

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Heath

SELECT BOARD

Jacobs Road Municipal Center

July 31, 2023

Called to Order at 4:00 p.m. With Robyn Provost Carlson, Susan Lively, Elissa Viarengo and Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator.

Others in Attendance: Finance Committee members: Tom Lively, Ned Wolf, Will Emmet and Bob McGahan. Highway Department members: Jeff Johnston, superintendent, and Kyle Jarvis. Also attending: Barbara Gordon and Pat McGahan.

Review of Agenda: Hilma's request for time off.

End-of-Year Transfers: After review of the accountant's report with recommended end-of year account transfers, the Finance Committee gave a unanimous recommendation to approve the presented report. *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the FY 2023 end-of-year recommended account transfers as presented by the town accountant.*

Review of Highway Truck Fleet: The Highway Superintendent was commended for his presentation at the Special Town Meeting and knowledgeable answers he gave to many of the questions that were raised. Robyn remarked that the Select Board needs to be able to function which includes making decisions in the best interest of the town, including safe roads and the safety of its residents.

Jeff stated he had continued to contact individuals and companies to secure additional plow services for the winter. He had a list of four possible call-ins who would be able to drive the one-ton Dodge. From the following companies he reported these contacts and results:

W. H Hutchinson, Greenfield—no

Barlow, Greenfield—not in Heath

Snow & Son—does driveways and parking areas only, not public roads

Dupree Landscaping—left message, no reply as yet

Saladino, Whitingham, VT—only contracts with municipalities. Has two 550 trucks with drivers.

In his research Jeff had found that plowing services with truck and driver range in cost between \$150 and \$225 per hour. The City of Springfield pays \$200-\$225 per hour while locally the compensation is around \$150 per hour. Robyn had done estimates based on 25 winter weather events during the course of the season and estimated the town might expect to incur approximately \$15,000--\$19,000 for the year for a hired driver with truck. The cost of hiring a part-time plow driver using town equipment would be much less but would increase the wear and tear on town trucks. Jeff will obtain information about prevailing wages for this work and also seek a contract form used by other municipalities for both back-up drivers and back-up truck and driver.

Sue read a statement she had prepared with her thoughts and concerns regarding the outcome of the Special Town Meeting vote. Although the required two-thirds vote was not achieved, she noted that a clear majority were in favor of transferring the funds from the Vehicle Stabilization account to make them available should a used truck in good condition come available.

The Board agreed that, although these vehicles could be used, if necessary, both the grader and small pick-up were purchased for particular purposes and not built to remove snow. Snowplowing would put unnecessary stress on these pieces of equipment and would greatly shorten their usable life span. When it comes to the International trucks, either the 2012 or 2003 could stop operating at any moment. The down time during a snowstorm could be significant and the actual cost incurred between repair and hiring substitute services was difficult to calculate.

The discussion then focused on how plow routes might be modified if the Town were to eliminate use of the 2012 International truck due to safety concerns. Several possible scenarios were analyzed without a definite consensus as to the best option. It was stated that the best plan for the snow-removal needs on Heath roads would be to have two one-ton trucks for the smaller dirt roads and two large trucks for the paved roadways.

After further discussion about the safety risks of the 2012 truck, the Highway Superintendent with the recommendation from the Finance Committee, stated that continuing to operate that vehicle posed a high safety risk to the driver and any oncoming vehicles. *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to take the 2012 International truck out of service immediately based on safety concerns.*

Next Meeting: Monday, August 8th, 6:00 p.m.

6:00 p.m. *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.*

Respectfully submitted,

Hilma A. Sumner
Town Coordinator