

MEETING MINUTES
Town of Heath
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Sawyer Hall
July 29, 2014

Called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Sheila Litchfield with Bill Lattrell, Brian DeVriese and Kara Leistyna, Town Coordinator present. Also present, Tracey Baronas, Town Accountant.

Reviewed Agenda: Added to Other Business: Community Hall Use Policy

Preparation for Discussion on DLS Review of Assessors and Tax Collector Departments: Board reviewed report and pointed out areas that needed clarification and to be addressed. There exist four legacy problems which could be considered ‘special projects.’ A budget for each would need to be determined, a target date set for accomplishment, and approved by voters. The report proposes a new, appointed position of Assistant Assessor. Goals and objectives need to be established as well as the legacy issues addressed. Discussed recommendation of formation of a Financial Team. The report also addresses performance reviews.

7:24 p.m. Steve Thane entered meeting and Margo Newton, Betty Nichols, and Ned Wolf arrived shortly after.

Highway Report: Steve offered an update on various issues. He reported that Avery Brook repairs are nearly completed. Extra hot patch has been used on ditch near Bob Dane’s house and on Dell Bridge and on uneven places on Rt. 8A near Canali’s house. Steve met with representative from Hot In Place regarding Number Nine Road and marked areas that need preparation. Steve has made a modification to the Chap. 90 Request and referred to Mike for assistance. Discussed Dell Road ditch alongside the road due to erosion. It has been dug out, cleaned up and stone will be added as fill. Rowe Road has been fixed. Underwood Hill has undergone grading, ditching as part of emergency request but more to be done. Brunelle Road and Taylor Brook have been graded. Crew is short staffed to accommodate vacations. Discussed grader issues. All in all Steve reported that things are going well. He’ll be away tomorrow.

7:38 p.m. Don Freeman, Gloria Fisher, and Kathy Inman entered meeting.

Discussion on DLS Review of Assessors and Tax Collector Departments: Went over report page by page together as a group. This offered an opportunity for comments and concerns if something seems incorrect. Discussed Budget Planning Calendar and target dates. Betty will provide additional steps with dates. Discussed stipends paid to Assessors. Delegating tasks is key. Ongoing legacy issues were addressed in report including mapping. Margo feels this was recently addressed and not sure why it is considered ‘antiquated.’ Margo would like to see what other towns’ maps look like and compare differences. She will find out if the suggestions are reasonable. Betty feels that parcel numbers are a unique identifier. Change to the systems needs to be thoughtful and time sensitive or ramifications could occur. Sheila feels each ongoing legacy issue is a separate special project, each needing to be considered separate and prioritized. Assistant Assessor will be considered a new position and will need a job description. Need to determine how many hours to complete tasks, etc. Discussed appointed positions vs. elected. Dept. of Revenue recommends appointed over elected especially where the Board elects one of their own. For this to change, it will need to be explained in detail and require a town vote. Discussed putting property cards on line. Margo will seek quotes. Betty’s software program has been updated. There were few changes but she will keep apprised of future updates. Sheila explained the TAP (Taxpayer Assistance Program) and how they met to encourage Heath (and other towns in the Commonwealth) to get tax rate setting steps done sooner to prevent a December crunch. A meeting was

held and the group worked to set a timeframe. DOR will monitor progress and offer support if needed. Discussed the recommendation for a Financial Team and regular meetings. The current system of joint meetings for budget planning serves this purpose and may be unnecessary to hold additional meetings. Each department may make a suggestion. Collaboration helps to create a smooth process. Discussed audit frequency and budgeting. When a principal leaves, a cash/tax audit is recommended and should be added to policy. Performance reviews were also addressed. It is recommended that they be held outside of a public meeting and everyone concurred.

There are some areas of text the group would like rewritten. Because this is a published document, the group felt the wording should be changed for accuracy. Kara will notify Zack Blake and request the following changes:

On page 4, the current administrative assistant only serves as such and as an assessor – not the clerk as well. There are two job descriptions because the former title was ‘clerk’ and the requested new title is ‘administrative assistant.’ However, the job description for the latter was never finalized. Therefore, even though it’s referenced in many areas, specifically on page 4., paragraph 3, request it to be rewritten to state:

“The board of assessors’ primary responsibilities involve reviewing and approving valuations, abatements and exemptions, and signing off on annual overlay and new growth estimates. One of the board members also serves as administrative assistant. Operating under two separate roles, she has served on the board for seven years and worked as the office assistant for two. The position has been budgeted for ten hours per week of work, however the current administrative assistant requested six hours per week. It is also worth noting that because the town pays each board member an annual stipend, the administrative assistant, for her dual role, receives the stipend along with her hourly pay rate.”

On page 5., last paragraph, the tax collector pointed out that the last line, *“This process begins 30 days after the May 1st real estate billing, when the collector sends...”* Should read *“This process begins 15 days after the May 1st real estate billing, when the collector sends...”*

On page 7., third paragraph, *“These challenges, when taken together, distract the assistant assessor from...”* Should read *“These challenges, when taken together, distract the administrative assistant from...”*

Last, in first paragraph of same page under 1. Appoint Assistant Assessor, third line down, please strike, *“but continue to function as its department head in carrying out daily responsibilities.”* The administrative assistant does not act as department head – the Board has a Chair and Margo Newton serves in the role currently.

Everything else in the report was fine with the group. Alice Wozniak unfortunately could not attend the meeting. However, the Board feels this was the first opportunity to have a discussion and looks forward to more in the future. The general feeling regarding the report was:

“Direct, thorough”

“Easy to read”

“Refreshing, pleasantly surprised”

“Thorough, well worth the effort”

“Valuable, hopeful we can make it work better”

“Interesting, easy to read”

“Concise, to the point”

“Thoughtful recommendations; await assessors’ opinion”

“Nice report, not sure it’s going to fix all the problems but it’s going to help”

8:57 p.m. Tracey, Betty, Margo, Gloria, Don, and Ned left the meeting. Steve Thane left at 9:05 p.m.

Reviewed Minutes: *On a motion by Brian DeVriese, and seconded by Sheila Litchfield, the Board voted unanimously, with one abstention, to accept the 6/17/14 Select Board meeting minutes as amended.*

On a motion by Bill Lattrell, and seconded by Sheila Litchfield, the Board voted unanimously, with one abstention, to accept the 7/1/14 Select Board meeting minutes as presented.

Mail/ Email:

- Various emails regarding Municipal Aggregation
- Email from Tracy Rogers - regarding contact information
- Preliminary announcement from HCOG regarding planning and creating a regional legislative agenda, more info. to come
- Letter announcing award of CDBG in amount of up to \$1,099,877 as well as form letter to be sent to Heath residents on the waiting list
- Info. from Jan Ameen regarding recycling revenue. This quarter we received \$819.25
- Letter from MA DOT. Balance of Pot Hole money is \$10,112.26. Plans are being made to use this money
- Letter from Alyssa Larose, Land Use Planner at FRCOG. Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan is on view on Town of Heath website until August 1
- Emails and memos regarding paving on Number Nine Road
- Letters from various towns to Supt. Buoniconti regarding transportation money and 90% reimbursement
- Municipal Safety Complex Financial Implications from the Finance Committee
- Job Opening Announcement from DLS
- Note from Alice regarding meeting tonight and vacation notice
- Memo from Tracey regarding holiday pay for Highway Crew and various related documents. The Board discussed further and reiterates that an 8 hour holiday will be compensated during the 10 hour work week. July 4 holiday will be compensated at 10 hours however, Labor Day (Sept. 1) and Columbus Day (Oct. 13) shall be 8 hours. Crew will be asked to work four eight-hour days during those weeks with an eight-hour compensation for the holiday = 40 hour work week.
- Email confirmation from Senator Downing's office. S. 1789 will be signed by Governor shortly. I've informed Margo.
- Email from Claire – update on North Cemetery. The North Cemetery Board will need to hire an attorney to create a deed. Claire Rabbitt will keep the Board apprised.
- Letter from Charlemont Board of Selectmen acknowledging receipt of your letter regarding ambulance services to Heath
- Betsy Kovacs letter of interest in serving on Board of Health (BOH). *On a motion by Brian DeVriese, and seconded by Bill Lattrell, the Board voted unanimously to appoint Betsy Kovacs to fill the vacancy on the Board of Health, to expire in 2017.*
- Rebecca Allen's resignation from BOH. *On a motion by Brian DeVriese, and seconded by Bill Lattrell, the Board voted unanimously to accept Rebecca Allen's resignation with regret from the Board of Health.*
- Email correspondence regarding Clean Sweep to be held by BOH on August 9. The Board feels they don't want to hire someone for just one day. The accountant feels that unless this person meets the criteria as an independent contractor, then she would have to be considered an employee. There is also worker's comp issue to consider and liability.
- Save the Date: 9/10/14 5:30-9:30 p.m. with dinner – FC Regional Emergency Planning Committee meeting.
- Email from Hilma with her input for tonight's meeting regarding DLS Review report

Other Separate Documents:

- Town Coordinator Report
 1. Enforcement of Transfer Station permits is critical. People must have permits adhered to vehicle window. No policy is currently in place for summer permits.
 2. Kara will give draft of dog complaint to Officer Mattson for D.A. review. She will ask whether all supporting documents need to be attached to complaint or brought to show-cause hearing.

Other Business:

Update on Feasibility Study: Brian reported that the informational meeting on July 22nd was well attended. A brief video outlining conditions of current structure was presented. People are concerned with cost yet need is evident. Support options will be investigated. A fact sheet will be prepared and sent to all households in town so every resident is informed. Both highway and fire buildings need attention. To piece meal it increases cost and this was addressed at the meeting. The committee will research what other towns have for facilities and a meeting with Paul Mark is scheduled for Sept. 2nd at 9 am to discuss options for funding support. The committee is looking for ways to make this work.

FCCIP: Brian discussed with the Building Inspection Program at their meeting that the Tax Collector may be added to the permitting system to allow, as part of Town Bylaw already voted, anyone delinquent on their property taxes may be denied a building permit. This has been implemented and the Tax Collector will be flagged for those situations and may sign off or deny a permit based on status of payments.

MTRSD Long-Range Planning Committee: Sheila has offered her resignation effective immediately. *On a motion by Brian DeVriese, and seconded by Bill Lattrell, the Board voted unanimously with one abstention to accept Sheila Litchfield's resignation from the Long-Range Planning Committee.* Discussed possible appointees.

Signed:

- Vacation Requests
- State Election Warrant
- EMT Training MOU
- Hosting Agreement for Earth Networks, Inc. *On a motion by Brian DeVriese, and seconded by Bill Lattrell, the Board voted unanimously to sign the Hosting Agreement by and between Earth Networks, Inc. and the Town of Heath.* A WeatherBug Weather Station will be installed at Sawyer Hall that will provide a digital display, sensor shelter, and computer program for collection, display and distribution of real-time and historical atmospheric data via the internet. This service is free to the town.

On a motion by Bill Lattrell and seconded by Sheila Litchfield, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:48 p.m.

Next meeting scheduled for August 12, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kara Leistyna, Town Coordinator