

**MEETING MINUTES**  
Town of Heath  
**SELECT BOARD**  
Jacobs Road Municipal Center  
Tuesday, September 10, 2024

**Called to Order at 4:33 p.m.** With Robyn Provost-Carlson, Elissa Viarengo, Will Emmet and Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator.

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

**School Committee Update:** School Committee Representative Budge Litchfield came to provide an update about a few aspects of the Mohawk Trail School District operations. The entire district's enrollment has increased by 17 students. All elementary schools are beginning the year in a stable, level place.

Although the official student enrollment count is compiled on October 1<sup>st</sup>, Budge gave preliminary student numbers for the town. Heath students attend various schools as listed below:

Middle school and high school	31
Colrain Central School	9
Buckland Shelburne School	13
Hawlemont School	9
Rowe Elementary School	15

Budge reported that this district has a slightly higher rate of homeschool students than other school districts across the state. The number of homeschooled students in each town in the district is as follows:

Heath	12
Ashfield	13
Buckland	17
Charlemont	7
Colrain	14
Hawley	4
Plainfield	4
Shelburne	14

The inclination to homeschool is because of a variety of reasons. Some parents prefer to school their children using a religious text curriculum. When the Covid pandemic mandated that students receive remote education, some parents switched to homeschooling curriculum and are just continuing that pattern.

Budge stated that statistics are being compiled on the functioning of the solar panels that were installed on the high school roof last year. More than \$3,000 was saved in August on electricity. During 2024 thus far, the district has saved over \$17,000 on electricity. What is produced but not used by the building is sold to the power company for \$0.07 per kilowatt.

The sustainability study is now putting together potential scenarios for the school district to move forward. Summarizations of all the work are posted online for anyone to read.

Security trainings will be conducted at all the district schools for both students and staff. This will include school tours to become familiar with structural layouts, especially in the high school. These tours include looking for areas that may be trouble locations for safety.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Review of Minutes:** *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and a second by Will Emmet the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of August 27, 2024, as amended.*

**Landfill Mowing:** The Board reviewed two bids for mowing the Tritown Landfill field. *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and a second by Will Emmet the Select Board voted unanimously to award the contract for mowing of the Tri-town Landfill to W. R. Hillman for \$2,900.00.*

**Rental Licenses:** The Board noted that the license was reviewed and approved by town counsel. The license for the Hilltown Youth Performing Arts will contain the conditions, restrictions, and allowances that have been listed in previous agreements. The rental license for the Heath Historical Society will extend for 12 months beginning on October 1. The Society will occupy the former police office in Sawyer Hall. The group interested in renting the former library space and former assessors' office shared with Hilma that they have not made a final decision. They are trying to negotiate with the current landlord to extend their lease and will contact the Town in a few days.

**Salt Shed Update:** No report has been received yet from the company preparing the feasibility study. The Highway Department will need to patch a hole that has developed in the floor of the present salt shed. In preparation for a new salt shed the internet and telephone equipment will be moved to the highway garage.

**Community Hall Windows Fundraising:** The Town has received certification from the Mass Cultural Council that the financial match has been met. The next step is to file an updated budget report.

**National Grid--Presentation and Discussion of 1109W1 Project:** There has been no response to the questions asked following the National Grid presentation on August 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Appointment: Wanda & John Mooney:** The Mooneys introduced Attorney Tom Lesser who they have engaged to support them in their quest to petition National Grid to install underground cables in front of their home. Wanda explained that they built their house in 1984 and have not had any utility lines dissect their view at any time. Wanda estimated that utility lines would reduce the sale value of their property by about \$150,000. The Mooneys had a third party view the site and provided an estimate of \$92,500 for doing the work of line burial, although it may be more.

Attorney Lesser emphasized that the utility company is coming to the Select Board to ask permission to install the utility poles. The Board has the authority to stipulate the 'how' and the 'where.' If the lines are buried, there are two options as to who would bear the expense; either the Mooneys or National Grid

would make payment. The Board will need to make a discretionary decision about the project construction.

The Board would like information regarding the time frame by which a pole hearing will need to be held and that by which the Board will need to make a decision about the request to install new poles.

**Unregistered Vehicles:** Before sending a letter to residents, the Board would like to have a definite enforcement plan as to what entity is responsible for enforcement of violations. More information will be sought as to what other towns have for regulations and how they manage enforcement.

**Mail:**

- N. Wolf re: HHS agreeing to rental license
- RPC re: questions to National Grid
- M. Wilmeth/S. Thane re: tree concerns along South Rd
- A. Schwenger re: assessment of electrical upgrade
- Mass Cultural Council Matching Funds Certification
- EDV re: Information for dog hearing
- FCSWMD re: August recycling expense
- KP Law re: Tax Title Foreclosure Procedures
- MMA re: FY2025 state budget and tax title changes
- Clinician Co-Responder Regional Partner Agreement-- *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and a second by Will Emmet the Select Board voted unanimously to enter into the Clinician Co-Responder Regional Partner Agreement.*

**Next Meetings:** Wednesday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 4:30 p.m.—discussion of candidate for Highway Superintendent position.

Tuesday, September 24<sup>th</sup>—Dog Hearing

**7:00 p.m. *On a motion by Will Emmet and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.***

Respectfully submitted,

Hilma A. Sumner  
Town Coordinator