

MEETING MINUTES
Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Jacobs Road Municipal Center
Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Called to Order at 6:00 p.m. With Robyn Provost-Carlson, Susan Lively, Elissa Viarengo and Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator.

Others in Attendance: See attendance sheet.

The meeting was recorded.

Review Minutes: *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of February 13, 2024, as amended.*

Finance Committee members Tom Lively, Will Emmet, Ned Wolf, and Bob McGahan joined the meeting.

Budget Hearing: Fire Department: Chief Nick Anzuoni discussed his rationale for requesting a level-funded budget by stating that he believed there was stability in pricing of supplies and equipment that may be needed. He also stated that he is working on recruitment of new volunteers and seeing that the current members received the training that is needed. Last week there was a garage door failure. The repair company came immediately and had the situation corrected within a couple of hours.

Budget Hearing: Police Department: Chief John McDonough explained the reason for his requested increase in expenses. There is a maintenance agreement for the CJIS software that costs \$800 annually. He also reported that he and one of the two officers have completed the Bridge Academy training. The other officer is in the process of completion. One of the requirements is that each officer must complete 2,400 hours of service. The department vehicle is in good shape. It is a 2015 model with approximately 40,000 miles. The oil is changed routinely and the chief had an oil undercoat in the fall.

Finance Committee Recommendations: The Committee recommended a 3.2 percent cost of living adjustment (COLA). They also recommended that an article to contribute appropriately \$7,000 to the Town of Rowe's cost for providing a late bus service for Heath, Rowe and Charlemont. *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to accept the Finance Committee recommendations.*

March 12th Meeting: At this next budget planning meeting, both groups will look at the overall budget, including salaries with the COLA increase, building maintenance and utility expenses, and separate money articles.

Community Hall and Sawyer Hall Buildings: All mold-contaminated material has been removed from both buildings. The company began installing new drywall today.

Community Hall Fundraising: The Board discussed the fundraising letter and made several editorial changes to the draft letter. *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Elissa*

Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the fundraising letter with the recommended changes. Elissa will take the recommendations back to the committee.

Budget Hearing: Highway Department: Superintendent Jeff Johnston presented his budget worksheet for FY 2025. The requested amounts were compared to current market trends and the FY 2024 expenses thus far. The aggregate cost for materials is up by 7 percent so that same level of increase for the upcoming year is warranted (\$92,000 total). Winter Equipment Maintenance & Repair, Dump Tipping and Wildlife Damage accounts are anticipated to exceed the budgeted amounts. It was suggested that these accounts each be increased with the last one increasing to \$920.

Lawn Mowing request for bids document will be finalized to include the JRMC mowing with any entity who is bidding to give a separate bid for each location.

Gravel costs are approximately \$64,000 per year. This expense is charged against Ch. 90 monies. Thus far, the department has used 1,800 tons on the dirt roads.

Four capital requests have been submitted for the department.

- (1) Used Truck to replace the 2003 vehicle with one of equivalent size. At least some of the funding would be requested through a transfer from stabilization. Estimated cost: \$90,000.
- (2) Leaf Blower to replace the current 1971 model that no longer runs. A new machine would have a 3-point hitch so that it and the truck would both operate from one fuel source. Cost: \$7,300.
- (3) Storage Container that would help preserve the town's assets. It would be a weather-proof, 40-foot metal box. Cost: \$4,500 plus shipping.
- (4) Roadside Mower Repair or Replacement with repair of the current mower taking several months to obtain the needed parts since one part must get shipped from Italy. Repair would have an approximate cost of \$9,300. Prices to replace this mower vary depending on what type of mower is reviewed. One like the current model is approximately \$37,700, while a bush hog type mower would be \$26,000--\$29,000. A mower that would be attached to the front of a loader is estimated to cost over \$100,000.

The Board briefly reviewed the prepared list of jobs that needed to be completed. Jeff stated that the road in poorest condition was Number Nine Road. From Groll Road to Vermont, the pavement has disintegrated to almost non-existence. Beginning at Route 8A to Groll Road, it would be sufficient to patch and then put down an overlay coat of pavement. Culverts along the entire road need to be replaced as well. Jeff and Hilma will apply for a MassWorks grant to do this work. Jeff also reported that sections of Colrain Stage Road were in a similar state of disrepair.

The department has now had a three-man crew for eight months. There has been extensive work done despite everyone's vacation times and weather setbacks with rain and some flooding washouts. Plowing has gone well. Both Nathan Clark and Jason Clark have been used as relief plow drivers and Jeff stated that they both do excellent work.

Foreman Kyle Jarvis commented that it would be helpful if the trucks each had an 800 series radio so that, if a driver came across someone stuck or stranded, the crew could contact the

dispatch center to request assistance. Hilma will talk with the Police and Fire about this possibility.

Salt Shed cost handout was distributed while Robyn noted that the costs were estimated for budget purposes only. These estimates assumed that a subgrade foundation would not be needed. Robyn gave a disclaimer that the work she is doing in obtaining preliminary designs and cost estimates is being done as part of her selectboard duties. This preliminary work and any final design work is not being done as part of her full-time occupation as a general contractor.

Salaries for highway personnel will be discussed at a later time. Robyn stated that, when these salaries are discussed, she will recuse herself from the discussion.

Hilltown Youth Performing Arts (HYPA): The Board reviewed the rental value estimates that Robyn had outlined on a spreadsheet. This gave different annual rental amounts based on different cost values for usage and level of usage. This document will be sent to HYPA for their review and response.

STAM Legislative Priorities: The Board agreed to support the recommended STAM legislative priorities which includes such items as increasing rural aid and rural school support.

Annual Town Report: There was no decision made about a dedication. Several names of noteworthy individuals were mentioned. There was also a suggestion of including a list of employees who had worked for the Town for either more than 20 years or 25 years if a list of such employees could be determined.

Mail:

- J. Diamond re: lease discussion
- HAS re: COLA information
- Rowe School Committee re: request for late bus support
- SML re: notes from meeting with highway dept.
- Vet. Services re: request for approval— *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to continue in the Veterans' District for two years.*
- FCSWMD re: February average market value of recycling
- FCSWMD re: 2023 tonnage comparison charts

Next Meetings: Tuesday, March 12th, 6:00 p.m. Joint meeting with Finance Committee for budgeting.

Tuesday, March 19th, 6:00 p.m. Town Nurse job description, Boards Clerk position.

10:06 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