

MEETING MINUTES
Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Jacobs Road Municipal Center
Tuesday, March 4, 2025

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 of Minutes: *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of February 25, 2025, as amended.*

Public Comment: None.

Sawyer Hall Water/Heat Issues: Presently there is neither central heat or water in the building due to the multiple leaks in the heating system. The Board reviewed a quote from Hartnett Plumbing to complete necessary repairs for \$14,389.56. This price covers work that was visible during the inspection. If there are other repairs needed that were not immediately visible, there would be additional costs. Robyn explained that she issued an initial approval for the work because of the emergency nature of the work. The replacement valves had to be ordered and will take about two weeks to arrive. : *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the repair quote of \$14,389.56 from Hartnett Plumbing.*

Kurowski/Wecker Dog Hearing Deliberation: Robyn provided a synopsis of the previous week's public hearing. She reported that, in a conversation with ACO Kyle Dragon, that his office has maintained a finding of a nuisance dog because of behavior patterns and the escalation of the dog's aggressive behavior. Owner Meredith Wecker explained that when the hearing was cancelled last summer, she and her husband thought their dog's level of behavior was acceptable as it was. There were no decisions made. : *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to continue deliberation at their next meeting and that the owners were to continue restraining the dog on their property and by leash.*

MTRSD School Committee Representative: Budge Litchfield presented an overview of the school district budget for FY 2026. There is a 2.89 percent increase over the FY 2025 budget. Heath enrollment has had a slight decline during the previous several years which means that during FY 2025 Heath's assessment comprised 8.55 percent of the total. For FY 2026 calculations the assessment percentage declined to 7.99 percent. The student number for Charlemont was corrected and assessments recalculated to arrive at the present assessment amounts.

Fire Department Budget Hearing: Fire Chief Nick Anzuoni met with the Board and the Finance Committee to discuss his budget requests. With the EMPG grant money he is planning to purchase a large dehumidifier to run in the fire garage to decrease the formation of mold on the equipment. To

cover the additional electrical cost of running the dehumidifier, he is requesting an increase of \$1,000 in the expense account. The Fire Department also received a grant for over \$10,000 with which there will be new hoses purchased for the fire engines.

The Fire Department and Emergency Management Director provided coverage needed during the previous snowstorm and three-day power outage. Heath, Colrain, and Buckland first responders, and Ashfield CERT workers went door-to-door to cover all the residences in town and check on the welfare of people. Nick stated he had compiled a report for Representative Blais about the event. Due to false reports and misled expectations, the National Grid response caused some people to remain in their homes when they might have sought temporary accommodations otherwise.

Highway Department Budget Hearing: Superintendent Tyson Howard and Foreman Kyle Jarvis joined the meeting to discuss the highway requests for FY 2026. Due to the uncertainty of pricing and inflation, the account amounts are increased 3-7 percent from the current year. There are two trucks in dire need of replacement: the 2002 International and the 2016 Dodge. Repairs this year for the Dodge have totaled \$5,576 with additional work needed (hydraulic pump, front stabilizer, and main seal replacement). It has broken down during several storms which have added costly delays in overtime wages. A replacement for the International will be purchased from another town when their new truck is delivered. Funding is being requested to replace the Dodge truck.

There are several roads in need of major work. Some of the work has been difficult to get estimates for because of unstable pricing. Tyson requested funds for several facility projects including measures to air-seal the garage doors and other areas. There needs to be a new platform built for the bottle/can recycling dumpster since the current one is too small for the current size dumpsters. There are also many roads in town without street signs. For emergencies and other purposes, every road should have a street sign. Grant money will be sought to provide funding, if possible.

Library Budget Hearing: Library Director Kate Barrows presented the request from herself and the Trustees that they would like the hourly wage of the library substitute to increase from \$15 per hour to \$17 per hour. Kate explained that this is the rate paid by several neighboring libraries. Because a substitute is used so seldom, the current budget amount can absorb the increase. There is a slight increase in the library operating budget to meet the state's requirement for funds.

Police Budget Hearing: Chief John McDonough explained that he was requesting level funding for his accounts. He reported that the police cruiser was in good condition and had 46,000 miles. The maintenance is done on a regular basis and the vehicle is undercoated every fall. With recent changes in regulations, the entire department must qualify twice a year for their shooting skills.

FY 2026 Salaries: Employee salaries will be calculated with the 3 percent cost of living adjustment and those numbers added to the budget worksheet.

Community Hall Windows Project: Elissa has closed the Unipay account since sufficient funds have been raised. The Board commended the fundraising committee on their work. *: On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to dissolve the Community Hall Windows Fundraising Committee with gratitude for their work.*

HCA with True Cannabis: A resident has asked that the Board take an official vote to end the HCA since there has been no work at the site and the farmer has not obtained a license to operate a cannabis growing farm.

Mail:

- V. Anderson re 2/26 information about dog incident
- RPC re: Sawyer Hall heat situation
- T. Gerry & RPC re; private property use by construction vehicles
- C. Rabbitt re: February Town Nurse report
- V. Anderson re: 3/1 update information about dog incident
- T. Lively re: Sawyer Hall heating system report
- Hartnett Plumbing re: estimate for Sawyer Hall heating system repair
- Gov. Healey re: proposed budget for revised Ch. 90 program

Next Meetings: March 11

8:50 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