

MEETING MINUTES
Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Jacobs Road Municipal Center
Tuesday, March 12, 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 Agenda: Added: Appointment to Conservation Commission, Accountant Software.

Review Minutes: *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of February 26, 2024, as amended.*

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Appointments: *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to appoint Virginia Mayer as a Post Office Substitute.*

On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to appoint Susan Draxler as a member of the Conservation Commission.

Annual Report: The Board's annual report is being reviewed and will be ready for final approval at the next meeting.

Finance Committee members Tom Lively, Will Emmet, Ned Wolf, and Alice Wozniak joined the meeting.

Ambulance Service Future Changes: Gary Ponce, Executive Director of the Colrain Ambulance Association, Kevin Worden, Assistant CEO, and Matt Walkenbright, Trainer, joined the meeting to speak to the Board regarding ambulance services. They presented a history of the development of the association and the level of services that is provided. In 2020 the switch was made to a paid service to keep workers with the association. It was noted that the Colrain association is the only paramedic ambulance in Franklin County west of Greenfield.

Currently, the billable base rate for service is \$2,700 without mileage or additional services. In Massachusetts when a person's insurance is billed, the ambulance service must accept that payment and cannot then bill the individual for the difference between the full rate of service and the insurance authorization. The example was given for Medicare which pays \$500 per call.

In the nine years of service to Heath there have been an average of 55 calls per year. In 2016 there were 34 calls. 2022 saw 76 calls and in 2023 there were 84 calls.

The Association is requesting that Heath enter into a new contract with the Association that includes annual fees that will be paid by the Town. The first option is an apron charge that would be a \$475 charge per call that would be billed monthly after service. The second option is a pay forward charge that would be an annual fee of \$22,000. This amount is based on the nine-year average of 55 calls at \$400 per call. They would like to enter a three-year contract with a look-back evaluation at the end of two years for possible fee adjustment.

There are currently agreements in place with Leyden for full service and with Charlemont and Shelburne Falls for mutual aid. Income to support the expenses comes from insurance payments, donations and small investments. The budget for FY 2023 was \$312,000. The Select Board and Finance Committee will evaluate what type of future service would best meet the needs of residents.

Town Meeting Preparation Dates: April 10th—finalize warrant and send to town counsel for review. April 23rd—finalize budget numbers.

Accountant Software: A proposal from the Accountant was reviewed for new software. He explained that there are problems developing with the current software that is outdated and no longer supported by the designer. There are some funds in the Accounting Stabilization account. More research and discussion with the accountant will be done to determine the urgency of the update.

Separate Possible Warrant Articles: Although all these options may not ultimately be on the Annual Town Meeting warrant, possibilities include funding for construction of a new salt shed, a used highway truck, storage container, roadside mower, leaf blower, and accountant software. A transfer of money may be needed to cover the highway shortfalls in the amount of approximately \$10,000.

MTRSD Articles for District Agreement Changes: School Committee Budge Litchfield has suggested a meeting with district administrators. Heath officials would like to hold the meeting in Heath with possible dates of March 27th or April 10th. A list of questions will be developed and sent to the MTRSD administrators and to Budge that include requesting information to show where their calculations differ from those of Ken Rocke. An explanation will also be requested to demonstrate future assessment projections. Questions to Budge will include asking his reasons for voting, during the School Committee meeting, against requesting that the Towns vote on the articles this year.

Community Hall Fundraising: *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the fundraising letter (draft of 3/6/2024).* The committee will make copies of the final letter and mail to Heath property owners.

Hilltown Youth Performing Arts (HYPA): The Board reviewed the email response from Jonathan Diamond to the spreadsheet of rental rates based on different square footage rates. It was also noted that these calculations did not include all expenses in their entirety. The Board emphasized that use of the common space is to be reserved online and other standards set forth in the lease must be met. In a new email, Hilma will convey that the Board wants to continue the relationship with HYPA. *On a motion by Susan Lively and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to offer a lease rental price of \$24,000 for 2024.*

Mail:

- G. Ponce re: Colrain Volunteer Ambulance Association
- SML re: updates needed for personnel policy
- B. Rode re: thank you to Highway Department
- K. Gilbert re: conclusion of research for extent of Vincent Road
- N. Anzuoni re: radios for highway trucks not permitted
- B. Litchfield re: meeting proposal with MTRSD administration
- S. Litchfield re: CAFII payment for broadband
- C. Rabbitt re: February Town Nurse report
- M. Thurber re: request for support letters for state rural educational aid
- Gov. M. Healey re: Ch. 90 apportionment for FY 2024
- Gov. M. Healey re: grant funds for Police Dept. defibrillator
- A. Gobi re: March 6 Rural Check-in notes
- National Grid re: right-of-way maintenance
- FCSWMD re: MRF Processing Recycling Expense for February
- Senator P. Mark re: March district office hours
- Gov. M. Healey re: filing of the Mass Leads Act
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Next Meetings: Tuesday, March 19th, 6:00 p.m. Town Nurse job description, Boards Clerk position.

10:20 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