

TOWN OF HEATH

MASSACHUSETTS



SELECT BOARD

MEETING MINUTES - TOWN OF HEATH SELECT BOARD

This meeting was held on Tuesday, July 14, 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 Barbara Gordon, Budge Litchfield (MTRSD School Committee), Johnny Depin (Greenfield Recorder), and Edwin Wolf (Heath Historical Society & Finance Committee).

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

Review Agenda: Add: End of Year Transfers; Deerfield River Watershed Association, Wild & Scenic Initiative; Hilltown Youth Performing Arts Summer Camp

5:00PM: Budge Litchfield – Mohawk Trail Regional School District (MTRSD)

B. Litchfield summarized the attached document entitled *Thoughts on Sustainability Approaches from Budge Litchfield*. He expressed his belief that transportation and preschool had not been properly addressed in discussions regarding the proposed single-campus model for the MTRSD, though he noted that the Superintendent had acknowledged this lack of consideration at a recent roundtable discussion with Heath residents. While not intentional, the single-campus model would leave some of the lowest-income families with the longest transport times to and from school. He also expressed concern, as did R. Provost, about the lack of a “backup plan” if the single-campus model was voted down, and if it was voted down, what can the members towns expect in terms of assessment increases. He noted that Heath is one of, if not the only, member Town to have experienced such a high level of instability in terms of elementary schooling. This instability, coupled with the instability caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, was likely the primary factor in many Heath families’ decisions to homeschool their children. He opined that something needs to change, though he wasn’t sure what that is or how it would be done. R. Provost explained that she is concerned that the decision-makers aren’t hearing from most of the families that would be affected by these changes. W. Emmet suggested that MTRSD set up informational booths at community events this Summer, such as the Heath Fair, in their member Towns.

Meeting Minutes: 06/30/2026

A motion was made by E. Viarengo and seconded by W. Emmet to approve the meeting minutes from June 30, 2026, as amended.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Carries: 3-0

Accounts Payable/Payroll Warrants

Approved by signature.

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Public Comment

See *Public Comment* after *Next Meeting*.

FY '27 Appointments – Make Additional FY '27 Appointments as Necessary – Vote Anticipated

M. Francesconi stated that she had forgotten to include Alice Wozniak's new position as the Fire Department Clerk on the appointment list used at the previous meeting. She had also spoken with a staff member at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) who had informed her that the Select Board was no longer the appointing authority for the FRCOG Planning Board Representative and FRCOG Planning Board Representative, Alternate positions due to the FRCOG charter amendment a few years prior. The staff member had also informed her that the Select Board should appoint an Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC) who is typically a town's Emergency Management Director (EMD). She noted that she had also listed Lyra Johnson-Fuller's title with the Heath Free Public Library incorrectly as the Assistant Library Director so it would need to be amended to the correct title, Library Assistant.

A motion was made by E. Viarengo and seconded by W. Emmet to amend the list of FY '27 appointments made at the previous meeting (June 30, 2026) to include the appointment of Alice Wozniak as the Fire Department Clerk and Timothy Lively as the Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC), to remove the FRCOG Planning Board Representative and FRCOG Planning Board Representative, Alternate positions, and to change the Assistant Library Director title to Library Assistant.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Carries: 3-0

MLP Manager & Senior Program Coordinator – Vote to Apply COLA (2.8%) for FY '27 – Vote Anticipated

M. Francesconi explained that since the MLP Manager, Bailey Cole's salary isn't funded by the operating budget, and most of the Senior Program Coordinator, Lyra Johnson-Fuller's salary is funded by a grant, the two employees hadn't been included in the COLA approval vote that was made during budget season. To approve a COLA for both employees, 2.8% for FY '27, the Board would need to make a separate vote. The COLA was recommended by the Municipal Light Board (MLB) for Bailey Cole and by the Council on Aging for Lyra Johnson-Fuller.

A motion was made by E. Viarengo and seconded by W. Emmet to grant a Cost-of-Living Adjustment of 2.8% to both Bailey Cole, the MLP Manager, and Lyra Johnson-Fuller, the Senior Program Coordinator, for FY '27, at the recommendation of the Municipal Light Board and the Council on Aging, respectively.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Carries: 3-0

ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan – Discussion; Progress Updates

R. Provost explained that Walter Cudnohovsky Associates, Inc. would be presenting an accessibility plan proposal for the Town center at the next Select Board meeting.

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Town Nurse Position – Discussion/Updates

E. Viarengo explained that the interview committee held their interview right before the Select Board meeting, so she did not have a formal recommendation as the Board of Health had not had the chance to meet and formulate one, but the applicant was very qualified. She explained that she was informed during the interview that Dr. Warner would continue to sign off on/approve any supplies/medications needed by the Town Nurse as he would retain the necessary licensure into retirement.

Burnt Hill-Catamount Trail Enforcement Order – Review/Approve REVISED Restoration Plan – Vote Anticipated

M. Francesconi explained that the restoration plan for the Burnt Hill-Catamount Trail Enforcement Order had been revised to include erosion and sedimentation controls at the recommendation of the Conservation Commission Consultant. Members reviewed the revised document.

A motion was made by E. Viarengo and seconded by W. Emmet to approve the revised “Wetland Alteration Evaluation Report for Shapiro Tract off of Flagg Hill Road (Burnt Hill to Catamount Trail), Heath, MA”, prepared by Fleetwood Environmental Solutions, LLC, and dated July 1, 2026.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Carries: 3-0

Heath Historical Society – Review/Approve REVISED License to Enter and Use Real Property – Vote Anticipated

M. Francesconi explained that she revised the License to Enter and Use Real Property for the Heath Historical Society per the discussion at the previous meeting regarding the term of the Agreement. The revised Agreement would be valid for twelve months and would auto-renew until terminated by either party. E. Wolf confirmed his approval of the revised Agreement.

A motion was made by E. Viarengo and seconded by W. Emmet to approve the revised License to Enter and Use Real Property by and between the inhabitants of the Town of Heath, Massachusetts, and the Heath Historical Society, dated July 1, 2026.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Carries: 3-0

CodeRED – Review/Approve New Three-Year Contract – Vote Anticipated

A motion was made by E. Viarengo and seconded by W. Emmet to approve and sign the Order Form for the purchase of Subscription Services and other Services (CodeRED) for a renewal term of three years to begin on October 20, 2026, for an Order Total of \$6,585.78.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Carries: 3-0

New Business: End of Year Transfers

M. Francesconi explained that she had received the end-of-year transfers from the Town Accountant the day prior. After some revisions, they had settled on the transfers listed on the attached document entitled *FY26 Year End Budget Transfers*. The Finance Committee will meet the following day to consider the transfers for approval.

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A motion was made by E. Viarengo and seconded by W. Emmet to approve the Fiscal Year 2026 budget transfers listed on the attached document entitled "FY26 Year End Budget Transfers" and totaling \$82,960.12.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Carries: 3-0

New Business: Deerfield River Watershed Association, Wild & Scenic Initiative

E. Viarengo reviewed the information supplied by Christopher Curtis from the Deerfield River Watershed Association (DRWA) and determined that the DRWA received a grant, years ago, to determine the Deerfield River Watershed's eligibility for the Wild & Scenic Designation. Through that study, it was determined that Mill Brook and West Branch Brook (North River) in Heath are eligible for this Designation. To move the designation process forward, the DRWA is applying for additional grant funding and is asking towns for letters of support. Heath was then informed by the Town of Charlemont that the designation could negatively affect a town's ability to receive certain types of federal funding. After speaking with the Conservation Commission Consultant about this, E. Viarengo suggested that the Board meet with both C. Curtis and the Conservation Commission to discuss this issue. M. Francesconi will schedule the meeting.

New Business: Hilltown Youth Performing Arts Summer Camp

M. Francesconi explained that Hilltown Youth Performing Arts (HYPA) had blocked the driveway to the bus circle for the first two days of camp to prevent those dropping off campers from parking in the bus circle. She was informed that this had been allowed in previous years but wanted to double-check with the Board. She also wasn't sure whether the usage of the atrium was allowable. R. Provost will follow up with HYPA and M. Francesconi.

Town Coordinator Updates

M. Francesconi summarized the attached document entitled *Town Coordinator Updates, July 14, 2026*. She added that she submitted a claim to the insurance company for the damaged guardrail and was informed that the Town's policy did not cover guardrails, culverts, or fire hydrants.

Mail

- REVISED Burnt Hill-Catamount Trail Wetland Impact Evaluation Report
- REVISED Heath Historical Society License to Enter and Use Real Property
- OnSolve CodeRED by Crisis24 Contract
- N. Francis re. Statement to the State Owned Land PILOT Commission
- A. Sparks re. Updated Charlemont Budget Graphs
- C. Rabbitt (Town Nurse) re. June 2026 Monthly Report
- Community Choice Power Supply Program Q1 2026 Status Report
- R. Ide (National Grid) re. AMI Update
- Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont Regional School Districts Sustainability Study Update
- M. Castillo (MassDOER) re. 225 CMR 29.00 Updates from DOER

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- M. Ryan & L. White (CPHS) re. West Nile Virus Positive Mosquito
 - S. Gruen (BOH) re. PVMCD EPI Week 26 Surveillance Report
 - S. Gruen (BOH) re. PVMCD EPI Week 25 Surveillance Report
 - S. Gruen (BOH) re. PVMCD EPI Week 24 Surveillance Report

Next Meeting: Tuesday, July 28, 2026, 4:30PM

Public Comment

B. Gordon expressed her thanks to the Heath Police Department for enforcing the speed limit on Avery Brook Road.

Meeting Adjournment

A motion was made by E. Viarengo and seconded by W. Emmet to adjourn the meeting of the Select Board at 7:34PM.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Carries: 3-0

Respectfully submitted,

Mia Francesconi, Town Coordinator
Town of Heath

ATTACHMENTS:

- *Thoughts on Sustainability Approaches from Budge Litchfield*
- *FY26 Year End Budget Transfers*
- *Town Coordinator Updates, July 14, 2026*

Thoughts on Sustainability Approaches

From Budge Litchfield

Note: *I have a few decades of experience struggling with how best to provide elementary school education for Heath children. We tried regionalization with Rowe, they voted it down, we built a 3.5 million dollar school and then closed it, we tried regionalization with Hawlemont and that didn't work. Many positive approaches but no long-lasting positive outcomes. I remain open to working with these towns knowing that particular past circumstances have changed. BUT, no other town in these districts has experienced this amount of disruption and change over the past four decades. I am at this point quite concerned that additional thoughts need to be explored, and additional questions answered so we don't find ourselves without support from towns at the voting anticipated for FY27. I am experienced and informed, very concerned, and needing to put some thoughts into the mix.*

Single Campus Approach:

- Data shows many educational and financial benefits; I respect and value the educational aspects, in particular.
- I am concerned that the currently anticipated financial benefits do not yet consider new capital costs or transportation costs.
- All Towns would close a school **but** the impact on the various towns is not equal.
- Larger towns with higher average household income would see little if any change in “ride-times” to school, including Preschool.
- Smaller towns with lower average household income would see increased, in some cases significantly increased, “ride-times” to school and Preschool.
- This is a public Pre-K – 12 District, I am concerned that a centrally located preschool would lead to a reduction in the numbers of children from the smaller, more distant towns attending preschool. Preschool is an important starting point for children, all children.
- A concern: What happens if the single campus model is voted down? If there are no readily available “back-up” plans what will be the educational and town assessment damages in FY 28, 29, 30?

Rowe:

- Currently one third of Heath elementary school children (16) are choosing into Rowe Elementary School. Only half of Heath elementary school children are attending MTRSD schools

- There seems to be some lack of clarity on the actual findings and outcomes of the brief BERK-12 work with Rowe. I recently had constructive and friendly meeting with the Chair of the Rowe School Committee to have a conversation about that study and share thoughts about the future.
- People in Rowe have a variety of thoughts about the future of the Rowe Elementary School and the plan for providing elementary school education for their children. There does not seem to be a clear consensus or sense of urgency.
- Rowe Elementary School currently relies on choice students to provide a sustainable enrollment; the Town only has 20+ elementary aged children.
- The Town of Rowe spends a **lot** of money to fund the operation of the school given the fact that choice students only provide a \$5,000 contribution and their per pupil cost is much higher than that. *BUT*, the Town of Rowe can comfortably afford this if they wish.
- A concern: if a single campus model is approved, I am guessing that more Heath families would choice to Rowe instead of putting their kids on a long bus ride to a campus at MTRS.
- A question: why would parents and neighbors of the “choice population” in Heath vote to incur a new capital debt for a single-campus school in Buckland? *After all, it was not that long-ago that we finished paying the capital debt for the former Heath Elementary School.*
- A clarification: I know that the other seven towns have little or no interest in or knowledge of these matters, yet Heath is a member Town and plans moving forward need to be reasonably workable and acceptable to all eight towns. Rowe is a question that needs to be engaged with.

My Thoughts:

- My mind remains open, but my concerns and questions are hopefully clearer now.
- SOME THINGS MUST CHANGE! BUT WHAT AND HOW?
- How do we accomplish this in a timely and thoughtful manner that provides the best affordable educational opportunities to all our children?
- Interesting final thought, consider building from the Gateway approach and have more than one site for six, in our case eight or nine, towns. A west campus, a south campus and a central campus which would hold a new elementary building for three towns, or more, and other important programs.

- Reality Check: every approach involving change is complicated in many ways; regional agreement terms, state law, building/land ownership, town meeting votes, finances, educational viability, topography, and people's opinions.
- A suggestion: don't become locked to any one approach at this moment, there is still a lot of factual information being explored and shared. Thoughtful, informed conversations are VERY important.

Town of Heath
FY26 Year End Budget Transfers
6/30/2026

Transfer From:

01-151-5000-00000	Legal Fees	\$	15,730.92
01-422-5005-00000	Highway Dept. Materials	\$	55,029.62
01-914-5000-00000	Health Insurance	\$	3,199.58
01-132-5000-00000	Reserve Fund	\$	2,980.00
01-522-5001-00000	Town Nurses Expense	\$	3,020.00
01-146-5004-00000	Tax Takings/Liens	\$	3,000.00
Total From		\$	82,960.12

Transfer To:

01-135-5013-00000	Accountants Support and Expense	\$	3,622.20
01-145-5002-00000	Treasurers Expense	\$	1,467.30
01-423-5010-00000	Winter Salt/Sand	\$	62,133.01
01-430-5000-00000	FCSWMD Assessment/Tipping	\$	517.48
01-752-5000-00000	Int.Temp. Loans/Rev. Anti	\$	2,531.25
01-916-5000-00000	FICA/Medicare Empl. Match	\$	12,688.88
Total To:		\$	82,960.12

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TOWN COORDINATOR

TOWN COORDINATOR UPDATES

July 14, 2026

TRAFFIC COUNTS

I received two of our requested traffic counts back from FRCOG: Avery Brook Road and Route 8A past Branch Hill Road heading South. We will re-do Avery Brook Road at some point since the counts are being impacted by the National Grid work, but it's still interesting information to have!

[Route 8A Traffic Count Results 2026](#)

[Avery Brook Road Traffic Count Results 2026](#)

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES (DPU)

This is the "D.P.U. 24-15 Energy Burden Inquiry Phase II Order." The email summarized it by stating, "... The Phase II order focuses on implementation issues of the income-eligible discount rate program." From now on, when I get these, I'll link them here to prevent the mail from being a million pages long.

[D.P.U. 24-15 Energy Burden Inquiry Phase II Order](#)

OFFICE ASSISTANT

Olivia started on July 1st and she's been doing great! She's already organized the office supply closet and has started to work on the filing. She's come up with a system to keep an inventory of office supplies that allows people to easily let her know if something needs to be ordered, without her even being there. For the most part, she'll be working in the mornings: Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday.

RIDESHARE TRIPS IN HEATH

I received an email outlining reporting requirements for per-ride rideshare assessments in Massachusetts municipalities. Luckily, we do not meet any of the reporting thresholds because apparently, only one person has called a rideshare service (Uber, Lyft, etc.) in the Town of Heath in the last ten years. Fun fact!

[Per-Ride Assessments by Town](#)

HEATH SALT SHED RETAINING WALL

The bids are in for the retaining wall! I'm just trying to make sure that I award the contract properly, so it's taking me a little bit longer than expected to get my ducks in a row, but it'll be awarded very soon.

COMMUNITY HALL LIFT

There's been some back-and-forth between the elevator maintenance company and one of the insurance adjusters, but still no word as to whether it will be covered.

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NUMBER NINE ROAD

We've received some information about the New Work Chip Seal method that we were going to use to repave Number Nine Road and it sounds like we're going to be taking a different approach. Tyson is looking into paving a portion of the road in the same manner that Colrain Stage Road was paved (FDR & Binder).

GUARDRAIL DAMAGE ROUTE 8A (SOUTH OF THE DELL)

We found out that the driver of the vehicle that ripped the guardrail out of the ground was uninsured. Unfortunately, this means that we are responsible for damages. I have contacted our insurance company and will be submitting a property claim in the coming days. In the meantime, Bartlett is working on a quote for the guardrail replacement.

TOWN CENTER KIOSK

The Highway Department can take down the kiosk as soon as tomorrow (Wednesday). I'm not sure if Will spoke with him about digging the concrete foundations out, if that's even possible.

SIGNS IN TOWN CENTER

The Highway Department replaced the four faded stop signs in Town Center and put the second "No Idling" sign back up in front of the parking area for Sawyer Hall.

DIRT DRIVEWAY NEAR VETERANS MEMORIAL

The Highway Department will grade and reseed the old driveway this week.

OVERHEAD DOORS AT HIGHWAY GARAGE & FIRE STATION

The new overhead doors have been ordered.

ROUTE 8A (JACKSONVILLE STAGE ROAD) OVER UNDERWOOD BROOK

CULVERT/SMALL BRIDGE

I am meeting with Matthew Houston from VHB next week to begin the application for the Municipal Small Bridge grant program through MassDOT. If we secure the \$1,000,000 in funding, the culvert restoration will be fully funded.

PRINTER/COPIER

The new printer/copier for Town Offices has been delivered and set up. It works beautifully and is much faster than the old one! We still have some paperwork to do on the lease agreement, but Baker Office Supply is working on that.

NO UPDATES

- Flagg Hill Road Branch – Quote to Fix Road Surface

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- Transfer Station Rules
 - Cultural Facilities Grant
 - Green Communities Grant
 - Roller
 - Sawyer Hall Heating System
 - Jacobs Road Municipal Center Sign
 - Boards Clerk Position
 - Deerfield River Watershed Association, Wild & Scenic Initiative
 - E911 Coordinator – Driveway Permitting Problem
 - Town of Colrain Surplus Police Cruiser