

## MEETING MINUTES

Town of Heath  
SELECT BOARD  
18 Jacob Road  
December 13, 2022

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

**Others in Attendance:** See attendance sheet.

**Parks & Recreation:** Mike Cucchiara spoke with the Board about the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Grants that have been awarded this year. The first grant was awarded to Heath for the purpose of purchasing a snow grooming machine. It will be used for grooming trails for winter activities such as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking and snowmobiling. Storage for the groomer has not been determined. The total grant award is \$15,000. A groomer has been priced for approximately \$6,200. The remainder of the grant would be used on signage and picnic tables.

The second grant was a joint application by the towns of Heath and Rowe for the purpose of hiring a consultant from FRCOG who would complete a land survey and analysis of the already existent trails. The consultant would then outline suggested trails that might be developed through private properties that would connect the trails on public properties.

Mike reported that the committee members and volunteers have continued to build trails, done some leaf blowing to clear pathways and gotten the name marker at the trail head installed.

**Tax Classification Hearing:** The Director of Assessing, Alice Wozniak, was present and gave the recommendation from the entire Board of Assessors that the Town remain a single-tax-rate municipality for Fiscal Year 2023. *On a motion by Brian De Vriese and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve a single tax rate for the Town for Fiscal Year 2023.*

**School Committee update of MTRSD FY24 budget planning process:** School Committee representative Budge Litchfield joined the meeting. He had previously sent the slide show used the previous week with the committee itself which outlined the various steps in the process of budget development for the school district. According to Budge's report, the School Committee and administrative officials were studying possible scenarios to evaluate what changes were feasible for sustainability of the district in the future. One area that has been identified is that rural budget monies were needed to remove some of the financial burden from the towns. Expense for rural regional schools was disproportionate compared with urban areas of the state.

There are areas that have been identified as being key priority areas. One is that the educational standards be upheld. Secondly, is the area of mental health in students. Following the upheaval that occurred during pandemic that included social isolation for students, it has been identified that socialization skills need to be learned or relearned among many of the youth. A third area of priority is to have the maximum number of fulltime staff possible, versus part time, even if the same person holds several different positions.

ESSER funds are depleted. It is hoped that the school district will receive more financial assistance. The amount is allocated according to the size of the community. It is estimated that there may be up to a 14.5 percentage increase in special education costs for the coming year.

Excess and Deficiencies (E&D) funding, as determined by the School Committee, is to be used as needed to cover new special education needs for a student or when there are changes in IEP accommodations for a student.

Budge reported that the School Committee will try to keep the overall budget increase to 2.5 percent. The actual assessment increase will vary per town based on the Ch. 70 formula. Principals of each school have given projected cost numbers to the central office. These numbers are used to formulate the new budget. It is possible that a first budget draft will be ready later in the week. By the fourth Tuesday of January there should be very preliminary budget numbers. It is projected that student numbers will remain similar for the next year.

Another area where the outcome is unknown is with the union salaries. Negotiations are currently in process. Not knowing exact numbers, the School Committee will compile an estimate of what they think the amount might be and use that in budget planning. This is the last year of the five-year transportation contract so those rates will change with a new contract as well.

**FY24 Budget Planning Process:** Finance Committee members discussed budget planning with the Board. Departments with budget hearings will meet with the two groups on weeks when regular Select Board meetings do not take place. The Police Chief, Fire Chief, Highway Superintendent, Library Trustees and Director and Municipal Light Board and Manager will be scheduled to attend hearings.

Finance Committee members approved the updated version of the letter that will be sent to the departments with their budget worksheets. *On a motion by Brian De Vriese and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the Finance Committee letter.*

**Salt Shed:** A feasibility study is the initial step in the process of building a new salt shed. The study would evaluate both the site where the existing salt shed sits and the Bray Road property to determine which site would be most suitable for construction. An estimate of \$17,000--\$18,500 has been obtained from one landscape architect for the study and design. It is hoped that this work can be done before the town meeting so votes necessary for construction can be included on the warrant. Brian will inquire as to when the study could be completed.

At the present salt shed there are broken trusses and supports, siding that has come off, and the cement slab is undermined and tipped on the west side of the building. In its present condition, the structure is precarious and possibly unstable. Discussion included ideas of how salt/sand services could be achieved if the present salt shed can no longer be used. These ideas include contracting the service or leasing something to contain the salt.

**CDBG Grant Extension:** On request from the Franklin Regional Housing Authority, the Board agreed to approve a six-month extension for the housing loan grant. *On a motion by Brian De Vriese and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve and sign the request for a six-month spending extension for the CDBG housing loan grant.*

**Route 8A Bridge Replacement:** The Town Coordinator reported that seven construction bids were opened by Highway Superintendent Jeff Johnston and herself on December 7<sup>th</sup>. All bid packets were then emailed to the project engineers for review. The low bid, in the amount of \$499,678.79, from J.H. Maxymillian Construction, was complete. *On a motion by Brian De Vriese and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to award the construction contract for the Route 8A bridge replacement to J.H. Maxymillian.*

**Hilltown Youth Performing Arts Lease:** The method for the group to reserve use of the shared spaces will need to be coordinated in a more effective way. Hilma reported that she had not received any sketches for the proposed artwork that they want to hang in the gym. She explained that Jonathan had demonstrated to her where painting of sky and curtains would be done. Then there would be panels hung within those spaces. The Board stated that they did not want any painting done on the building itself.

**Review Minutes:** *On a motion by Brian De Vriese and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of November 15, 2022, as amended.*

*On a motion by Brian De Vriese and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of November 29, 2022, as amended.*

**Town Coordinator's Report:**

- Meeting of MTRSD Superintendent: Supt. Stanton held a meeting on Thursday, Dec. 8, with town administrators. Also present were the Business Manager and Communications Director. Current status of the FY24 budget planning was explained with an opportunity to ask questions.
- Bid Opening: The bid opening for construction of the Route 8A bridge over Burrington Brook was held on Dec. 7, 2022. The Highway Superintendent and Town Coordinator conducted the opening of seven bids. Bid packets were sent to the engineering firm for their review of completeness. The lowest bid received was \$499,678.79 from J.H. Maxymillian. The bid was complete and is recommended for award.
- FCTS Work: Electrical students from the tech school were here two days last week exchanging inside ceiling light fixtures in the front offices and atrium area. They also continued to work on the outside lights on the building. Palmeri Electric has agreed to donate a day in the spring with their bucket truck so the students will be replacing the taller outside parking lights at that time. The instructor with students will continue to replace inside fixtures in offices during their field days.

**Mail:**

- CDBG extension request
- Library Trustees re: letter of commendation for Lyra Johnson Fuller
- P. Porter re: BUC report and questions— *On a motion by Brian De Vriese and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to appoint Alice Lee to the Building Use Committee.*
- COA re: offer of space to Town Nurse
- Gov. Baker & DEP—Sustainable Materials Recovery Program grant
- FCSWMD re: Transfer Station Inspection Report
- FCSWMD re: November processing fee & report for recyclables
- FCSWMD re: Executive Director's Report & Program Director's Report
- Numerous emails from taxpayers re: renaming the former elementary school—The Board agreed that there would be a discussion about renaming the former elementary school.

**Statement written by Robyn Provost Carlson, read into the meeting:**

The Select Board received a number of emails from a group of residents that were not happy with the newly voted name for this building [former elementary school, 18 Jacobs Road].

One of the often-stated accusations was that the Select Board used the renaming of the building as a way to attack, anger, and hurt people and a way to divide our community.

This was not the intention of the board. We are sorry that people took it as such.

Months ago, the Select Board agreed to look at renaming this building. We hoped to find an option that described the use of the building without being pretentious. We hoped to find a “Heath-like” name.

The Select Board reached out to folks for help. After months of soliciting name options from residents via The Heath Herald, the Heath website, and word of mouth, the Select Board reviewed a list of received suggestions.

The list was reviewed at a couple of Select Board meetings and, finally, the Select Board voted on the name “Heath Community Center.”

This name was not meant to confuse or replace anything within our Historic Heath Center. We recognize that there are many people who see our Historic Center as “The Heath Center” and we see the value of each of our Town owned buildings.

The name Heath Community Center was believed to be an option to describe a place where people from the community come together in one location for a multitude of reasons...library use, senior meeting and recreation, civil service work, government office work, public recreation...while also housing income making lease space.

This topic is not on our agenda this evening. We understand the importance of continued, constructive, conversation. We will include a continued conversation on the building name on the next agenda.

**Open Meeting Law Complaint:** Town Counsel is drafting a response to the complaint. When done, Robyn will review the letter. *On a motion by Brian De Vriese and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to allow Robyn to approve the letter when drafted, and, if not ready by the deadline, to authorize town counsel to request an extension for responding.*  
**Next Meeting:** January 3, 2023

**8:54 p.m. On a motion by Brian De Vriese and a second by Robyn Provost Carlson, the Select Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Hilma A. Sumner  
Town Coordinator