

Town of Colrain
Select Board/MLP Board Meeting
Highway Garage
9 Jacksonville Road
4:30 PM

**MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD
October 10, 2023**

Present: Benjamin Eastman, Chair; W. Thomas Griffin; Emily Thurber

Others Present: Betty Johnson, Council on Aging; Elaine Stanley, Council on Aging; Kathy Phelps, Council on Aging; Howard Phelps, Council on Aging; Janice Barnes, Council on Aging; Nick Anzuoni, Assessor; John Chivers; Jane Johnson; Marybeth Chichester; Roger Williams; Jade Mortimer; Pat Geary, Colrain Sewer District; Roberta Murphy; Art Schwenger; Kathy Steinhem; Marjorie Smith, Administrative Assistant; Kevin Fox, Town Administrator

Ben Eastman called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

**Appointments: Lisa Hayden and Kate Conlin – Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts-
Informational Presentation**

Kate Conlin presented to the Board the Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts and what joining the Partnership means for municipalities. There are 21 towns in the Partnership region and 19 have joined. Municipalities that join have access to yearly grants through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs of \$25,000 per town per year and \$75,000 for regional initiatives throughout the Partnership. Examples of grants awarded to municipalities include forest management of municipal lands, improving access to wildlife management areas and an ATV for all-season rescue. The Partnership is interested in the wood producers in Colrain and having their thoughts and ideas be part of the Partnerships initiatives going forward.

The Partnership is volunteer based and there is no cost to the Town to join. The 10-Year Plan is on their website and outlines the three main initiatives of the Partnership. Discussion on the PILOT (Payment In Lieu of Taxes) program initiative and benefits of the Partnership for private landowners. The Partnership is requesting that Colrain join in one of two ways; solely by Select Board vote or for the Board to vote to have this as a warrant article at the next Town Meeting.

Nick Anzuoni discussed concerns that the Partnership needs to consider and how it could be beneficial for the Town. Kate further noted that with the PILOT program, not only are towns not being fully funded for state-owned land, but there is also inequity in the assessment value of state-owned land, and the Partnership can advocate for the towns.

Discussion on whether the Board should vote to join or put it on the warrant at the Town Meeting.

MOVED: Thom Griffin moved that Colrain join the Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts.

No second. **Motion did not pass.**

Further discussion on bringing the vote to the Town Meeting and having the Partnership put together a flier and attend Candidates Night prior to Town Meeting.

MOVED: Thom Griffin moved to add joining the Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts to the warrant for the coming Town Meeting.

Discussion: Jade Mortimer thanked Kate Conlin for the presentation and commented that it is important for the Board to inform residents ahead of the changes of why they do certain things and when they are going to happen and used the example of the new Transfer Station vehicle stickers. Further discussion of where the information was posted and when and directing people to the Select Board and to the Town Administrator regarding questions and complaints.

Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Colrain Council on Aging CCS Basement Senior Center Proposal

Betty Johnson informed the Board that the Council on Aging (COA) would like to pursue the use of the basement of the Colrain School as a space for the seniors. They have been to the Mohawk Trail Regional Building Subcommittee, and they are in favor of investigating the option and are requesting the Board support the COA looking into the school as an option. The COA is aware there are many hurdles to overcome and questions to be answered, and getting the support of the Board is the first step. Discussion on some of the repairs and modifications to be explored during the process. The members of the Board expressed their interest in having the COA explore their options for using the school basement as a senior center type space and Kevin to look into applying for an Efficiency and Regionalization grant to possibly obtain funding for a feasibility study.

Mike Slowinski – MLP Manager – Broadband Update

The RRR project is complete and user acceptance testing is scheduled for 10/11/2023. The project came in on time and under budget and the excess funds were sent back to the State, as required by the State. Colrain is now sharing three 10GB lines and pays 35% of the cost. There are 649 active subscribers, nine signed up this year and three more in the process of signing up. 74% of locations have been hooked up, but not necessarily all subscribers. The first Bond payment is due 11/1 and an interest payment is due 5/1, both of which we have the funds to pay.

New Business: None

Old Business: None

Unanticipated: Approve Select Board Meeting Minutes – 9/26/2023

MOVED: Thom Griffin moved to approve the minutes of the Select Board dated 9/26/2023. Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Pat Geary – Colrain Sewer District Update

Pat Geary updated the Board that he tried to access the \$50,000 ear mark in the State Budget, however, due to the way the document was worded, the Colrain Sewer District was not specifically mentioned and preventing the State from releasing the funds to the District. He would like the Board to think about the possibility of accepting the funds for the District and transferring the funds to the District. In return, the District would help with the I&I study of the collection system. Kevin further explained that the budget specifies the money is to the Town of Colrain and the intention of the Legislators was for the money to go to the Sewer District. Kevin has spoken with the Administration of Finance (AOF) regarding the matter. Further discussion is needed between the Select Board and the Colrain Sewer District.

Town Administrator Updates:

Kevin scheduled training for the Personnel Policies on 11/8 with the different departments.

Discussion on the use of the website rather than Facebook for Town information.

Further discussion on Woodlands Partnership including requesting they do a public forum in the spring so residents can learn more about the partnership before Town Meeting.

MOVED: Emily Thurber moved to dissolve the meeting at 6:14 pm.
Thom Griffin seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

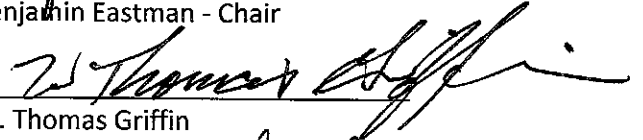
Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie Smith
Administrative Assistant

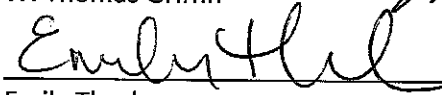
Accepted by the Select Board



Benjamin Eastman - Chair



W. Thomas Griffin



Emily Thurber

Documents:

Select Board Meeting Notes

Email from Lisa Hayden dated 9/26/2023 re: Woodlands Partnership of Northwest MA

Bill H.2932 re: An Act Establishing the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership

Email from Betty Johnson, COA, dated 9/26/2023 re: School Basement for Senior Center

Letter from Governor Maura Healy's Office dated 8/15/2023 re: FY24 Community Compact Program

Information re: Applying for the Efficiency & Regionalization Grant

Email from Mike Slowinski, MLP Manager, re: Request for an Appointment with Select Board for Broadband Update