both the Trustees and Director believed that library operations needed to be relocated to the Jacobs Road municipal building but many books would be at Sawyer Hall and would be available upon request.

Kate gave an overview of the feedback from the future-focused meetings that had been held. She stated that those who participated were emphatic in their love for the library with a sense of ownership. Patrons valued a sense of personal service received and enjoyed the Saturday-morning routine and other library traditions. There was also a lot of interest in expanding services with the library and having services that would partner with other municipal groups.

Brian clarified that there were two issues involved. One was the library and the fact that it was not legal to be in an inaccessible building. They needed to resolve this with a short-term solution. The second issue was an overall design project for Sawyer Hall that encompassed the entire building. Robyn added that the report was an affirmation of what was already known. She also stated that the town needs and deserves a level of expertise to look at this, along with the possibility of a volunteer group. The library will not be able to revise their services in a safe and legal way at Sawyer Hall in a short period of time. She stated that she believes that it is necessary to bring in outside assistance with expertise to make sound decisions about the future of the buildings, the library and the town offices. Deb stated the library cannot apply for certain grants while it is operating in a building that is not fully accessible.

On a motion by Susan Lively and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to affirm that they supported the recommendation made by the Library Trustees which was based on the recommendation of the state Office on Disabilities to operate out of the Jacobs Road building library space while research and study was being done.

The Board also agreed that there was a need to look at the purpose of each municipal building and what each building could feasibly be used for. Robyn stated that she would not support eliminating any building until she believed it was the right move for the town and at this time, she did not believe any building should be eliminated. Part of the Board’s work is the need to serve the greatest number of people in the most appropriate manner.

Discussion was had between Chairman Porter and the Select Board members about holding a public informational meeting to present the Office on Disabilities report and to make a statement about the action needed to be taken by the library and the need for town offices to remain at Jacobs Road. Robyn stated that meeting would be a time to explain how the town would proceed. It would give residents an opportunity to have their questions answered. After much discussion, the date of June 7th during the next Select Board meeting was selected for the Public Information Meeting, beginning at 7:00 p.m. This will be a remote meeting and folks will be encouraged to submit questions in advance. Robyn, Deb and Kate will collaborate to organize the meeting.

Salt Shed: Brian stated that he wanted to look at all sources of possible funding. There needs to be a decision about the siting of the building and then cost estimates sought for the actual construction. The Board discussed what had been stated last week, that there was a possible source of funding through the FEMA-BRICK grant program.

Green Communities Update: According to Brian, he will need to get in touch with ECI for a contract about the Jacobs Road weatherization work. The company had provided an estimate but not a contract.

Town Coordinator Report:

- Auditor: Welcomed Auditor Tom Scanlon and two of his staff members on Monday. They are in town Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Assisted with gathering documents and relaying communications between Mr. Scanlon and town offices.
- Town Coordinator Absence: Spent time briefing Office Assistant, Nancy Thane, with updates of ongoing projects, procedural implementation and other information. She will be checking email remotely next Tuesday—Thursday. After that she will be in the office for an hour or two each day until my return. Town Clerk Mary Sumner will be handling the mail and will check the Coordinator phone for messages the days Nancy is unable to come in to the office.
- Move Comments: Sent emails out to personnel in the offices that had relocated at Jacobs Road. Compiled responses into one document to present for review to Select Board.
- FCTS: Work at Jacobs Road has not started due to Alec Jillson testing positive for Covid. He will contact the Town Coordinator when he is back at work and will be bringing students to Heath.

Mail:

- Library Trustees re: recommendations following MA Office on Disabilities rpt
- S. Litchfield re: wifi survey for EDS
- P. Porter re: public buildings and barefeet
- Library Trustees re: Protocol for public interaction
- L. Maldonado re: letter sent to Colrain Finance Committee
- S. Suhoski re: letter advocating for continued municipal benefit for cannabis—The Select Board will consider drafting expressing municipal concerns.
- KP Law re: notification of rate increases
- KP Law re: SCOTUS decision of flag-raising
- R. Viarengo re: possible 150th anniversary celebration of CH

- J. McDonough re: CSO on-call clinician for PD— *On a motion by Susan Lively and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to participate in the CSO on-call clinician program for the Police Department.*

Next Meeting: June 7th—MTRSD FY22 assessment error; BoH report on Covid updates; public information meeting; Boards Clerk.

9:08 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