

# Meeting Minutes

## Town of Adams Board of Selectmen

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### Board of Selectmen Meeting

January 14, 2015

On the Above date the Board of Selectmen held a Workshop Meeting at Town Hall at 7:00 p.m. **Chairman Arthur Harrington** presided. Present were Members **John Duval**, **Joseph Nowak**, and Vice Chairman **Richard Blanchard**. Member **Jeffrey Snoonian** was absent. Also in attendance were Town Administrator **Tony Mazzucco**, Community Development Director **Donna Cesan**, and Town Assessor **Donna MacDonald**.

*Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Harrington.*

**Chairman Harrington** gave an overview of the agenda items.

### OFFICIAL BUSINESS

#### *Wastewater Treatment Plant Superintendent Job Description*

The Wastewater Treatment Plant Superintendent may be leaving. The *Personnel Sub-Committee* is in the process of updating the position job description to reflect changes in laws and grade. An incomplete draft had been given to the Select Board Members but the final version will be given to Board next week.

#### *Town Assessor: Independent Real Property Re-Evaluation*

**Town Assessor, Donna MacDonald** addressed the Board regarding bringing in an outside evaluation company to re-evaluate the whole town. Every 9 years the state mandates that the Town should do a measure to assess all properties. The last time Assessor MacDonald did it herself, but she would like to have an outside firm perform the action because last time there were two full-time employees in the office and a Board Member also assisted. She said it is mandated by the State to have a re-evaluation done and hopes to send out an RFP as soon as possible. She explained it is very difficult to do in-house because each building must be entered to verify that it is still the same as the previous assessment. In 9 years there can be additions, out-buildings, and upgrades that took place, and there have been changes in the Building Department.

Discussion followed and it was determined that it is not mandated to be done by an outside firm. There are a group of people in town who feel their homes are over-assessed in value, and others that think their homes are not assessed at a high enough value. Run-down neighborhoods would be taken into consideration for value. Changes in the 2008 economy crash affected the housing market. It would remain to be seen whether the town would be able to regain the money spent on the evaluation, but it would bring the buildings to a more equitable playing field. The neutrality of having an outside firm do the assessment would be desirable.





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**Assessor MacDonald** said the way to find out what it would cost would be to send out requests for proposal, which she hopes to have approval to do right away. She estimates the cost would be between \$75,000 and \$100,000, which could be spread out to approximately 3 years over the term of the project. There is no way to hold the value of the properties for the full three years though. There is no grant money that can be gotten for this project. North Adams and other Berkshire County towns are currently doing a re-evaluation with an outside firm. An outside firm would be given background information on each building before assessing it.

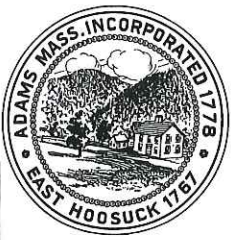
**George Haddad** advised there is a very complicated formula that is used in raising and lowering values.

The Select Board will do some independent research and will readdress this issue at the next meeting with discussion about different ideas. The Board will work with Assessor MacDonald to get the RFPs out.

### *Discussion on FY2015 CDBG*

**Community Development Director Donna Cesan** advised the Board that the next CDBG application deadline is Feb 13<sup>th</sup>. The maximum grant amount within the CDF1 program in which the Town can apply is \$900,000, but she didn't have the full breakdown to discuss. There will be a Public Hearing for the grant scheduled for next week, but it will still be in a proposed state. Community Development is looking to continue the Adams Housing Rehab program for 12 to 15 units. She had a Community Development strategy meeting and got support for getting the HVAC system put in the Memorial School to be able to use it more fully. She has not yet talked with DHCD about the likelihood of funding. A design project will cost an estimated \$60,000 to \$70,000 to redo the Visitor's Center parking lot, which has drainage issues and cracking pavement. This should be done in anticipation of more visitors coming through with Berkshire Scenic Railway so the Town must ready its facilities be able to accommodate it. She said her intention is to apply for construction dollars in the following year. Typically, Community Development has \$140,000 to \$160,000 in administrative funding that supports two existing staff positions and provides funding to carry out projects for the year. The projects are still conceptual but she will have more detail next week.

Director Cesan is undertaking work with EDM Architects on a scoping study of the HVAC system. EDM has given the Town general recommendations over the years and they were able to get both Berkshire Gas and National Grid commitment to pay for half of the study, which is about \$6,000. This information would form the basis for more in-depth design, which Berkshire Gas and National Grid could also pay for. They would possibly even consider paying a portion of HVAC system installation cost, which helps with the grant funds and stretching dollars. Currently EDM is talking about leaving the classroom wing in mothball state. The new HVAC system would be zoned to maintain that wing at 40 degrees with the fully developed system in the main parts of the building, where the greatest activity will be. The classroom area is viable for reuse for senior housing and a HVAC system and windows would come in at that point.



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The replacement of the Memorial School windows will be an enormous amount of money to become energy efficient. When the Senior Housing portion is ready to go forward they may frame in walls and have less glass to make it a more energy efficient area and to reduce heat loss. An engineer would need to look at this. With this kind of use it might be more efficient to have individual heating units in each room much like a hotel, and rented space will need individual control of the units. Until the Town knows exactly what the uses are going to be for each portion of the building it is hard to evaluate. Reuse of the classroom wing that would require changes in the windows and walls would be paid for by investors, not the Town. Berkshire Mills left their windows in and were able to make it work.

### *Discussion on Budget Process*

The *Budget Sub-Committee* met earlier today with Town Administrator Mazzucco regarding the Budget process, and will be meeting with the Finance Committee Chairman tomorrow to discuss this further.

### *Discussion on Strategic Plan Strategy*

**Town Administrator Mazzucco** advised he gathered examples of other strategic plan strategies and is touching on what the Board is looking for in a final product and process to determine what the timeline is. He explained his philosophy on how to create a strategic plan, including explaining it, engaging the public and inviting them in to see what they are looking for in a strategic plan. Re-evaluating needs to be part of the process of this organic document, but it must be a community process from start to end. It may take a year or two to do it, and shouldn't be rushed.

It is up to the people to come if they are interested. The Town frequently has meetings and good intentions, and then people don't come. Some of the best ideas come from unconventional sources.

The *Strategic Plan Sub-Committee* comprised of Chairman Harrington and Member Duval will have to define the process and get it going.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

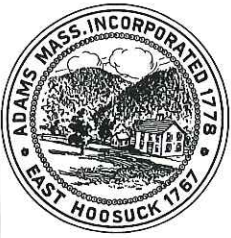
### *Mount Greylock Advisory Council*

A Letter was received from *Mount Greylock Advisory Council* with meeting information. Member Nowak was asked to attend the quarterly meetings, and said he would like to serve on the council if possible. Adams has its allotment of representatives and he would not be able to vote on issues but he will attend the meetings and report back.

### *Letter regarding Chapter 90 Funds*

**Chairman Harrington** read a letter from Governor Baker releasing Chapter 90 funds for FY2015 for the Town of Adams to increase them from \$291,820 to \$437,729. The Town has plenty of projects to use this money on so this is good news.





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*Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to adjourn*

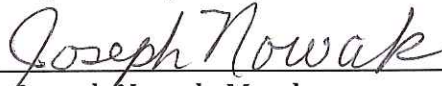
*Second by Member Nowak*

*Unanimous vote*

*Motion passed*

*Meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.*


Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,  
Recording Secretary

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joseph Nowak, Member

  
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John Duval, Member

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Jeffrey Snoonian, Member

  
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Richard Blanchard, Vice Chairman

  
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Arthur Harrington, Chairman