

TOWN OF HEATH

MASSACHUSETTS



SELECT BOARD

MEETING MINUTES - TOWN OF HEATH SELECT BOARD

This meeting was held on Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at 5:00PM.
JACOBS ROAD MUNICIPAL CENTER – CAFETERIA - 18 JACOBS ROAD HEATH, MA 01346

Called to order at 5:00PM with Robyn Provost (Chair), Elissa Viarengo (Member), William Emmet (Member), and Mia Francesconi (Town Coordinator) present.

Others present included Pat McGahan, Tucker Jenkins (Board of Health), Barbara Gordon, Sheila Litchfield (Board of Health), Robert McGahan (Finance Committee), and Ned Wolf (Finance Committee).

R. Provost announced that the meeting was being audio recorded.

Review Agenda: Add: Accounts Payable Warrant (Special); Highway Department Updates

Meeting Minutes: 03/31/2026

A motion was made by E. Viarengo and seconded by W. Emmet to approve the meeting minutes for March 31, 2026, as amended.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Carries: 3-0

Town Nurse – Discuss Next Steps & Position Posting – Vote Possible

Members explained that they had received correspondence indicating that the Board of Health was questioning why the Office Assistant and Boards' Clerk positions were posted, but not the Town Nurse position. It was noted that there had been some confusion surrounding the retirement date of the current Town Nurse. Members then reviewed the Town Nurse job description, with S. Litchfield noting that the Town Nurse does not work under the supervision of the Select Board; the Town Nurse works under the supervision of the Board of Health. S. Litchfield also noted that other Town Nurses in the area are paid much higher than the position is currently paid; typically, upwards of \$44 per hour. Given that the budget was almost finalized, it was suggested that the positions' hours be decreased, just for the year, to allow for the pay to be increased. This would allow the two Boards to better evaluate the job description and how best to structure the position's responsibilities moving forward. Members will continue the discussion at their next meeting to give the Board of Health time to discuss next steps.

Annual Town Meeting Warrant – Review/Discuss Most Recent Draft; Select Board

Recommendations – Vote Anticipated

Members reviewed the most recent draft of the Annual Town Meeting warrant along with the opinions given by Town Counsel. M. Francesconi will be combining the Mohawk Trail Regional School District and Colrain Central School (ongoing) Capital Assessment articles as they are billed as one "lump sum" number; therefore, they do not need to be separated. This was confirmed by District staff, the District's

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Heath School Committee Member, and Town Counsel. Since revolving fund limits need to be set annually by Town Meeting, Town Counsel had opined that the revolving fund limits be removed from the General Bylaws to avoid having to amend them on a yearly basis. This change will also be made by M. Francesconi. Members plan to approve the FY '27 budget and Annual Town Meeting warrant at their next meeting.

FY '27 Budget – Review/Discuss Most Recent Draft

E. Viarengo explained that she had taken the time, since the previous meeting, to conduct an independent review of the stipends and the work done by all who receive them. She proposed that the Town's School Committee Member for the Franklin County Technical School's stipend be lowered as the member's responsibilities appeared to be less time consuming than those of the Town's School Committee Member for the Mohawk Trail Regional School District. She also proposed that the Board of Health's stipends be increased due to the time commitment involved with holding the position. Members agreed to lower the Library Trustees' stipends to be better aligned with surrounding Towns. Members also discussed ways to consolidate some of the Highway Department accounts; M. Francesconi will speak with the Highway Superintendent to get his opinion.

Office Assistant & Boards' Clerk Positions – Review/Discuss Next Steps

M. Francesconi explained that she had received two applications for the Office Assistant position and had heard that a couple of other people were interested. She had not received anything for the Boards' Clerk position. Members agreed that applications should continue to be accepted for the Office Assistant position for the next couple of weeks to give anyone who might be interested time to apply. The interview committee would consist of M. Francesconi, a Select Board member, and one other person. W. Emmet volunteered to be the Select Board member on the interview committee. R. Provost suggested that M. Francesconi ask Mary Sumner, the Town Clerk, if she would be interested in being the third person.

Town of Colrain Surplus Police Cruiser – Review/Discuss Vehicle Information, Memorandum of Understanding, and Bill of Sale

M. Francesconi stated that she had not heard back about whether the Town of Colrain was still willing to cover the cost of outfitting the vehicle. Discussion was tabled pending additional information.

REVISED Colrain Ambulance Contract – Review/Approve – Vote Anticipated

A motion was made by E. Viarengo and seconded by W. Emmet to accept and execute the Professional Services Agreement for ambulance services between the Town of Heath, MA, and the Colrain Volunteer Ambulance Association, Inc. for a term of one (1) year commencing on July 1, 2026.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Carries: 3-0

Tri-Town Landfill – Possible Contract Amendments for Post-Closure Monitoring; Mowing Contract

M. Francesconi explained that she had been made aware of the vegetation cutting requirements at the Tri-Town Landfill and had set up an appointment with a vendor who would be giving the Town a quote.

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She had informed the Towns of Hawley and Charlemont of this and had advised them to put money aside in their budgets for the cutting. M. Francesconi had put a placeholder in the Town's budget as well and would be updating the Board once she obtained a quote.

Sand on Roads/Street Sweeping – Review/Discuss Complaint & Street Sweeping Options

M. Francesconi had received a complaint from a resident who stated that the Highway Department had used much more sand than they had in previous years and it was creating potential safety issues for drivers and pedestrians. The Highway Superintendent, Tyson Howard, had informed M. Francesconi that the number of small storms this year had significantly increased, so the amount of sand left on the roads in the Spring would be greater than in previous years. T. Howard had noted that the brush for the street sweeper needed to be replaced. Members discussed options for street sweeping. W. Emmet will speak with T. Howard about next steps.

Letter Against S2874, An Act to Increase Opportunity by Ending Debt-Based Driving Restrictions – Discuss & Decide Whether to Sign – Vote Anticipated

Members reviewed the letter supplied by the Tax Collector. M. Francesconi explained that the Act would remove the Deputy Collector's ability to mark driver's licenses and vehicle registrations for non-renewal when a person is delinquent on their motor vehicle excise taxes. This would effectively remove the incentive to pay one's motor vehicle excise taxes. Since the income generated through this form of taxation goes to the Town, that loss in revenue could be detrimental.

A motion was made by E. Viarengo and seconded by W. Emmet to sign and mail the letter against Senate Bill 2874, An Act to Increase Opportunity by Ending Debt-Based Driving Restrictions, to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Carries: 3-0

Letter of Support, Franklin Land Trust, Heath and Colrain Conservation Effort – Discuss & decide Whether to Sign – Vote Anticipated

Members reviewed the letter supplied by Liam Cregan of the Franklin Land Trust. Members expressed concern about the lack of concrete information that had been supplied to them about the project. They also expressed concern about the property taxes on the parcels of property that would be acquired for the project as the taxes paid would likely be lower than the tax rate that a private owner would pay. Members did not sign the letter of support but noted that they would consider signing one in the future if/when they were provided with additional information.

Town Common Spring Clean-Up – Volunteer Work Bee Requesting Approval

M. Francesconi explained that she had been approached by Robert Gruen who had requested that she obtain the Select Board's permission for a group of volunteers to do a work-bee style Spring clean up of the Town Common. Volunteers would leave any large branches and/or debris that they picked up on the edge of the Common and they asked if the Highway Department would be willing to remove it. The Select Board approved of the idea provided that the Highway Superintendent's approval was received ahead of time. The Select Board expressed their appreciation to the volunteers for this work.

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Sabra Billings, Candidate for State Representatives – Brainstorm Topics of Discussion for Meeting with Town Coordinator

M. Francesconi had received an email from Sabra Billings, a Massachusetts Candidate for State Representative, who requested to meet with either the Town Coordinator or the Select Board about the issues that the Town faces with funding and support at the State level. The Board agreed that the coming weeks would be best for an appointment with S. Billings. M. Francesconi will follow up with S. Billings about the appointment date/time.

Council on Aging Action Plan – Review/Discuss

Members reviewed the Council on Aging's action plan submitted by Sue Lively, the Chair. Members noted how thorough the plan was and expressed their appreciation for the hard work that the Council on Aging members do.

Community Hall Cupola – Discuss Repair/Replacement Options

M. Francesconi explained that another side of the cupola on Community Hall had fallen during the Winter and it was discovered on the ground once the snow melted. R. Provost noted that the remaining two sides will need to be taken down for safety reasons. Members discussed. M. Francesconi will follow up with the Highway Superintendent.

Lease Agreement Next Steps – Hilltown Youth Performing Arts; Valerie Isaacs; Heath Historical Society; Carin Freeman

M. Francesconi explained that Valerie Isaacs had rescinded her proposal to rent the large, upstairs room in Sawyer Hall due to financial difficulties. She had expressed interest in renting the space next year and would be following up with M. Francesconi.

Public Comment

P. McGahan asked members about the Parks & Recreation Committee's proposed warrant article to move money out of their stabilization account and into another account that they could access more easily. Members expressed concern about this idea as the transfer did not have a specific purpose. M. Francesconi will follow up with Counsel.

B. Gordon asked if a CodeRED message would be going out about the latest closures of Avery Brook Road as National Grid continues to do utility work. M. Francesconi explained that she would be sending one out before the end of the week.

Mail

- E. Viarengo re. Stipend Evaluation
- D. Parsons (Town of Colrain) re. Surplus Police Cruiser Bill of Sale & MOU
- Colrain Ambulance re. NEW Service Contract
- R. Dane re. Amount of Sand on Heath Road
- E. Nichols (Tax Collector) re. Letter Against S2874
- L. Cregan re. Letter of Support for Heath and Colrain Conservation Effort

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- S. Billings re. Challenges Heath Faces
 - S. Lively re. Council on Aging Action Plan
 - J. Clark re. Jacobs Road Municipal Center Sign
 - P. McGahan re. Jacobs Road Municipal Center Parking Proposal
 - R. Martin (FCTS) re. October 6th District-Wide Ballot Vote
 - S. Joslin (MBCIA) re. Statutory Reporting Req. for Building Officials
 - A. Cruz (MIIA) re. FY '27 Renewal
 - C. Rabbitt (Town Nurse) re. March Monthly Report

New Business: Highway Department Updates

M. Francesconi explained that the Highway Superintendent, Tyson Howard, had asked her to inform the Board that Colrain Stage Road would be paved during the first two weeks of May. W. Emmet will follow up with T. Howard regarding Chapter 90 reimbursement. He had also asked that she inform the Board that a culvert had collapsed on Taylor Brook Road, in between the ponds, but the Highway Department was able to replace the culvert without any outside contractors.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 14, 2026, at 5:00PM

Meeting Adjournment

A motion was made by E. Viarengo and seconded by W. Emmet to adjourn the meeting of the Select Board at 8:24PM.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Carries: 3-0

Respectfully submitted,

Mia Francesconi, Town Coordinator
Town of Heath