

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
18 Jacob Road
April 11, 2023, a.m.

Called to Order at 11:00 a.m. With Susan Lively, Brian De Vriese, and Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator. Robyn Provost Carlson recused herself due to a possible appearance of a potential conflict of interest. The meeting was chaired by Brian De Vriese.

Others in Attendance: See attendance sheet.

Finance Committee Recommendation: The Board reviewed the recommendation from the Finance Committee that the Select Board reduce the number of highway department employees from the present number of four to three employees. Their recommendation was based on what they saw as a need to reduce the general budget for Fiscal Year 2024.

Highway Department Superintendent Jeff Johnston said he opposed the reduction. He stated that he was concerned that more projects would be started but not finished. He also has concerns that the highway department would not supply residents with the same level of service. Then he concluded that the department and its work can be done with a crew of three and the work will be done. The department will be keeping impact records of crew performance and more in-depth financial records during the next fiscal year.

The Board and the Superintendent discussed the possibility of some of the Office Assistant's hours be used for clerical work of the highway department, if necessary, to allow the Superintendent to spend more time on the actual road maintenance.

In their discussion both Brian and Sue spoke of the difficulty of weighing all the information and financial analysis to reach a decision. Brian stated that it was one of the hardest decision he has had to make in his 24 years on the Select Board.

On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to accept the recommendation of the Finance Committee to reduce the number of employees on the Highway Department from four positions to three positions for Fiscal Year 2024.

Method of Implementation: The Board examined the four positions on the Highway Department. Both the superintendent's position and the mechanic's position require employees with specific skills and abilities that the skilled laborers do not have. They are also able to do the laborers' work. There are two skilled laborer positions and one position can be eliminated without compromising the necessary skills of either the superintendent or the mechanic. It was also noted that neither of the skilled laborers expressed interest in applying for the mechanic's position the previous summer when it was advertised.

On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Brian De Vriese, the Select Board unanimously voted to reduce the number of skilled laborer positions in the Highway Department from two employees to one employee for Fiscal Year 2024.

Method of Notifications and Severance Terms: In order to give the effected employee due process and to discuss severance terms with him. it was determined that the effected employee, the skilled laborer with the least years of seniority, would be called to the office where Brian, Will Emmet of

Finance Committee, and the Town Coordinator would inform him and present him with a written notification of an executive session for the Board to meet with him. The executive session meeting was set for Thursday, April 13, 2023, at 3:00 p.m. After the employee is informed someone from the Board will go to the highway garage to inform the other employees.

The Board discussed the terms they would like to offer the employee. Given what is expected to be discomfort for the employee, the Board decided they would like to continue to pay the regular wages plus earned vacation hours through June 30th. They will also continue his health insurance for the remainder of the fiscal year. Hilma will consult with town counsel about these offers for a severance package and to determine if there are other terms to be included.

11:24 a.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