

Town of Colrain
Select Board Meeting
Remote Conference Call-in
4:30 P.M.
MINUTES OF MARCH 23, 2021

Present Mark Thibodeau, Joe Kurland, Mike Slowinski

Others Present Toby Bassett and Kate Barrows, School Representatives; Superintendent Sheryl Stanton; Doug MacCleay and Thom Griffin, Finance Committee; Chelsea Jordan-Makely, Library Director; Nicole Slowinski, FCTC school representative; Paula Harrison, Treasurer/Collector; Betsy Shuipis, Administrative Assistant; Kevin Fox, Town Administrator.

The meeting was called to order by Mark Thibodeau at 4:30 p.m.

Appointments **MTRSD School Committee Representatives Kate Barrows and Toby Bassett and MTRSD Supt. Sheryl Stanton RE: FY 22 Assessments and Possible Capital Improvement Projects**

Superintendent Stanton answered the following questions from the Select Board provided to her prior to this meeting.

1. **How many paraprofessionals are assigned to Colrain Central School for FY21 and what are their assigned duties?** We currently have 8 paraprofessionals and have reassigned our Tech Hub supervisor to a paraprofessional position, all of which fall under Special Education since they are attached to students with IEPs.
2. **Is the Colrain Central School principal a full-time principal? If so, why, since there are only 67 students in grades K-6?** Due to Covid-19, enrollment is down, while homeschooling and private options are up. But with the April 5 re-opening with full, in-person learning, anticipated enrollment will be 102 students.
3. **How many of the 102 students are pre-school and school choice in?** Supt. Stanton will get those answers to the Select Board.
4. **There are 3 classes of 7 or less pupils in Colrain – why no combined classes?** In looking at future enrollment, we're trending towards 8-20 students/class, which means we're appropriately staffed, with room to enroll school choice students. Through the strategic planning process in the next 3 years, class size will be watched to maximize use of our finite resources.
5. **Why are the salaries at Colrain Central increasing while the other two elementary schools are either the same or slightly declining?** Sanderson Academy did not add any staff. Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School (BSE) is where the district-wide specialized special education program resides with 8-10 students. In FY22 BSE, along with the other towns in the district, will share the cost of this program, thereby lowering BSE's salaries. In FY21, Colrain Central reduced two paraprofessionals and one is returning in FY22. **Mike Slowinski:** Your answer does not explain the disparity in classroom teaching amounts: BSE-no increase; Sanderson-\$4,000 increase; Colrain-\$157,000 increase. Supt. Stanton did not know why Colrain had such a large increase, but thought it could be the hiring of a school psychologist. **Supt. Stanton will get a definitive answer to the Select Board.**
6. **Why are the custodial salaries decreasing at Colrain Central and BSE?** There was a new hire at BSE who came in with a lower rate of pay than the person he replaced. At Colrain Central, they did a positional control correction (is person in the budget with the right step and longevity) on this position.

7. **If the transportation director and the facilities administrator are the same person, why are there 2 different line items for the salary?** In FY22, they kept it as is, but in FY23, they combined the 2 into one salary.
8. **What is the gender of staff at Colrain Central, BSE, and Sanderson?** Supt. Stanton consulted with their attorney. We have a staff list, but don't assume gender anymore, so cannot answer this question.
9. **What are the professional qualifications for head maintenance and facilities administrator?** Supt. Stanton consulted with their attorney who said that qualifications aren't the same for the public sector as they are for the private sector. Also, they do not want to single out any one employee publicly. Mike Slowinski wondered what kind of qualifications these two people have to get such high salaries. The former head maintenance employee had several construction licenses that enabled him to save the district money. Those kind of projects and upkeep aren't being done in-house any more. Why are we paying these salaries without knowing the qualifications of the employees, especially since the outside maintenance of our school buildings has not been kept up? Supt. Stanton advised bringing our concerns to the Building Subcommittee where she can address quality of work issues.
10. **Why did the projected salary raises for facilities administrator and head maintenance person exceed the projected raises for salary for the entire custodial staff?** Portions for both of those salaries were split into a revolving account and we brought all portions into the operating budget. What looks like a raise is just 100% of their salaries being paid from the operating budget.
11. **How much is in E&D?** We are anticipating \$524,472 and that is with using \$225,000 that was budgeted for FY21.
12. **Are you going to sign up for Colrain Broadband?** We're investigating the cost of breaking our contract with Crocker, and if it's not cost prohibitive they will switch to Colrain Broadband. The Select Board cautioned that the MLP offers \$2,000 per hook-up subsidy that disappears sometime in the summer. After that the school would have to pay the total cost.

The Select Board voiced their frustration with the school budget, where comparing line items from year to year is often impossible, while having five business managers in 6 years with no one able to answer questions. We cannot possibly know what we are getting for our money.

Supt. Stanton said she understands and intends to have a functional system that works within the next 4 years. Please don't lose faith.

Capital projects. The Select Board decided no capital spending for the next year except for taking the \$15,000 left over from the capital budget to design what we need for the parking lots/sidewalks project. The wall between the gym and cafeteria does not need to be replaced; only repaired. One or two railings need to be repaired; the rest need maintenance. The window in the nurse's office does not need to be replaced. The fire alarm had a perfect inspection this year and does not need to be replaced.

Supt. Stanton recommends having another conversation about replacing the district's alarm system that includes reports and research done by the Capital Working Group, who have researched, listened, and worked together to come up with products that we can all agree will keep the buildings functional and safe for our staff and students.

New Business Annual Town Meeting Warrant Schedule

The Annual Town Meeting Warrant Schedule is attached for your approval. The dates are: open the warrant on 3/28, close the warrant on 5/14/21, vote on warrants at the Select Board meeting of 5/18/21, post the warrant on 5/19/21, and the Annual Town Meeting on 6/16/21.

MOVED: Joe Kurland moved to approve the Annual Town Meeting Warrant Schedule as reported. Mike Slowinski seconded. **All ayes.**

Library Director’s Request to set up a “pop-up” library at the Transfer Station

The pop-up library at the Transfer Station is part of the ALA grant “Library Transformed” Chelsea received. The Pop-up library will be under a tent in a safe, roomy area with a nice display and laptops (Scott Sullivan will meet with Chelsea to decide where to set up at the Transfer Station). The aim is to get to know people, talk with them about the many services the library has to offer, and check out library materials. The plan is to set up the pop-up library six times during the warmer weather.

Another component of the grant is civic engagement. Chelsea would welcome any Select Board members to join her at the pop-up tent and speak to families about voting, the census, or to just chat.

MOVED: Joe Kurland moved to approve the Library Director’s request to set up a “pop-up” library at the town Transfer Station. Mike Slowinski seconded. Roll call: **all ayes.**

Old Business FY22 Town Budget, On-going discussion

The Select Board would like more time to think about the budget and salaries. Kevin Fox noted that there will be a slight adjustment to the Police Dept.’s budget due to the need for more hours. Chris will attend the next board meeting.

Colonial Power, Low-income community Solar Aggregation

Kevin has not heard from our attorney, who is waiting to get answers from Colonial Power. The Select Board wants to wait for our attorney’s response.

Franklin County Technical School District Enrollment Issue (Heath students being counted as Colrain students)

Nicole Slowinski reported on the FCTSD meeting of March 10. The corrected assessment to the Town of Colrain is \$334,287 with a difference of \$2,341. The minimum contribution cannot be changed for FY22. Other costs – busing, EMD – were reduced by one student with a net change of \$2,341.

The Select Board would like Kevin Fox to contact the Heath Town Administrator to schedule an initial meeting with a Heath Select Board representative and a Colrain Select Board representative (Mike Slowinski).

Unanticipated Business

Annual Report from the Housing Authority

The report shows the activity in the housing rehab revolving loan program this past year. Two loans were issued.

Release of funds from the Colrain Veterans’ Memorial donation account from Elaine Stanley. Ms. Stanley must provide a contract proposal/invoice, a W-9 from the vendor, and a certificate of insurance from the vendor if they are doing any work on town property.

MOVED: Mike Slowinski moved to authorize the release of \$3,533 for the Colrain Veterans’

Memorial as a 50% down payment for the construction of their plaques. Joe Kurland seconded.
Roll call: **all ayes.**

Approve Select Board minutes of 1/12/21, 1/09/21, 1/29/21, 2/09/21, 2/23/21

MOVED: Joe Kurland moved to approve the minutes of 1/12/21, 1/9/21, 1/29/21, 2/09/21.
Mike Slowinski seconded. Roll call: **all ayes.**

Town Administrator

Updates No updates.

MOVED: Joe Kurland moved to close the meeting at 7:17 p.m. Mike Slowinski seconded. Roll call: **all ayes.**

Respectfully submitted,

Accepted by the Select Board

Betsy Shuipis
Administrative Assistant

Mark Thibodeau - Chair

Joe Kurland

Mike Slowinski

Documents

Select Board Meeting Notes

Email dated 3/21/21 from Mike Slowinski to Town Administrator re: Questions for Supt. Stanton regarding MTRS.

Annual Town Meeting Schedule

Email dated 3/10/21 from the Library Director to the Town Administrator re: Pop-up Library at the Town Transfer Station.

FY22 Annual Assessments from Franklin County Tech School

Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority letter dated 3/16/21 to the Select Board re: Annual Report on Activity in Colrain's housing Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Fund

Summary of Veterans Memorial Park checking balance as of 2/26/21 of \$11,410.31.