

MEETING MINUTES
Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Jacobs Road Municipal Center
Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Called to Order at 5:00 p.m. With Robyn Provost-Carlson, Elissa Viarengo, Will Emmet and Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator.

This meeting was recorded.

Others in Attendance: See attendance list.

Review Agenda: Deleted: Mail.

Public Comment: Pat McGahan expressed her desire to have the sign at Route 8A updated.

Barbara Gordon noted that Avery Brook Road was being surveyed and stakes placed at various locations along the side of the road. Work was being done on behalf of National Grid.

Review Minutes: *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of November 12, 2024, as amended.*

Highway Superintendent and Department Update: Superintendent Tyson Howard and Foreman Kyle Jarvis were present for the department. With the Board, they reviewed concerns about new utility pole placement. The poles need to be installed at least four feet from the edge of the pavement to keep them out of the drainage ditches and wing-plowing area on the road shoulders. The survey on Avery Brook Road was to lay out an alternate installation of the 3-phase cable in case it is needed. Supt. Howard remarked that there are many dangerous trees on that road that need to come down.

If any utility lines are buried, there is concern that cutting the pavement and then patching afterwards will compromise the integrity and durability of Burrington Road. There are also two or three culverts which would be affected by underground installation. There are still two pole markers located in the ditch.

Winter preparation is moving ahead although the department would like to get more names for relief plow drivers who hold CDLs. They have finished the new entrance to the materials pit and also finished removing the protruding end of trees and curbing in the JRMC parking lot which has interfered with snow removal in previous winters.

Salt Shed Update: Robyn reported that she has reviewed the RFP and made some adjustments. It will now be sent to Walter Cudnohovsky for review. After the document is revised based on his recommendations, it will be sent to the entire Board. Supt. Howard remarked that, upon looking at the landscape design, if the base were about one foot higher, it would resolve much of the runoff and drainage problem.

Preconstruction Preparation: The Board reviewed a quote to purchase two storage containers in which the Fire Department would store equipment. These would be located at JRMC and could be paid for out of ARPA funds. ***On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the purchase of two storage containers for Fire Department storage for the cost of \$8,200 paid from ARPA funds.***

When fuel tanks are relocated, a new diesel tank will need to be purchased because of the age and condition of the current tank.

The Board reviewed a quote from Clean Integrative Properties for assessment of hazardous materials in both the Salt Shed and the former EOC office. ***On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the quote from Clean Integrative Properties for \$1,770 to be paid from ARPA funds.***

Community Hall Projects: Hilma will work to finish the FRP for the window renovation for the next meeting. Having reviewed the quote from Donelson Builders, ***on a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the estimate of \$6,500 from Donelson Builders to replace the double doors on the main level of the Community Hall.***

Library Substitute Appointment: ***On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to appoint Valerie Finkel as a substitute library worker.***

Municipal Light Board & Municipal Light Plant Manager: Board members Art Schwenger, Anne Emmet, Ned Wolf and Bill Fontes, along with Municipal Light Plant Manager Sheila Litchfield joined the meeting. They presented a draft of the revised and updated job description for the manager's position. The original version was written when broadband was just being built. Now that the workload has changed there needs to be a description that reflects the current work of the position. There was some additional change proposals made during the meeting. The MLB voted unanimously to accept those proposals. ***On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the revised job description as presented and amended.***

The job posting will appear on the town website with paper posts at town buildings. An advertisement will also be placed in the Greenfield Recorder for the next two Saturdays.

When discussion shifted to the upcoming pole hearing, the MLB noted that, if the new cable line comes up Burrington Road, there would be 86 poles where the broadband cable would need to be relocated. If the decision was made to route the cable up Avery Brook Road, there would be 46 pole transfers. Sheila and representatives of the Charlemont MLB met with Jon Gould, Senator Paul Mark's aide. They presented an argument that the towns should not be held fiscally responsible for transferring the broadband cable.

Mohawk Trail Regional School District: Superintendent Sheryl Stanton, School Committee Chairperson Martha Thurber, and School Committee Representative Budge Litchfield joined the meeting to answer any questions that may have arisen following the presentation done at the Colrain Selectboard meeting. The presentation was an updated report of the sustainability study. To read the

reports, monthly updates and overall purpose of this work go to the dedicated website:
<https://www.2districts8towns.org/>.

The Board asked what feedback the district is hearing from other towns about the five feasible options for change. The response was that no one is remarking that conditions and the need for change does not belong in their own town. There is a general consensus that the district cannot continue to put an additional financial load on the towns.

One of the challenges to attracting young families is the lack of affordable housing in the different towns. Another shortage which impacts the demographic is the lack of accessible health care. Transportation costs present another challenge to the school district. There is a lack of providers which then impacts the cost of the service.

Officials explained that another round of meetings will be held when the five models are further developed and possible scenarios described. A decision of how to move forward would then involve the Select Board of each district town.

A brief discussion was held about homeschooling that occurs in the district towns. It was explained that there was a direct impact because of the COVID pandemic. Some families chose to begin homeschooling with their chosen curriculum at that time and then have continued. It was noted that this year the district has the highest number of non-vaccinated seventh graders.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, December 3, at 5:00 p.m.

8:08 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