

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath Finance Committee
March 4, 2014

Time: 7:02 pm

Place: Community Hall

Present: Gloria Fisher, Ned Wolf, Jeff Simmons, Don Freeman (chair), Kathy Inman;
at 7:30 Kara Leistyna, Sheila Litchfield, Bill Lattrell, and Mike Smith; at 8:00 Brian DeVriese, and
at 8:10 Betty Nichols

Don made available to members copies of the following :

-Agenda (Don)

-Minutes of the February 25th meeting (Ned)

Don reported that on March 13th at 5:30 pm at the Whately Inn there will be a Selectboard Association Meeting. Don and Jeff plan to attend. Members discussed the possibility that the Division of Local Services (DLS) of the Department of Revenue (DOR) would conduct a financial management review. Such reviews are free. Gloria said that in certain towns the DLS recommendation has been to get rid of stipends. Jeff made a motion seconded by Don that the DLS be requested to do a financial management review of Heath. The motion passed unanimously.

Turning to the proposed increase in the Town Coordinator's salary, members asked Don for electronic copies of the following: Town Coordinator (TC) job descriptions for Colrain and Warwick, Memo from Kara about proposed increase in TC's salary, List of changes in the Essential Duties and Responsibilities of the TC, Kara's list of jobs she has done in addition to the standard tasks, and Salary Data on TC's in other towns.

At 7:30 the committee adjourned to go upstairs to join the Selectboard meeting in progress. Mike said that he has looked into the cost of rewiring the 1979 Mack truck with a Continental fire fighting component. Continental is no longer in business. The cost would be fifteen to thirty thousand dollars. Mike thinks the sensible thing would be to replace the truck with a new or used one. He thinks one can get another year out of the 1979 truck.

The next topic was the estimated cost of replacing both the service pickup and Mike's SUV with used vehicles. Mike said that spending no more than \$10,000 for both vehicles would be acceptable. He said he needs to talk with Tracey about the technicalities of bidding for used vehicles.

There was a discussion of the appropriate amount in a Warrant Article to repair Transfer Station's physical plant. A refurbished compactor costs \$9,000, replacing the concrete pad \$3,000, the shed \$3,000, and electrical work \$1,000 for a total of \$16,000. Approximately \$10,000 can come from the Recycling Account.

At 8:10 pm Betty arrived and explained online billing as offered by UniBank Massachusetts. Jeff asked about liability if credit card information is compromised. Betty said that she would not have access to such information. Security would be UniBank's responsibility.

Don informed the Selectboard of the Finance Committee's passage of a motion to request the DLS to do a financial management review of Heath. Sheila said that the Selectboard has been discussing asking DOR to perform an Assessing Office review. It's possible that by limiting the scope of the review the Town will get quicker service. The reviewing team could be asked about stipends. Kara will make phone calls to inquire.

Bill informed members of a meeting the evening of March 19 at the Charlemont Academy about Wired West's efforts to connect homes to high speed internet. It's expected that Wired West will need a fifty million dollar bank loan to complete the job but the banks won't loan unless the towns back them up in case of default. Members wondered why the State couldn't back the loan up. The Selectboard would like a member of the Finance Committee to attend the March 19 meeting. Art Schwenger and Al Canali may visit a Selectboard meeting after March 19 to talk about the issues.

Both Social Security and the FRCOG have set this year's COLA at 1.5%. Members will discuss COLA's at a future meeting.

Sheila asked that the Finance Committee resolve the matter of choosing towns for comparison. In terms of population Leyden, Warwick, and Wendell are close to Heath. Hawley is closest to Heath in per capita income, Leyden in EQV. Are there broader principles underlying these incidental comparisons?

As for the experimental breakfast/lunch program for Sanderson and Heath, Sheila said that meals would be prepared at the Mohawk High School cafeteria and that funding would come from the District's stabilization fund. Heath's Mohawk Trail Regional District assessment for FY2015 is \$784,847 as compared with \$733,196 last year. This year the operating assessment is \$776,172 as compared with \$721,642 last year. That leaves a capital assessment of \$8,675 as compared with \$11,554 last year.

The Finance Committee meeting adjourned at 9:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Ned Wolf, Secretary