

MEETING MINUTES
Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Jacobs Road Municipal Center
Tuesday, October 22, 2024

Called to Order at 4:30 p.m. Meeting opened at 9-11 Jacksonville Road, Colrain, in conjunction with the Colrain Selectboard. With Robyn Provost-Carlson, Elissa Viarengo, Will Emmet and Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator.

Others in Attendance: See attendance list.

2D8T Sustainability Study Report: Joining the two Select Boards were MTRS officials Sheryl Stanton (superintendent), Martha Thurber (school committee chairperson), and Budge Litchfield (Heath School Committee Representative) to review the progress of the sustainability study. The approach of the study has been comprised of five steps: study, plan, engage, act, and sustain. Currently the work is at the third step of engaging others in contribute input.

The officials reported that, if the current trend of declining enrollment continues, by 2030 there will be another thirteen percent reduction in student population numbers. Although educational costs continue to rise, the amount of state aid per student has not risen for over fifteen years.

In the process of getting to stage five in the study there were initially 177 ideas proposed. Each of the ideas were evaluated as to whether each would affect sustainability. Those that met this criterion (56 ideas), were evaluated as to practicality. Next the 27 ideas were assessed as to the educational quality of each. The team is now looking at the remaining five suggestions.

The remaining five ideas are as follows:

1. No change.
2. Districts of MTRS and Hawlemont merge
3. Move sixth grade to the middle school.
4. Move sixth grade to the regional middle/high school campus and close one or more elementary schools.
5. Move all elementary schools to the central campus where the middle/high schools are located. All individual elementary schools would close and, most likely, a new wing would need to be built at the new location.

There are many factors to consider for each of the five ideas including the length of time it would take to see savings if an elementary school wing was built to accommodate elementary age students. Another area that is being weighed out is to find ways to make the Mohawk Trail education unique.

5:35 p.m. The Select Board recessed to travel to Heath to resume the meeting.

6:00 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at Jacobs Road Municipal Center

Public Comment: None.

Review Minutes: *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of October 8, 2024, as amended.*

Rental Licensing: The final revisions will be made to the license for the youth theatre group. The length of the license will extend through 2025.

Resignations: *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to accept with regrets Don Freeman's resignation as a Library Trustee.*

On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to accept with regrets Dennis Peters' resignation as the veterans' representative.

Police Department Report: Police Chief John McDonough gave a mid-year report to the Board. The officers have been working on many details for utility work in town. The chief has processed firearms permit renewals, responded to various phone calls, and worked on in-service training. The entire force worked during the Heath Fair. The chief also reported that budget spending was on pace for the year and the squad car had been running well. The Board spoke about concerns of repeated speeding in town and asked that the department think about ways to increase the time spent trying to apprehend speeders and those without current vehicle registrations.

Trail Easement: Mike Cucchiara, Parks & Recreation chairman, and Liam Cregan from Franklin Land Trust presented the plan to continue the through-trail extending west from the Shapiro Land. The easement is a revocable permission for a trail that is to run along the property boundary of owner Tom Trowbridge. *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve and sign the agreement for a trail easement for no consideration with landowner Tom Trowbridge.*

Highway Department Update: The floor in the salt shed has been patched and 250 tons of sand and 100 tons of salt have been delivered. Plow frames have been mounted on the trucks. The department has been dealing with beavers who have been blocking a culvert on Route 8A. They have gotten an emergency permit from the Conservation Commission to open the dam as often as it is built. Beaver Solutions will be called to permanently intercede on the town's behalf to remove the beavers.

The new Highway Superintendent, Tyson Howard, will begin work the next day.

Salt Shed Update: The Board reviewed the site plans that had been sent by Cudnohufsky Associates. Both a proposal for construction and a proposal for the demolition of the current shed and site preparation will be prepared. To designate ARPA funds for the work, contracts for work need to be in place.

FY 2024 Year-End Financial Reports: When the reports have been finalized, the Board would like to have the accountant and the various departments with budgets convene for an introduction to VADAR, the new accounting system and how to use the reports.

Community Hall Projects: Exterior painting has been completed. It was remarked that the painters had done an excellent job.

Mail:

- L. Cregan re: agreement for trail license with Thomas Trowbridge
- D. LeBreux re: interest in appointment to Parks & Rec-- *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to appoint Don LeBreux to the Parks & Recreation Committee.*
- D. Peters re: resignation from Veterans' Center board
- K. Baringer re: salt shed site plan
- EOHED re: grant denial
- W. Emmet re: email conversation with USDA Rural Development representative
- Donelson Builders re: estimate for new CH double door
- J. Frenette re: complaint of toxic waste burial
- R. Crochier re: CPHS Health Agent notice of inspection
- R. Viarengo re: Center Cemetery repair work to stones
- N. Anzuoni re: September Fire Department report
- DPU re: notice of electric sector modernization plans
- R. Boyd (FRCOG) re: rural legislative priorities meeting
- P McLatchy re: hiring of a regional zoning enforcement agent
- FCSWMD re: October recycling processing
- FCSWMD re: September Executive Director's and Program Director's Reports

Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 7, at 5:00 p.m.

8:17 p.m. *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.*

Respectfully submitted,

Hilma A. Sumner
Town Coordinator