

MEETING MINUTES
Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Jacobs Road Municipal Center
October 21, 2025

Called to Order at 5:00 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 Agenda: Added: Council on Aging request.

Colrain Selectboard: The Colrain Selectboard members, town administrator, administrative assistant, and police chief joined the meeting for a discussion primarily about the two towns forming one police district and one fire district. Also present were the Heath Police Chief and the Fire Chief employed by both towns. Reviewing the police annual budgets and number of calls for each town, it was noted that Colrain has a much larger budget and number of calls.

Both police chiefs do their own administrative work each week. They also each deliver the firearms cards to the licensees, if possible, which allows them to become familiar with where more residents live, although deliveries take time. Colrain officials stated that they would like to have more robust delivery of services but are deliberating on where to make changes and what kind of adjustment will need to be made in the budget. Currently the administrative assistant does detail billing because the full-time officer position is vacant. There was discussion about what would be involved in hiring a separate administrative person.

Members of both boards will continue to fact-find and continue discussion in the future. The chiefs will produce data that can be analyzed. Chief McDonough noted that each town's budget and number of work hours is vastly different and Heath does not have reciprocal hours to go to Colrain. The Heath Board acknowledged that any action toward collaboration would increase the town's budget. Such district formation has recently been accomplished by Leverett and Wendell, and Leyden with Bernardston. One possibility would be to hire administrative help to work in both towns.

The fire chief stated that the same person does fire department administrative work in both towns. The chief also remarked that it is becoming more difficult for small towns to find a part-time chief or firefighters. It is also difficult to find volunteers so the solution to obtain more workers may be to hire them. The chief also stated that the problem is not to reinvent the wheel but to determine how to fund the 'wheel.' If there were employees that worked and received salaries and benefits, staff would not have to work fulltime somewhere else.

It was agreed that next steps would include the two police chiefs making lists of the short steps that would need to be taken to achieve the larger step. These talks and plans may increase the chances for needed funding in the future such as building a new fire station. The two boards and chiefs will reconvene in early January.

Highway Department Update: The salt shed floor has been paved with an apron of about eight feet on the front entrance. The plywood retaining wall will be installed tomorrow. The base pad is in for the magnesium tanks to sit on. The new diesel fuel tank is expected to be delivered in three to four weeks.

The original plan on the propane tanks was to have both new tanks installed on the garage side of the structure although it is unknown where the property line is. To put both tanks there it would require making a bigger level area to the north without encroaching on the abutting property.

The crew has been sanding and painting the winter head gear to install on the trucks. Summer equipment is being made ready for winter storage. The mower that was purchased last summer has some significant problems. Will and Tyson will look at options for either repair or replacement. If a 3-point flail mower is purchased, the person hired to operate the mower will not need a hoister's license.

There is a MassDOT grant application opening soon that will award up to \$250,000 to a town. Tyson is planning to apply for both a vibratory roller and a hydro seeder. CDL winter plow drivers continue to be sought for relief plowing during severe snowstorms. The crew has done some weatherizing of the garage to aid in keeping the heat in. The Board requested that the highway superintendent, along with the police chief, actively remind residents not to park on town roadways, especially during the winter months.

Appointment-- Applicant for Town Coordinator position: Mia Francesconi, one of the applicants for the position of Town Coordinator, interviewed with the Board. Elissa gave a report of the preliminary interview committee regarding the information obtained at that time. She also gave the committee's high recommendation of Mia's experience.

Mia is a trained emergency medical technician and worked both in that field and in her current position of executive assistant for the town of Cheshire for approximately two years. In this position she works with several town boards and acts as the receptionist for anyone needing to take care of business with town officials. She resides in a neighboring town and is very available during the week for evening meetings and other needs.

Deliberation: Elissa and Hilma provided information about the other applicants that had been interviewed. It was the committee's consensus that Mia's qualifications most closely matched what is required for the Town Coordinator position. After a lengthy discussion and evaluation of Mia's background and experience, on *a motion by Elissa Viarengo and a second by Will Emmet, the Select Board voted unanimously to offer the Town Coordinator position to Mia Francesconi with an hourly wage of \$35.10 and full-time benefits*. Robyn will contact her and present the Board's offer of employment.

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 the October 7, 2025, with amendments.*

Public Comment: Pat McGahan stated that she thinks the lower level in Community Hall needs either a larger dehumidifier or a second one to handle the size of the area. Pat also said she thinks that Hilltown Youth Performing Arts should show good faith in their desire to continue renting from the town by taking care of things left throughout the building.

Hilltown Youth Performing Arts (HYPA): The Board did a final review of the lease and two appendices. The second appendix is a list of clean-up items that is to be completed by November 15th to remain in compliance with the lease. : *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and a second by Will Emmet,*

the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the lease with two appendices for HYPA. Hilma will send the documents to HYPA informing them that the lease must be signed by October 31st. Rent for October and November, the block rental for September and security deposit are to be paid at time of signing. HYPA is to meet with the Board on December 2nd for a check-in as stipulated in the lease.

Spyglass Telecommunications Analysis: The Board decided that they would not engage in an analysis at this time. Since there are few phone lines outside of the Granite Communications system, an analysis can be done at a later time by the Town Coordinator.

FY 2025 Special Accounts: The Board reviewed a list of special accounts that are in deficit but did not have activity for several years because there is no longer need for the function. ***On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and a second by Will Emmet, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve moving these deficits in a total amount of \$19,093.86 to be added to the amount to be raised in taxes during FY 2026.***

Facilities Report: Receipt of the Sawyer Hall Site Accessibility Study that was given to the Town by Bob Viarengo was briefly reviewed. The study also gave an opinion on construction costs. The Board thanked Bob for his diligence and generosity in having the study done. It was noted that another part of a reconstruction project would need to include repair of the porch foundation and the uneven roadway immediately in front of the building.

JRMC Gym Roof Update: The Building Maintenance Coordinator will be asked to get another quote for the work that needs to be done. Quotes should be to reroof the same areas with the same product quality for accurate comparison.

Council on Aging Request: The COA chairperson, Sue Lively, requested approval to form an ad hoc committee to plan a health and wellness fair which the Board approved,

Special Town Meeting: A tentative date of November 17th was set for an STM to vote on petitioning the state legislature to extend the work years for Fire Chief Nick Anzuoni and Firefighter Will Emmet until they are each 70 years old. The Planning Board will be asked if they would like the zoning bylaw article revoted at this meeting.

Mail:

- Status of Heath PD & FD
- Status of Colrain PD & FD
- H. Hallman re: CH use for Set. 3-12, 2026— ***On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and a second by Will Emmet, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the request to use the Community Hall for the annual art show to waive the fee for use.***
- P. McGahan re: pickleball players serve as escorts
- N. Thane/J. Frenette re: condition of roads
- D. Clark re: FCTS bussing
- The Recorder re: Charlemont, Rowe to share fire chief
- Titan Roofing re: cost quote for re-roofing sections of JRMC

Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 5th

9:52 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