

MEETING MINUTES
Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Jacobs Road Municipal Center
Tuesday, April 8, 2025

Called to Order at 5:05 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: Added National Grid update.

Highway Road Signs: With Mike Cucchiara, Parks & Recreation Committee chairman, and Highway Superintendent Tyson Howard, the Board discussed the proposed project of purchasing and installing road signs throughout town. Mike explained that this year's Woodland's Partnership grant was written to purchase wayfinding signs and kiosks. There will be three information kiosks installed around town: in town center, by the H.O. Cook State Forest, and at Jacobs Road Municipal Center. There is approximately \$7,800 in unallocated funds.

A list of town roads will be compiled and a place to get the metal signs made will found. E911 Coordinator Ken Gilbert will be invited to review the list of streets for correctness. Hilma will send an email to the group that will be engaged in the project, including Elissa as the Board representative.

Parks & Recreation Committee Update: Mike reported that someone from the Franklin Land Trust will be hired to cut the hiking trail through the Trowbridge property. The committee has not yet talked to the Conservation Commission, nor had the area been analyzed for possible wetlands.

Long Hill Road Beaver Dam: Beaver have been blocking the culvert outside of their dam along the road. Both on Sunday and Monday the Highway Department had to open the blockage because water had flooded half the width of the roadway. An emergency call was made to Beaver Solutions who responded immediately to trap the beaver.

Salt Shed Update: The Fire Department has removed some of the materials that were stored in the former EOC. There are still items to be removed. The Board reviewed an estimate from Hoosac Environmental for asbestos testing of the EOC. *On a motion by Will Emmet and seconded by Elissa Viarengo, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the quote dated April 7, 2025, from Hoosac Environmental for asbestos sampling and testing for a total of \$1,750. A subsequent motion and second by the Select Board authorized Hilma to sign the agreement.*

Research has been done to determine if there should be a change in the company that supplies propane. The present company, Osterman, does not do servicing and will not be able assist in relocating or disconnection of tanks. George Propane is willing to put in temporary tanks and lock in a gas price for three years. There would be two options for a tank purchase and gas purchase. One option would be an

outright purchase of the tank for \$16,461 and gas for \$2.35 per gallon. The second option would involve paying \$3.95 per gallon for three years with a minimum purchase of 4,000 gallons per year. Before a decision is made, information about ownership of propane tanks and costs at the other town buildings will be obtained.

The ledge behind the present salt shed has been hammered loose but clean up and removal must wait until the mud has dried and the ground can hold the heavy machinery. There are still some trees that need to be removed later this spring.

Robyn will get information about whether the Town or the construction company should obtain the building permit. The Town is waiting to receive the building design from Iron Horse Structures and waiting to hear when the company will begin staging materials at the site.

Review of Minutes: *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of April 1, 2025, as presented.*

Public Comment: None.

Sawyer Hall Repair Update: When there is a load draw on the generator, it does not run smoothly. The most probable cause would be either the governor on the generator itself or the regulator on the propane tank. The Building Maintenance Coordinator will be asked to consult with the companies involved. The heat is once again working. The hallway was measured for carpet replacement and Hilma will visit Booska's showroom to select carpet.

Prices will be obtained for a short-term rental of a 30-yard dumpster that would be placed outside of Sawyer Hall to dispose of large trash items from all the town buildings. The Board is hoping that, after the dumpster rental and drywall repairs, there will be funds to have some professional cleaning done inside the building.

Robyn noted that the brick porch foundation at the front of the building needs to be repaired. A masonry tradesman will be sought to give an estimate for the repair.

National Grid Updates: Hilma spoke with the Community Liaison, Robert Ide, who provided updates in two areas. The design for the 1019W1 three phase project has been completed for a route along Avery Brook Road. The company is now pursuing the regulatory permits they need. Once that is complete, they will request a pole hearing from the Town. Before the hearing, the engineer and other relevant staff would like to hold a preliminary meeting with a member of the Select Board, the MLP Manager, the Highway Superintendent, and the Town Coordinator to answer initial questions and concerns.

Following the mid-February storm and power outage, National Grid officials are requesting a meeting with emergency personnel from the towns of Charlemont, Hawley, Heath, Monroe, and Rowe. There will be state officials from emergency response agencies, such as MEMA, expected to be present, along with Representative Natalie Blais and Senator Paul Mark. The purpose of the meeting will be to review the storm damage, National Grid's response and communication, and allow the effected towns to have input about the incident.

FY 2026 Budget Discussion: Finance Committee members Dena Briggs, Ned Wolf, Alice Wozniak, and Bob McGahan, joined the meeting to discuss the budget and their proposals. They recommend allocating \$35,000 to Legal Fees account and \$100,000 to the Broadband Debt account. They also recommend adding six-months difference of family plan health insurance since the Town Coordinator will be retiring during the upcoming fiscal year. The Committee and the Select Board agreed to increase the amounts in the town buildings' maintenance/utility accounts to allow for inflation prices.

ATM Warrant Discussion: The Finance Committee agreed to propose borrowing to fund the purchase of a truck to replace the Dodge 550. The cost will be confirmed with the Highway Superintendent. It is also recommended that \$15,000 be appropriated for a one-year Town Coordinator transition account.

Alice, also Director of Assessing, did not recommend the proposal to adopt the MGL allowing for additional tax waivers for veterans who are 100 percent disabled. She said that there are already other measures in place to award tax credit. The rest of the committee agreed. ***On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to not include a warrant article accepting tax exemptions Clause 22I and 22J on the ATM warrant.***

Excise Tax Late Fee: Finance Committee raised the question of having the demand fee on unpaid excise tax bills increased. The current fee is \$5 but it can be raised as high as \$30. Hilma will speak with the Tax Collector about this possibility.

Proposed Changes to Zoning Bylaws: An updated draft of the changes to the language of streets and road frontage, and changes to the section on accessory dwelling units (ADUs) was sent although there still needs to be some clean up and reformatting before the new language is in the correct format for warrant articles. The Planning Board voted at their last meeting to table changes to the wireless communications bylaw section.

Mail:

- RPC re: Sawyer Hall needs & observations
- D. Hayward re: Comm Hall windows update
- A. Jarvis re: complaint to police about driver
- FCSWMD re: MRF processing recycling report
- Hoosac Environmental re: proposal for pre-demolition asbestos survey--
- T. Jenkins re: resignation letter
- M. Thurber re: investigation findings and school policy

Next Meeting: April 15th

9:11 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