

Town of Colrain  
Select Board Meeting  
Highway Garage  
9 Jacksonville Road, 4:30 P.M.  
**MINUTES OF OCTOBER 26, 2021**

**Present** Joe Kurland, Mike Slowinski, Thom Griffin

**Others Present** Chelsea Jordan-Makely, Library Director; Kate Barrows, Toby Basset, MTRSD School Committee Representatives; Sheryl Stanton, Superintendent; Emily Thurber; Jamie Hall; Joshua Hall; Julie Hall; Dawn Brown; Jon Stetson; Jane Johnson; Bob Bolles; Betsy Browning; Sam Rudel; Lynn DiTullio; Donnie Brown, Jr.; Josh Slysz; Dennis Patterson; Jamie Jefferson; Jan Jones; Ben Davenport; Karen Parker; Jill Horton-Lyons; Rebekah Novak; David Greenberg; Haynes Turkle; Ben Eastman; Ingeborg Waldsmith; Ellen Weeks; Nancy Turkle, Library Trustee; Chris Larabee, *Recorder* reporter; Paula Harrison, Treasurer/Collector; Betsy Shuipis, Administrative Assistant; Kevin Fox, Town Administrator.

The meeting was called to order by Joe Kurland, Chair, at 4:31 p.m.

**Appointments Chelsea Jordan-Makely, GML Director – Library Programming and Services Overview and Update**

Ms. Jordan-Makely presented “Growing our Collective Future” along with feedback from the community as a follow up to the Transform Communities Grant. Copies of the library’s Strategic Plan was distributed for reference. Ms. Jordan-Makely asked for the town’s support in future plans for a capital request.

**MTRSD School Committee Representatives Kate Barrows and Toby Bassett, Superintendent Stanton – Assessment payments, District Strategic Plan, FY23 Budget Development Process**  
Superintendent Sheryl Stanton gave an overview of the Strategic Plan. Four big “buckets” make up the plan: building community, innovating, investing in our shared future and fostering an inclusive community of learners.

Superintendent Stanton introduced Bing Waldsmith, the new treasurer of the MTRSD. She went on to discuss school assessments and the fact that the district has not received the August 1 and October 1 payments from Colrain. How can we prevent late payments in the future? Paula Harrison, Collector/Treasurer, explained that with a semiannual tax collection, the town does not have the income coming in with the same timeline that assessments are paid. Moving to a quarterly tax collection would solve the problem; a decision that would need to go to town meeting. The first move would be a joint meeting between the assessors and the Select Board.

The Select Board asked Superintendent Stanton why questions submitted to her last April regarding maintenance, project completions, and staffing needs was not answered. Superintendent Stanton will look into this request and get back to Mr. Slowinski.

**Emily Thurber, Policing Concerns**

Ms. Thurber voiced her concerns with the high turnover rate in the Police Department and the lost investment made to train its first full-time officer when he resigned. With so much happening in our town, the gaps in police coverage are worrisome. Who will take over all the

work of our full time officer? Ms. Thurber believes that public trust in our police department is paramount and that trust has diminished since our full-time officer left. For the sake of our community, our townspeople need transparency and Select Board oversight of the police department.

Chief Lannon responded. Police reform started July 1, 2021, which means he cannot hire any part-time officers. The current staff have to go through 220 hours of training to be certified by the state. Police staff are now averaging 90 hrs. per week. With regard to keeping turnover low, Chief Lannon said that high turnover is prevalent in other towns as well, and it's a complex issue.

Ms. Thurber asked the Select Board if they agree that there may be a common thread between all the recent resignations; and if so, what can we do as a community to mitigate this pattern? It was noted that there is a problem with keeping people in public sector jobs as can be seen with our school custodians and highway crews. In an effort to clarify the real number of officers who have left recently, Kevin Fox, Town Coordinator, confirmed with Chief Lannon that the town has lost three officers in the past three years. One part-time officer retired, one took a job in Greenfield for a full-time opportunity, and one recently resigned for another job.

Kevin Fox described the process when there is a complaint against an officer. A complaint (in writing preferably) would first go to the police chief. If it is not addressed adequately, the complaint would then go to the Town Administrator and the Select Board. An executive session would be scheduled where the named individual would be contacted. He/she would have the right to counsel and to an open or closed session.

Mr. Haynes Turkle and Ms. Thurber suggested the Police Department focus on employee retention, especially in a competitive market, by developing skills and ways to communicate that can mitigate an employee seeking employment elsewhere.

**New Business Unregistered Motor Vehicle By-Law Violation Reponse to Specific Complaints**

The Town of Colrain is in receipt of two letters of complaint: 1 Jacksonville Road and 5 River Street. The town counsel prepared a letter in response to a specific complaint for the town administrator's signature. Mr. Fox checked both residences and confirmed that they meet the criteria of the by-law. Should he proceed as he has in the past? The Select Board asked that the letters be held in abeyance until the general unregistered motor vehicle letter goes out with the tax bill sometime in the next week.

**MOVED:** Mike Slowinski moved to continue this discussion until 11/9. Thom Griffin seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

**OPEB Actuarial Report**

Good news for the town. No action required.

**FY22 Tax Rate Approval**

Increase in property values still are below our levy limit, which keeps the town out of an override situation.

**Timing of FY23 Annual Town Meeting**

Kevin recommends keeping the Annual Town Meeting in June as we have the past 2 years. The Select Board agrees. Kevin Fox will contact the moderator about the date.

**One Day Liquor License Artifact Cider Project**

**MOVED:** Mike Slowinski moved to approve the One-Day Liquor License for Artifact Cider Project at Pine Hill Orchards on November 6, 2021. Thom seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

**Old Business Unregistered Motor Vehicle By-Law Violation Reminder Letter**

Mike Slowinski read the reminder letter to the group. There is a special permit that can be issued by the Select Board, but the board needs to work out the procedure for it.

**MOVED:** Mike Slowinski moved to send out the Unregistered Motor Vehicle By-law Violation letter as written by town counsel with the tax bill. Thom Griffin seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Kevin Fox clarified for the record that there were two formal complaints submitted to the town administrator. The town office has no knowledge of a list of 30 properties with junk/unregistered that the town is purported to have made. **To be clear, the “list” of properties referred to is meaningless unless the Select Board receives a formal complaint.**

**Unanticipated Select Board Minutes 6/8/21, 8/10/21, Executive Session 8/10/21, 9/28/21,**

**MOVED:** Mike Slowinski moved to approve the minutes of 6/8/21, 8/10/21, 8/10/21 Executive Session and 9/28/21. Thom Griffin seconded. **Voted unanimously.**

**Town Administrator**

**Updates**

Toby Bassett submitted his letter of resignation from the Mohawk Trail Regional School District to the Town Clerk. The Select Board wants to find a candidate now and will start recruiting.

**MOVED:** Mike Slowinski moved that the Town request MassDOT to eliminate the bark mulch area around the Civil War/WWI monument. In addition, we are requesting that a sidewalk be installed between the monument and the circular sidewalk on the north side to allow better viewing of the Civil War plaque. We further request that the remainder of the bark mulch area be loamed and seeded. Thom Griffin seconded. **Voted unanimously.**

The Select Board agreed to have a meeting on November 2 at 12 noon in the Town Office to plan for the future of the MLP.

**MOVED:** Mike Slowinski moved to dissolve the meeting at 7:42 p.m. Thom Griffin seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Shuipis  
Administrative Assistant

Accepted by the Select Board

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Joe Kurland - Chair

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Mike Slowinski

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Thom Griffin

## Documents

### Select Board Meeting Notes

Email from Kate Barrows, dated 10/8/21, to the town administrator requesting to be added to the Select Board agenda

Email from Emily Thurber, dated 10/20/21, to the town administrator requesting an appointment with the Select Board to discuss policing concerns.

Formal complaint from Jane Johnson to the town administrator, dated 10/14/21, against the property owners of 1 Jacksonville Road re: unregistered motor vehicles.

Formal complaint from Jane Johnson to the town administrator, dated 10/14/21, against the property owners of 5 River Street re: unregistered motor vehicles

OPED Actuarial Report of the Town of Colrain dated 10/15/21.