

**MEETING MINUTES**  
Town of Heath  
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
Community Hall  
March 12, 2013

Called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Sheila Litchfield, with Tom Lively and Brian DeVriese present. Also present: Kara Leistyna, Town Coordinator, Mike Smith, Highway Supt., Ned Wolf and Jeff Simmons from Finance Committee. Kathy Inman arrived at 7:11 p.m.

**Reviewed Agenda:** Added to other business: BOS scheduling.

**Highway Dept:**

- Looked at proposed warrant requests and article 3 line items.
- Weighed option of hiring out for mowing or purchasing a mower. Mike shared that his past experience hiring out was unsatisfactory, overall there was no savings and there was low interest in bidders.
- Discussed repairs needed for 2001 grader. This grader was purchased used in 2009. It was three years old with 6,000 hours of use. It currently has over 8,000 hours of use. The ball joints and king pins and main seal need work. Schmidt Equipment gave an estimate of \$12,000. A new grader would cost approx. \$180,000. This grader has always been well maintained and should last another three or more years. The repair cost is a fraction of the replacement cost.
- Resumed discussion on materials line item. Mike estimates an additional \$6,000 for dust control. This process saves on amount of gravel needed for roadways and reduces amount of dust. A lot of gravel was purchased through FEMA repairs and this treatment will help to maintain that gravel. Other materials purchased with this account are: hot patch for small patching; culverts; stone for mud; steel for fabrication; delineators to mark culverts; etc.

**7:23 p.m. Doug Mason entered meeting.**

(Highway discussion paused to allow Doug Mason to offer information update on paper compactor for Transfer Station)

**Paper Compactor:**

- Doug presented cost for a refurbished compactor at \$7,000. A new one would cost \$14,000. This compactor will save approximately \$1,500/year in hauling costs with a seven year payback. Additional costs include extending the concrete pad for the box and some electrical work. Briefly discussed a new building for Free Cycle (an area where residents may drop off or acquire used but usable items). This topic was tabled until a later time. Doug will get prices for increasing pad and the electrical work and he will ask about a metal/glass compactor. The Board suggests using the FCSWMD escrow fund to purchase the compactor. Doug was thanked and left.

**7:40 p.m. Alice Wozniak, Assessor, entered meeting.**

**Highway Dept. resumed:**

- Salary Discussion: Reviewed Sheila's prepared salary analysis that she and Mike worked on together. Heath's highway salaries were compared with an average of comparable towns: Ashfield, Leyden, Gill, Hawley and Charelemont. Looked at rates and formulated possibilities to bring salaries up to remain competitive on a local level. Job descriptions will be reviewed next year in conjunction with stipend review for FY15.

**8:20 p.m. Mike Smith left meeting.**

## **Assessors:**

- ❖ Discussed collaboration issues between tax collector and assessors.
- ❖ Alice will turn in her responses to the survey she received from Sheila.
- ❖ Discussed FY14 Budget Calendar. The Board explained that the calendar is a time plan for the preparation of the budget each year. It is an attempt to be informative for residents as well as employees/departments. Setting dates annually is an effort to capture what happens over the course of the year so that new employees don't have to reinvent the wheel. Alice will mark up the calendar and offer suggestions for revisions.
- ❖ Alice questioned the holding of the Shapiro land and asked what the Town was doing to maintain this land that was gifted to the Town for conservation/ restricted use/ recreation. The Board suggested that the land may need an updated forestry plan. The Board also explained to Alice that it would require an act of legislation to dispose of it. The Board also added that the land is valuable as a preserve; a place to hike and as a natural resource which out-values the tax income generated from it if it were a privately owned parcel.
- ❖ Discussed the pros/cons of semi-annual tax billing vs. quarterly. Alice shared how semi-annual billing allows towns to send out tax bills in late Sept. and consequently, the tax rate can be set by the end of Sept. With quarterly it must be set by 12/31 each year. She explained that the quarterly bills are confusing to tax payers because the preliminary bills (August and November) are based on the prior year's valuation. On the other hand, quarterly bills offer better cash flow. Before the town switched, there were temporary borrowing issues. Once quarterly was adopted, those issues were eliminated. The Board also feels that it is less burdensome for taxpayers to have quarterly payments.
- ❖ Discussed software compatibility issues. Alice explained the process and how there is no neutral buffer/check & balance mechanism currently. If there are errors, there is no way to determine the source and she feels that contention results. She shared that some software comes with external back-up system/third party verification which she feels has a lot of value. Assessors have safety mechanisms in the event something happens. The question is whether the collector has similar support. Alice believes that the current system has no verification; no manual; no assistant and no one knows how to use it. Discussed possibilities to perhaps designate a person to resolve problems of this nature – perhaps an audit from FRCOG or DOR and they could offer suggestions for improvement. Alice offered estimates for software. Will discuss further with tax collector. Tom will talk with Betty.
- ❖ Lastly, Alice broached the topic of a special project needed to correct the deed issue. Currently, many properties are consolidated into one deed. When taking for tax title, a clear title is difficult to obtain. To fix this issue, Alice suggests working with a person from Patriot who has priced the job at \$600/day. Pondered funding options. Tabled till further discussion.

## **9:20 p.m. Alice Wozniak left meeting.**

### **Continued Joint Meeting with FinCom:**

- Read and discussed FinCom's revised budget memo. Don prepared an incremental comparison of three tax rate scenarios using .50, .75 and 1.00. Discussed implications of each and the level of free cash and stabilization funds. FinCom will discuss further and make a recommendation.
- Discussed MTRSD revised assessment for FY14. Again, there will be a vote on Wednesday so the numbers may change.
- Don will work with Kara to get numbers for special projects FY14 and Green Communities Initiative.
- Discussed Margo Newton's increase in hours for police. Board needs a justification prepared for Town Meeting.

## **10:00 p.m. Finance Committee members left meeting.**

**Mail/ Email:**

1. Email from Jan Ameen regarding disposal of camper trailers (responding to a BOH question).
2. FRTA Transit Advisory Committee meeting announcement.
3. Hampshire Power information session announcement.
4. FRCOG announcement of traffic counting. The Board suggested a count at the Dell/8A Mill Bridge area. Kara will relay that request to FRCOG.
5. Letter from Town of Colrain regarding non-resident vocational education and their support of proposed amendment and their encouragement to support this initiative.
6. FCSWMD Calendar Year 2012 Data.
7. Excess and Deficiency report – Franklin County Tech School.
8. Announcement of Hampshire & Franklin Municipal Conference.
9. Announcement of Transportation Finance Legislation Coming Soon and Support Needed!
10. February 2013 Cashbook.

**Separate Docs:** Special Project Info.: Window Quilts information; Sandri estimate and Glen White Heating estimate for furnace/boiler. Notice of Dog Hearing; Gen Fund/Spec Fund Reports; ATM Warrant Draft; Audit Info.; Fraud Policy draft; 2/26 unapproved minutes

**Signed:**

1. Warrants
2. Resignation letter
3. Nomination for Animal Inspector
4. Smith Hardwood Floor Co. Contract
5. Request for Leave
6. FRCOG Emergency Comm. Systems Contract (3 yr)

**Town Coordinator Report:** Discussed Town Report dedication. Kara will get a photo. Discussed upcoming Dog Hearing. Kara will ask Hilma for a compilation of what is currently owed. Reviewed goals of hearing and what is needed for preparation. Discussed Town Dog Bylaws and whether to rescind the Town Bylaws and adopt Chap. 140 State laws. Kara will follow up with Hilma to find out what is needed to make that change. Bill Lattrell would like to show a representative around town from Seaboard Solar.

**Other Business: Scheduling:** The Board set their schedule as follows:

Tuesday, March 19 at 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 26 at 7:00 p.m.

Monday, April 1 at 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, April 9 at 7:00 p.m. (Finalize Article 3 and warrants)

Tuesday, April 23 at 7:00 p.m.

Monday, April 29 at 7:00 p.m. (Special Election (Primary) and Local Elections on April 30 – no meetings may be scheduled)

Tuesday, May 7 at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 11 at 9:00 a.m. (Annual Town Meeting)

Also, no meeting scheduled Week of April 15.

**Animal Control Officer job description Draft:** Tom will review and recommend a stipend for this position. Discussed and suggested that perhaps a Regional Animal Control Officer would be ideal.

***On a motion by Brian DeVriese and seconded by Tom Lively, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:54 p.m.***

Next meeting scheduled: Tuesday, March 19, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. Community Hall.

Respectfully submitted, Kara Leistyna, Town Coordinator