

MEETING MINUTES
Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Jacobs Road Municipal Center
September 23, 2025

Called to Order at 6:00 P.M. with Robyn Provost Carlson, Elissa Viarengo, Will Emmet, and Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator, in attendance.

Other Attendees: See attendance sheet.

The meeting was recorded.

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 September 16, 2025, with amendments.*

Public Comment: Pat McGahan asked if the black ground tarp in the playground could be picked up and stored. Highway Department will be asked to take care of it. Pat also commented that the last time she was in Community Hall she thought it smelled musty.

Both Will and Hilma commended the two highway laborers for the work that they have done over the previous two weeks while the Highway Superintendent has been away.

Hilltown Youth Performing Arts (HYPA): The Board continued discussion of the HYPA lease proposal by examining the reasons that they want to lease space in town buildings. It was agreed that they had given an accurate summarization in the RFP of wanting to encourage cultural endeavors while also obtaining income for the Town. Any lease with a tenant formalizes the relationship of what the purpose is; it does not signify any commitment to a tenant's vision.

The Board affirmed that charges would be outlined as follows: monthly rent of \$500 per room for Rooms 122 and 126, \$50 for most of the equipment closet, and \$100 for outdoor use and storage space. Block rent rates would be applied at the non-resident rate for use of the cafeteria and gymnasium/stage. The atrium would not be available for work use and rental apart from 8:00 pm. to 12:00 midnight on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

Mohawk Trail Regional School District (MTRSD): Superintendent Sheryl Stanton, School Committee Chair Martha Thurber, and Heath School Committee Representative Budge Litchfield joined the meeting to present an update on the work of the 2D8T Steering Committee. The committee had made the decision in April to move toward a one-campus educational model for grades pre-K through 12th grade. The committee is now in Phase 3 of the study work and will engage Berk-12 to analyze the present, and potentially future, situations and to help establish goals for the process. MTRSD officials met with representatives from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) earlier in the day to discuss plans. The statement of interest will be reviewed and a decision made in December.

The general plan is to merge the two districts of MTRSD and Hawlemont, move sixth grade students to the regional middle school, and consolidate all elementary schools to a new wing at the central campus. Officials stated that the impact on the towns needs to be studied as well as working on the elementary

curriculum, and transportation needs of young children. They want to find what the best educational structure will be for many years into the future. The work will occur in phases; however, the School Committee hopes to present district towns with a proposed regional agreement revision that will incorporate all the successive changes so that towns will only need to take one vote on an agreement revision. According to the proposed timeline, if preliminary approval is given in December, district towns will be asked to hold a special town meeting in November 2026 to vote on a revised regional agreement.

It was discussed that there are many unanswered questions that need to be addressed. The school district owns two of the elementary schools so decisions about repurposing those buildings will need to be made. Robyn asked that a bullet point list be written for the towns to help them know what needs to be done and the target date by which each task is to be achieved. There will be two fiscal years from when the vote is taken to amend the district agreement and when the process will be ready to commence.

The MSBA funding is not contingent on federal funding but if federal dollars are cut in other areas, it might make availability of reimbursement monies to Massachusetts more stringent. One percent of the sales tax percentage is guaranteed to be allocated for MSBA funding. MTRSD officials confirmed that there were other Massachusetts school districts that have downsized from multiple campuses to one central location for all grades. They also stated that the Hawlemont School Committee expressed an interest in the possibility of combining districts and wanted to know more information. Rowe is also interested in exploring the possibility of joining the district although they would have to fund their own initial research and analysis that has already been finished in the other towns.

Suggestions from Board members and former Heath School Task Force members included the importance of holding community meetings and pointedly reaching out to parents of school children. The Board strongly affirmed that all-district public meetings would be advantageous so that ideas and sentiments were shared throughout the entire eight towns. It was also suggested that the schoolchildren themselves be asked what they are missing, or would be missing, and what they would want for a school experience.

ATM 2025, Article 21: Robyn stated that she has questions that she would like to discuss with town counsel about the pros and cons of each course of action. Determination of the course of action will be discussed at a future meeting when more information is available.

Salt Shed Update: Will has talked with the paving company that will be laying the asphalt on the base of the salt shed. There was discussion about having a front apron laid as well. Will is going to speak with the Highway Superintendent to find out what he had in mind.

Town Coordinator Transition Plan: The preliminary interview committee met on Monday. During the meeting the list of interview questions was drawn up, candidate applications were reviewed, and availability dates on which to conduct interviews was decided. Three candidates listed having municipal government work experience on their resumes and will be interviewed initially.

Mail:

- S. Brower re: Speeding complaint
- S. Thane re: Request for signage posting
- P. McGahan re: Complaint on commercial exterior wire reels
- Assessors re: Pole hearing guidelines

- C. Demars re: UPVVSD (Vets) Request for 2 yr service agreement—***On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and seconded by Will Emmet, the Select Board unanimously voted to accept and sign the service agreement with the Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans' Service District.***
- FCSWMD re: September recycling rates
- Email exchanges between RPC and J. Diamond
- P. McGahan re: Comments on HYPAs Lease renewal terms
- M. Labarre re: Colonial Power Group aggregation report for Q2, 2025

Next Meeting: October 7th

8:32 pm. Adjournment: ***On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and a second by Will Emmet, the Select Board voted unanimously to adjourn.***

Respectfully submitted,

Hilma A. Sumner
Town Coordinator