

**MEETING MINUTES**

Town of Heath  
SELECT BOARD  
18 Jacob Road  
February 21, 2023

**Called to Order at 6:04 p.m.** With Robyn Provost Carlson, Susan Lively, Brian De Vriese, and Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator, in attendance.

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

**6:05 p.m.** *On a motion by Susan Lively and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to adjourn the open session and convene in Executive Session pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, sec. 21(a)(3), To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation and the chairman declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body, For deliberation and strategy involving dispute over the operating assessment process between the Mohawk Trail Regional School District and the Town of Heath and to reconvene in open session.*

Robyn Provost Carlson    Aye                  Susan Lively    Aye                  Brian De Vriese    Aye

**6:40 p.m. The meeting reconvened in open session.**

**Municipal Light Plant Budget Hearing:** The Municipal Light Board members and Municipal Light Plant Manager met with the Select Board and the Finance Committee to discuss the current and future operations of the Municipal Light Plant (MLP). For the two account lines that are on the ATM warrant, they are requesting level funding.

Construction of the broadband network is done. Installation is not completely done; there are about 30 households that have not scheduled appointments. There is an incentive to have the installation done by June 30, 2023 or the drop credit will be lost if an appointment has not been made by this time. There is no longer any credit for any new installations. Manager time is still needed for closing out the grants. The Municipal Light Board wants to make certain that there is enough budgeted for the needed time.

There are 344 active connections in operation to date.

The Projected Cash Flow was outlined in a spreadsheet. The MLB members and manager explained the projected expenses and revenues. WiredWest pays many expenses out of generated revenue—in FY23 it totaled approximately \$271,000. CAF II funds are anticipated to begin by 2024. These monies have to be used for broadband expenses but may be used for the loan payments. The question was raised as to whether these monies will need to go through Free Cash before it can be spent.

Heath’s part of the WiredWest revenue sharing for FY23 is \$113,000. The town does not pay for the entire cost if there is storm damage to the system or a tree-trimming project. That cost is distributed among the towns in the collaborative.

There will be procedural changes now that construction is complete. Docusigns will no longer be used to approve invoices.

The redundancy project with the five towns is continuing to move forward. Whip City Fiber is doing the engineering to building the backhaul system. Under the grant funding, they have until June to finish the project. It will have 10 gigabits of service when finished.

WiredWest has a two-year contract with Whip City Fiber which means they are paying slightly higher rates than other customers who have signed longer contracts. During the two years, they will be issuing an RFP to other providers to see if they can obtain a lower rate for services.

Concern was expressed because there is a six-hour planned internet service outage tonight. There is no emergency coverage and not much advance notice was issued.

The MLB and Manager are hoping that the town can make use of the Digital Equity Planning with FRCOG being one of the lead organizations in the area. This is a program that can be used to advance digital literacy.

**Fire Department Budget Hearing:** Fire Chief Nick Anzuoni met with the Select Board and Finance Committee. He stated that, between Colrain and Heath, there had been four structure fires in the past few weeks. There have been expensive repairs needed on trucks over the past two years. The low-pressure air compressor has worn out and needs to be replaced.

Those officials present talked about the future that might include shared services with a few neighboring towns sharing a chief. It would be helpful if there was money for a study to be done to evaluate the needs of departments, cost projections and possible shared services. Fire chiefs should have input to such a study as they know what is needed in their own department.

**Highway Department Budget Hearing:** Highway Superintendent Jeff Johnston and Foreman Kyle Jarvis met with the Select Board and Finance Committee to review departmental budget requests and capital expense requests. It was noted that FY24 is the last year of the three-year lawn mowing contract. Before some of the highway winter accounts can be combined, it needs to be known how these accounts can be spent.

Jeff had put in two capital expense requests for trucks. Two of the four present trucks have significant problems and frequently need repair. These are the trucks that Jason and Kyle drive. The idea is that Jason's large truck would be replaced with a smaller truck. For now, the old truck would be kept as a backup for when Kyle's truck breaks down. Soon this 2012 International will need to be replaced as well although the cost for a new truck is \$300,000 to \$400,000 and has an extensive lead time.

The desired replacement of Jason's truck would not exceed \$200,000 with build out and equipped with plow. Allegiance Trucks in West Springfield has limited slots available for interested buyers. If the town is interested, a letter of intent needs to be sent to hold the slot. The letter can stipulate that purchase is contingent upon town meeting approval. This would be for an International CV series truck. ***On a motion by Susan Lively and a second by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to issue a letter to Allegiance Trucks to hold a place for the above-mentioned truck.***

Another capital expense request is to purchase a 3-point hitch leaf blower for \$7,300. This is to replace the present rebuilt leaf-blowing machine that runs by a separate engine, thus meaning that gas is burnt by both the truck and the leaf blower when in use. Because that machine is very old, the carburetor no longer works and there is no replacement part.

Jeff also requested that the remaining money in the account to rebuild Flagg Hill Road be transferred to an account to do extensive tree removal on Avery Brook Road. The transferred amount would also need additional funds added since the total estimate for the tree work and police detail is \$46,300.

**Free Cash:** There are some repeated deficit lines from the year before. Robyn has begun to research whether reimbursement funds have been received.

**Auditor's Report:** It was decided that the auditor was most likely waiting for a response from the Board to give a management report to the Town. The report will be discussed at a future meeting.

**Community Hall Flooding/Building Concerns:** Hilma reported that the Building Maintenance Coordinator will meet with an insurance adjuster in the morning to evaluate damages caused by the flooding.

**Farmland of Local Importance:** Tabled until the next meeting.

**Regional Through-Trail Feasibility Study:** After review of the agreement of work to be done through this two-town grant study, *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the agreement between the Town of Heath and FRCOG.*

**Open Meeting Law Complaint:** The Board reviewed the Open Meeting Law Complaint that was filed by Jesse Weigand against the Select Board. The complaint stated that they, and the Town Coordinator, had not included the exact wording of his public comments from a previous meeting. *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to acknowledge receipt and review the complaint.* It was noted that the last open meeting law complaint filed the previous month had cost approximately \$1,000 in legal costs for town counsel involvement and response. *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to authorize submission of a response to the complaint by Town Counsel.*

#### **Future Meetings:**

February 28: Next regular meeting: Broadband backhaul agreement appendix B, renaming Jacobs Road building, discuss budget and auditor's report.

#### **Mail:**

- R. Viarengo re: resignation from Planning Board— *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to accept, with deep regrets, Bob Viarengo's resignation from Planning Board effective May 1, 2023. On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to inform the Town Clerk of the resignation so that the open seat can be placed on the Annual Town Election ballot.*
- A. Averill re: Farmland of Local Importance
- T. Lively re: CH repair update
- K. Barrows re: Library grant award
- R. Crochier re: CPHS new staff appointments
- C. Rabbitt re: January Town Nurse report
- FCSWMD re: DEP data tables
- KP Law re: Public Lands Preservation Act

**9:20 p.m. On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.**

Respectfully submitted,

Hilma A. Sumner  
Town Coordinator