

MEETING MINUTES
Town of Heath
SELECT BOARD
Jacobs Road Municipal Center
November 5, 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: Special Town Meeting: confirm date.

Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) Updates & Plans: Superintendent Rick Martin and School Committee Representative Art Schwenger were present to update the Board about activities and information about FCTS. There are currently nineteen students attending from town and the cost per pupil for expenses is around \$8,800 for this school year. At present the student body population is 650 pupils.

The administration and school committee have been comparing cost estimates to evaluate differences between renovation of the existing school building and construction of a new school building. After analysis it has been decided that the most cost-effective plan would be to build a new school building on the site where the soccer and baseball fields are located. The current building would be demolished, and the affected athletic fields reestablished in that area. The overall estimated cost, after the MSBA contribution, would be \$129,000,000 to \$135,000,000. The timeline has been established to ask the district towns to hold town meeting votes in October-November 2026. If the towns agree to move forward with the construction, groundbreaking will occur early in 2028 with occupancy in summer 2030.

The new aviation program will not become certified until the federal government re-opens and an inspector can be onsite. The facility was built and equipped with funds from a competitive grant that was only awarded to eleven high schools and universities. The building is 12,000 square feet in size and has been provided with \$1.5 million of equipment.

The Superintendent also announced that there are plans to build a complete agricultural program. He explained that they realize, with the school located in rural western Massachusetts, there is a need for agricultural-related training.

The bussing issue that has been a concern for Devon Clark was addressed. The Superintendent reported that he had spoken to John Harris of the bus company and requested that the route in Heath be reorganized so that the Heath students did not have to spend one and one-half hours or longer riding the bus to school.

Due to new state regulations the school will be determining new enrollment through the lottery system. There will be a third, independent agency that will process the actual lottery from those students who

have applied to enter FCTS for fall 2026. This will be an unweighted lottery so no appeals officer will need to be employed.

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 October 21, 2025, with amendments.*

Public Comment: Pat McGahan issued a word of thanks to all those town officials who had played a part in building the salt shed.

Jesse Weigand expressed his opinion that, since the road crew was cut by 25 percent two years prior, the snow plowing has been ‘awful.’ On Thanksgiving Day last year, his road had not been plowed until 4:40 p.m.

Town Coordinator Appointment and Transition: The Board reviewed the basic agreement that they had decided upon in executive session for hiring a new town coordinator. *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and a second by Will Emmet, the Select Board voted unanimously to appoint Mia Francesconi to the position of Town Coordinator at an hourly wage of \$35.10.*

Hilltown Youth Performing Arts (HYPA): It was noted that the lease had been signed. The second appendix with the list of tasks to be completed was reviewed at the time of signing.

Planning Board Member Resignation: The Board reviewed a letter of resignation from Bill Fontes, effective immediately. *On a motion by Elissa Viarengo and a second by Will Emmet, the Select Board voted unanimously to accept with deep regrets the resignation of Bill Fontes as a Planning Board member.*

Town Center Court Refinishing: Pat McGahan is working on contacting companies to give a quote on refinishing the basketball court in the town center. Robyn will help to find information from various sources.

Surveillance Camera Policy: This matter will be dealt with further at a future meeting. Hilma had drafted a potential policy and Elissa had prepared an agreement with a policy. The Board will review both proposals.

Jacobs Road Municipal Center Gym Roof Update: No definitive action was taken as a third quote to be reviewed has not yet been received.

Special Town Meeting: The Board set December 9th as the date to hold a special town meeting. The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. The warrant will need to be posted by November 25th.

Conservation Commission: Chairman Brian DeVriese and Agent Bill Lattrell joined the meeting. They advised that any routine maintenance to dry hydrants does not require a permit. A new hydrant is needed at the Mohawk Estates beach area which will need to be permitted. The hydrant located at the causeway needs repair due to breaks caused by the snowplow.

The Board agreed that the Highway Superintendent can contact a company to give an estimate for doing work to build out the road shoulder and culvert on West Main Street. Bill affirmed that the area currently does not have any wetlands, however, implementing a new design may create such an environment where wetlands are created.

Brian then explained that there was work done on the Burnt Hill Catamount trail in the Shapiro Land that was done in wetlands areas without a permit. The culverts that were installed do not meet stream crossing standards. The Parks & Recreation Committee were informed in 2024 to get a permit but that was not done. Bill has spoken with Mark Stinson at the Department of Environmental Protection who stated that the Conservation Commission will need to issue an Enforcement Order for the two areas to be returned to the natural elevation at each location. Because of the nature of the violation there is no statute of limitations that exempt enforcement. It was also advised that for future planning of trail work, that a cost for wetlands delineation be a part of any work estimates or grant applications.

Mail:

- M. Cucchiara re: emails about ConCom & Shapiro Land
- VT Recreational re: court resurfacing proposal
- Sen. Mark re: Remarks & Refreshments in Heath
- M. Thurber re: town officials' meeting for 2D8T Plan of Action
- FCTS re: Informational Community Forums
- E. Pare re: AT&T wireless project update
- DOR re: Free Cash report for MTRSD
- FCSWMD re: Program Director's Report
- FCSWMD re: Executive Director's Report
- Sen. Mark re: November district office hours
- ConCom re: Meeting minutes & pictures of BHC footbridge
- Pictures & email re: West Main St. road shoulder
- Notice of Free Cash Certification of \$249,209

Next Meeting: Monday, November 17th

7:43 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