

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath Finance Committee  
April 3, 2012

Time: 7:00 pm

Place: Sawyer Hall

Present: Jeff Simmons, Ned Wolf, Don Freeman, Dave Gott, and at 7:40 Kara Leistyna, the BOS,  
Val Kaempfer, Mike Smith, at 8:25 Alice Wozniak, at 8:40 Jan Ameen, and at 9:10 Hilma  
Sumner and Bob Tanner

Absent: Jan Carr

The following documents were received by members in the course of the meeting:

- Agenda from Don
- Minutes of the March 20<sup>th</sup> meeting from Ned
- FY 2013 Projected Tax Levy vs. FY 2012 Tax Levy Worksheet from Don
- Implications of FY 2013 tax rate for Levy Limit and Levy Ceiling (3/30/12) from Don and Jeff
- ATM Hand Out – “The rest of the story” from Don
- Letter from Mike Smith to the BOS and FinCom regarding his proposal to hire a Semi-skilled mechanic/  
Laborer/Driver
- Spreadsheet from Mike Smith of Highway Department Budget with and without new hire
- Heath Transfer Station Operation from Jan Ameen
- Proposed revision to Dog Bylaw from Hilma

The minutes of the March 20<sup>th</sup> meeting were read and approved with emendations.

Members discussed a request from Tracey for the Transfer of \$2,841.93 from the Reserve Fund to the Machinery Maintenance/Supplies Fund to pay for the repair of damage caused by the catastrophic failure of the engine fan on the 2003 truck. Don said that the balance in the Reserve Fund is now just \$2,340.08. Jeff suggested that we check on how much is available in the escrow recycling account. He made a motion that the Finance Committee table the Request for Transfer pending consultation with the Town Accountant. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Members discussed Mike’s proposal that the Highway Department hire a new employee responsible for maintenance, roadside mowing, and occasional snow plowing. Jeff questioned the current maintenance protocol and in particular the notion that one of the new employee’s duties would be washing the trucks since a power washer is available to any truck driver. Ned said that although he lacked data it is his impression that Heath does well among surrounding towns in terms of the number of people in its Highway Department. Dave suggested that there not be a flat ‘no’. He asked how we might encourage Mike to find a way of strengthening his case for the voters.

At 8:40 the FinCom joined the BOS with Don as Chair. There was a discussion of how to allow townspeople to vote on Transfer Station Hours. Jeff suggested there be research into how many holders

of Transfer Station stickers are seasonal as a guide in determining whether the vote should be by ballot prior to the ATM or at the ATM itself.

Don informed Tom of our approach to the Transfer Request from Tracey. Tom said that \$1500 for the Planning Board is the only other request he's aware of on the escrow recycling fund.

Regarding the proposal to hire a new Highway Department employee, Don asked Mike how we compare with other towns in terms of machinery maintenance. Mike said that his primary concern is for the Town of Heath with needs that are unique. He said that Heath replaces equipment less often than Rowe and more often than some other nearby towns. Sheila said that data is needed to take to the ATM on the number of mechanics in other towns. Brian stressed the difference between the commitment a town makes to hiring a new employee versus the commitment it makes to buying a new piece of equipment. Tom said that he doesn't think the case has been made to bring the proposal to the ATM this year. Dave asked Mike how efficiently his staff are used. Sheila emphasized that Mike uses his staff very efficiently as was stated by the BOS in his recent evaluation. Brian said that an in depth review of maintenance procedures could yield useful information. Don said that a preliminary analysis of the budget suggests an unacceptably high increase of the tax rate. That budget version happened to include a new Highway Department employee but no new truck body and no engineering study of Dell Bridge. Members thanked Mike for his presence.

At 8:25 Alice Wozniak, Clerk of the Board of Assessors, joined the meeting. Alice is asking for the same pay for 6 hours instead of 8 hours. Sheila said that the Town's job classification system, which is used to determine pay, must start with an accurate job description. Tom said that the job description must come from the Board of Assessors rather than an individual. Val said that the Board of Assessors would meet Monday, April 9 and arrive at the requested job description. There was a consensus to add \$400 to the Assessors' Budget to train a new person should the need arise. Members thanked the Assessors for their participation.

At 8:40 Jan Ameen arrived to discuss waste disposal data for Heath and surrounding towns. She said that with the new contract in 2014 the cost of hauling Heath's trash to ecoSpringfield will decrease from \$80/ton to \$62/ton. Regarding Pay as You Throw (PAYT), she said that the application for a Start-Up grant is due June 13<sup>th</sup>. A town that receives such a grant must try PAYT for at least 2 years. Members discussed having regularly scheduled bulky waste days. Jan said that the Heath's adopting PAYT would likely save the town \$17,000 per year. She spoke of the option of having a modified PAYT system in which the Town determines how many stickers each person will receive. People are then free to trade their stickers. Members thanked Jan for her participation.

At 9:10 Hilma Sumner and Bob Tanner arrived for a discussion of the Dog Bylaw. Sheila said that Hilma's suggestion that there be a private, voluntary fund would relieve tax payers from paying veterinary bills While protecting the Dog Officer from accusations of cruelty to animals. Tom said that if there's no money in the voluntary fund, the dog would get no care. If there is money in the account, the dog would get that much care. Don asked about a hypothetical case where a resident's dog has run away,

lost its tags, been held by the Dog Officer, and has gone unclaimed for more than 10 days. If the dog were euthanized, could Heath be sued by the owner? The BOS responded no, that the Town is protected in such a case. Jeff asked about the source of funds for euthanizing a dog. Tom said that it is the revolving account. Sheila said that the voluntary fund could be administered like Hands Across Heath. Members thanked Hilma and Bob for their participation.

Tom suggested to Don that they talk in the coming week about stipends.

At 9:55 the FinCom left the BOS meeting for the Assessors' Office. Don asked members for their preference as to a new body for the 2003 truck versus a new truck. The consensus favored a new truck body in light of evidence that the chassis is in significantly better condition than the body. There was also a consensus on the value of Don's talking with Margo about getting a second mechanical opinion on the condition of the Subaru cruiser.

Jeff stressed the importance of seed money for a feasibility study for a safety complex if the Town is to qualify for grants.

Ned will post a meeting for April 10 at 7:00 pm with an agenda to include Article 3, meeting with the BOS, continued discussion with the Assessors, and the report of the Space Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 10:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ned Wolf, Secretary.