

Town of Colrain
Select Board/MLP Board Meeting
Colrain Central School
22 Jacksonville Road
4:30 PM

**MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD
November 12, 2024**

Present Emily Thurber, Chair; Benjamin Eastman; Katie Korby

Others Present: Nate Gilbert, Interim Highway Superintendent; Michael Slowinski, MLP Manager; Anna Lavarreda, Town Clerk; Keegan Lynch, Control Point Technologies; Jane Johnson; Alice Wozniak, Director of Assessing; Dave Lewandowski; Peter Smith; David Nims; David Greenberg; Marjorie Smith, Administrative Assistant; Diana Parsons, Town Administrator

Chair Emily Thurber called the meeting to order at 4:30pm.

Tax Classification Public Hearing:

Chair Emily Thurber opened the Tax Classification Public Hearing at 4:31pm. Ben Eastman seconded.

Alice Wozniak, Directory of Assessing, stated the Assessors recommended a residential factor of one, meaning a single tax rate and that residential values increased an average of 10%. Diana Parsons explained the budget increase was very frugal and there were some expenses that weren't included in FY2025.

Questions were asked and answered about the breakdown of different tax rates and other figures.

Emily Thurber closed the hearing at 4:38pm. Ben Eastman seconded.

MOVED: Ben Eastman moved to set the tax rate as one.

Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Further discussion on the factors used to determine assessed values of properties.

Consent Items:

Meeting Minutes of September 24, 2024

Warrant AP2518 in the amount of \$11,535.07

Warrant AP2519 in the amount of \$17,296.75

Warrant PR2508 in the amount of \$31,719.40

Warrant PR2509 in the amount of \$26,345.50

MOVED: Emily Thurber moved to approve the meeting minutes of 9/24/2024 as written.

Ben Eastman seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

MOVED: Emily Thurber moved to approve the warrant AP2518, AP2519, PR2508 and PR2509.

Ben Eastman seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Appointments and Resignations:

None

New Business:

North River Watershed Restoration; Request for Letter of Support and Access

Diana Parsons explained there is a grant available the Town can access in response to the acid spill from Barnhardt. She has recommended applying for the grant to use for a feasibility study of the uncapped landfill and erosion control along the river on the Town Office property. The grant is due this Friday and would request up to \$75,000. Diana has also spoken with DEP and they are willing to help.

MOVED: Emily Thurber moved to approve to sign the letter of support and access for the North River Watershed Restoration.

Ben Eastman seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Work Extension for Broadband Infrastructure on N. Green River Road, Michael Slowinski, MLP Manager

Mike Slowinski explained the upper section of North Green River Rd receives power from VT and we can't run broadband from it. They looked into using Verizon conduit from New County Rd, however, they said there was no room in the conduit. There are four houses that can't get broadband for different reasons. Mike further updated the Board that there are two programs the Town is part of, the BEAD Challenge and Digital Equity, to assist with getting these homes broadband. Discussion on roadside work that could need to be completed, customer service charges, and town-wide communications from Whip City including Town letterhead.

Discussion regarding who pays for reattaching wires to poles and pole licensing along West Leyden Rd.

Update on 2024 Election Activities; Anna Lavarreda, Town Clerk

Anna Lavarreda commented that everything went well and smoothly. There were 29 workers including two officers. Some workers are volunteers, and some are paid, and more are looking to be paid. A total of 1,047 ballots were cast; 417 early ballots (vote by mail and in person early voting) and 690 came in day of and the early ballots are processed the day of voting.

Takeaways to future elections, particularly Presidential elections:

- increase budget for poll workers
- processing early ballots to have one or two people specifically for that task
- actively recruiting more workers and training an additional clerk and warden

Questions and answers regarding additional requirements for processing early vote ballots and number of paid versus volunteer poll workers, which the majority were paid.

Highway Department Updates; Nate Gilbert, Interim Superintendent

Nate Gilbert spoke to the following topics:

Update on Roadway Activities, Aug-October

Most of the mowing is done and currently working on grading.

Highway Staff Update: New Hire, Ad Posted for Drivers for Snow Removal

Joel is working out well, but still shorthanded. Jonathan Graves will help seasonally and could use another one. Discussion on possibility of using Scott Denison and Craig Avery.

Review Purchase Order for Sidewalk Tractor w/ Bucket & Snow Blower

Nate has a quote from Bacon's and explained that the sidewalks may not get done by the end of the storm and would do as fill in after the storm is over. Once the tractor is ordered, the receipt would be about a month out.

Discussion on what else the tractor could possibly be used for; rake roads, run leaf blower, and maybe a small sickle bar.

He is going to wait on a trailer that had been put in the warrant article and the money will stay in the appropriation until the Town decides it's needed, and the tractor can be stored in the wash bay.

Update on Completed Repairs at Salt Shed

The shed was patched last week because of the bank sliding.

Spring Paving Plan for Thompson Rd.

Have a quote and hope to pave Thompson Rd in May/June of next year. Discussion on where money will come from.

Updates on Jacksonville Road Slope Stabilization Project & Heath Rd Culvert Replacement Project

Western Earthworks put up signs for the Heath Rd culvert project, which should only take a couple weeks to do the work.

Jacksonville Rd will be done this week and have money left in the budget and are looking to have the entire road relined. If more money is left over, we could possibly use it for adjacent roads.

Private Ways & Discontinued Roads: Working on Research of Status (Public vs. Private) and Determining Capacity for Snow Removal & General Maintenance

Diana Parsons commented that some residents have reached out about the status of winter maintenance on certain roads. Diana and Nate have talked about the lists but don't have a recommendation at this time and will continue to look at the topic.

Transfer Station Recommendations

Diana Parsons and Nate Gilbert met with Jon Tynan, George Billiel and Jan Ameen at the Transfer Station and have put together a list of recommendations, including bundling sticker sales and flow of traffic to keep everyone safe. Any changes will be implemented in phases.

Old Business:

Green Communities Annual Report Summary

Diana Parsons explained that the annual report is due November 15th, which is a report of all fuel and utility use by the Town as part of our energy reduction plan.

MOVED: Emily Thurber moved to sign the Green Communities Annual Report Summary as written. Ben Eastman seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Administrator Updates:

Community Compact Grant

The grant ended October 24th and Diana is working on the final report. The program will continue going, and we have a little money left so she will do a mailer to residents promoting the program to use up the funds. May look at rearranging the compost space at the Transfer Station.

Public and Board Member Comments:

None

Requests for Future Agenda Items:

MRF Extension – Must be Signed by December 31, 2024

The Materials and Recycling Facility (MRF) contract is looking to be extended for five years. Because some towns are going to single stream recycling, the facility can't accept from those towns, so less towns will be using them, which will increase costs. Diana Parsons will check with Town Counsel regarding the 5-year term of the contract.

Correspondence and Select Board Informational Items:

Franklin Regional Housing Redevelopment Authority (HRA) 2024 Annual Report

No discussion.

Letter from MDAR re: Violation of Co-Grantee Terms of APR Agreement, Scranton, Book 3453, page 332

Katie Korby questioned if the Board can do anything, which Diana could reach out to the Scranton's.

Public Hearing – Joint Petition for Pole Locations

Chair Emily Thurber opened the Joint Petition for Pole Locations Public Hearing at 6:00pm.

Keegan Lynch, of Control Point Technologies explained the purpose is to replace existing cable and increase the current voltage, which will better the power quality. To facilitate the new cables, they need to set new poles and install mid-span poles along West Leyden Road from Greenfield Road to Green River Road and Avery Hill Road.

Questions were raised regarding the height and number of new mid-span poles and existing poles being replaced, cost of switching Broadband to new poles and licensing, and timeline of the project. Keegan responded that the new mid-span poles will be the same height, there are 51 new poles and approximately 90 existing poles being replaced. Eversource should pick up the cost of moving the Broadband if they've set a president in other towns for the existing poles. The pole project is slated to be completed in 2025 with the attachments in the next calendar year.

David Lewandowski, 127 West Leyden Rd, questioned the proposed location of a pole in his yard. Keegan replied that the pole in question is not part of this project and the contractor for that project is aware of the concern and suggested following up with him.

Further questions were asked regarding the process for replacing the existing poles, Conservation Commission approval. Keegan explained that they are allowed to replace within three feet of the existing pole even if it is a higher pole. Regarding the Conservation Commission, flags have been left because of MA Conservation areas and need a state official there for replacement.

Mike Slowinski, MLP Manager, commented that there have been many maintenance issues with the wires and Broadband and the new poles will reduce the tangles in the wires and be beneficial to that part of Town.

Diana further questioned if Eversource has a long-term plan that is available for municipalities. Keegan explained there are some broad plans and maybe some more specific plans online. He commented that this project is going to switch from 2-phase power to 3-phase, increase voltage and use a different type of cable to allow for more power availability.

Questions regarding replacing transformers and diameter of the poles. The majority of the transformers will be replaced, and the diameter of the poles is increasing slightly. Discussion on poles that have already been replaced and some being too close to the road. Nate Gilbert will make a list of the poles and contact

Keegan.

Emily Thurber closed the hearing at 6:23pm.

Discussion on next steps regarding the petition.

MOVED: Emily Thurber moved to table this until the next meeting.
Ben Eastman seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Alice Wozniak will communicate with Diana after the Conservation Committee meeting. Nate Gilbert will look at the newer poles.

Executive Session:

None

Dissolve Meeting:

MOVED: Emily Thurber moved to dissolve the meeting at 6:33pm.
Ben Eastman seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

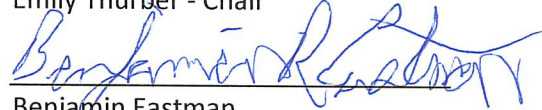


Marjorie Smith
Administrative Assistant

Accepted by the Select Board on 1/14/2025



Emily Thurber - Chair



Benjamin Eastman



Katie Korby

Documents Distributed to the Select Board Before the Meeting in a Packet or at the Meeting:

Quote from Bacon's Equipment to Town of Colrain dated 11/1/2024 re: Kubota LX2620HSDC Tractor

Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority Annual Report dated 10/28/2024

Letter from Dep. Of Agricultural Resources to Diana Parsons, Town Administrator, and the Select Board dated 10/23/2024 re: Violation of the Terms of the APR granted by Duane L. Scranton and Nancy J. Scranton on 1/26/1999 and recorded in Book 3453, Page 332 at the Franklin County Registry of Deeds

Eversource Petition for Joint or Identical Pole Locations dated 8/23/2024

Draft Letter of Support and Property Access Authorization to Michelle Craddock, Natural Resource Damages Program Coordinator MassDEP from the Select Board

MVP Resilience Plan from April 2018

Green Communities Annual Report Summary FY2024

Draft Deerfield River Watershed Landfill Assessment, Massachusetts Watershed Initiative Project #2002-07/MWI dated May 2003