

**MEETING MINUTES**

Town of Heath  
SELECT BOARD  
18 Jacob Road  
March 7, 2023

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

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

**Public Comment:** None.

**6:05 p.m.** Finance Committee members Tom Lively, Ned Wolf, Alice Wozniak, Bob McGahan and Will Emmet were present and called their meeting to order.

**6:15 p.m. Appointment with Representative Natalie Blais:** Accompanied by Legislative Aide Corinne Coryat, Representative Blais came to introduce herself to the Board as Heath's new state representative since being sworn into office in January. She first listened to town officials express what the most urgent needs of the town are at present. Items such as a new salt shed, new fire station, broadband construction debt, installation of energy saving measures and regionalization of services were all talked about. The need for an available professional grant writer was another desire that was expressed.

Rep. Blais then talked about the top priorities that she is advocating for her district. Most of the towns need infrastructure support whether it be road and bridge improvement or new/renovated municipal buildings. She is co-sponsoring a bill to provide aid for municipal building construction. There is a need for administrative efficiency which could happen through more regionalization of services that she is also advocating to have put in place. Other bills that she has submitted to the Legislature for consideration are an office of rural policy that would be staffed fulltime, additional funding for roadways including dirt roads, and a bill to codify the WRAP program.

There was discussion about the high level of needs that exist in rural schools and the need for a revaluation of the state aid formula because of the needs and the smaller revenue base that exists in taxation. Both Franklin and Berkshire counties have declining populations which are also aging by comparison. Another factor that puts rural towns and those in western Massachusetts at a fiscal disadvantage is funding received through the state-owned property in lieu of taxes. The formula used for distributing funds is disproportionately against these communities.

The House has voted to extend the use of remote meetings under the Open Meeting Law through March 31, 2025. The Senate still needs to vote on the same bill and that vote is expected shortly. Anyone who would like to follow the progression of bills in state congress may create an account at [www.malegislature.gov](http://www.malegislature.gov). Rep. Blais' website is [www.repblais.org](http://www.repblais.org) for those that would like to stay current on her work.

**Municipal Light Plant Backhaul Agreement, Appendix 2:** This appendix to the original agreement was to include the internet provided to properties situated with the town of Charlemont. *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the Municipal Light Plant Backhaul Agreement, Appendix 2.*

**Smith Vocational School:** The Board heard and discussed the information about the Heath student who began attending Smith Vocational School at the end of January. Although no invoices have been received to date, it is anticipated that tuition will be approximately \$10,000 for half of the school year. VEAC has a bussing contract in place to provide transportation for area students and have included the Heath student. One half year of transportation cost will be approximately \$4,600. The Board directed Hilma to communicate with both Smith Voc. and David Newell, co-chair of VEAC to see if payment can be made after the ATM. *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to have VEAC continue providing transportation for the Heath student.*

**Special Town Meeting:** Tabled until information about Smith Vocational related payments is known.

**Auditor's Report:** Both the Select Board and the Finance Committee agreed that Auditor Tom Scanlon needs to be invited to present his report in a meeting. Finance Committee members noted that financial bonds for the Tax Collector and Treasurer need to be brought up to the recommendation of \$100,000 for each. The report also noted that there appeared to be approximately \$35,000 in outstanding checks, including one check for an estimated \$33,000. Robyn will talk to the treasurer about these checks. Other recommendations of the report included a review of special revenues and a review and update of personnel files.

There was discussion about the Town having set benchmarks by which respective town officials will bring about the recommended improvements. A sub-committee of Robyn, Hilma and Alice Wozniak was established to develop a plan to achieve the improvements. Part of the task will be in identifying the liabilities in the present operations that need to be adjusted and improved.

**FY24 Budget:** The Board, with Finance Committee, briefly discussed some of the proposed expenses for next fiscal year.

- Accountant Salary increase of \$10,200: The Board would like further information for the requested increase.
- Salaries: Any COLA (cost of living adjustment) will need to be evaluated at a future date.
- Combining Line Items: Evaluation will be done to see if there are some line items in Art. 3 that are logical to combine.
- Highway Request for Fund Transfer: Further information needs to be obtained to determine the total amount of money that will be needed for the Avery Brook Road tree clearing project and from where it will be obtained.
- Emergency Transmitter Antennae for Cell Tower: Police Chief McDonough reported that he had emailed FRCOG and reached out to another police chief to inquire about pricing.

**Highway Department Position Descriptions:** The Board reviewed the job descriptions for the three different positions. To Superintendent and Skilled Laborer descriptions there was one sentence added to reflect available for assistance to other Town departments. To the Foreman description that same sentence was added as well as the foreman duties that the Board had approved several weeks earlier in a separate document. *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the changes to the various Highway Department position descriptions.*

**Highway Department:** Robyn explained to the rest of the Board that she was drafting a recap letter to the Superintendent. In the letter she is reviewing the main points of the three meetings she has had

with him. The letter will also include some new procedures that she would like to have instituted by the department such as time cards that list the actual work accomplished.

In this week's mail is a series of emails between Robyn and the Superintendent about having a temporary person on call to smooth mud in the north end of town at the end of the day. It was stressed that budget levels have to be carefully watched and the crew itself needs to have enough work.

It is Robyn's intention that in the near future there will be log books in the trucks to track where each vehicle has been used and for what purpose. Kyle's truck broke down during the last snow storm but it was able to be repaired in-house. The plow and wing frame on Mike's truck have been bent and needs repair.

**Community Hall:** In anticipation of the square dance that is scheduled for March 18<sup>th</sup>, the Board directed Hilma and the Building Maintenance Coordinator to assess the downstairs floor and determine if something could be done, such as covering the walking area with floor matts so that people could safely reach the elevator and the bathrooms.

**Donation for Community Hall Window Renovation:** Hilma reported that, at a concert in December, \$180 in donations had been given to help with the renovation of the upstairs windows. *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to accept donations given for the Community Hall window renovation project.* Because there is presently no account in which to deposit these donations, *on a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to authorize the accountant to establish a new account in which donations can be deposited.*

**Farmland of Local Importance:** Hilma will provide Robyn with the contact information of the person spearheading this project for the state so that she may ask questions she has.

**Naming Jacobs Road Property:** The building is very much a community building with various services and functions used by a variety of age groups. It began as a school but is now a community center. From the list of 42 name suggestions, the Board selected six possibilities. Hilma will compile a list of just those six names and send to the Board for review in preparation for a decision at the next meeting.

**Review of Minutes:** *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of February 14, 2023, as amended.*

*On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of February 15, 2023, 9:30 a.m., as amended.*

*On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of February 15, 2023, 11:30 a.m., as amended.*

*On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of February 21, 2023, as amended.*

**Landscape Architect Agreement:** The Board reviewed the letter of agreement and scope of services from Walter Cudnohufsky Associates, Inc., the landscape architect who will be doing the study to determine suitability of two locations for possible construction of a new salt shed. *On a motion by*

*Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the letter of agreement and pay the \$3,000 retainer for services.*

**Letter to Congressman McGovern:** *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the letter with amendments to be sent to Congressman McGovern.*

**Mail:**

- RPC re: email exchange with Jeff about muddy roads
- FRCOG re: Building Cease & Desist Order to True Cannabis
- FRCOG re: Electrical Cease & Desist Order to True Cannabis
- Heath Herald re: notice for article due
- HAS/M. Andre re: free cash
- C. Rabbitt re: February Nurse report
- FEMA re: HMP/MVP Plan final approval
- Senator Mark re: Beacon Hill in the Berkshire Hills

**9:37 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