

TOWN OF ADAMS

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, March 18, 2015 – 7:00 PM

TOWN HALL, MEETING ROOM, 1st FLOOR, ADAMS, MA 01220

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TOWN CLERK
ADAMS MASS.

On the Above date the Board of Selectmen held a regular meeting at Town Hall at 7:00 p.m. **Chairman Arthur Harrington** presided. Present were **Members John Duval, Joseph Nowak, Jeffrey Snoonian,** and **Vice Chairman Richard Blanchard.** Also in attendance was **Town Administrator Tony Mazzucco.** *Town Counsel Ed St. John III was absent.*

The meeting was called to order at 7:18 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

READING OF MINUTES

March 4, 2015 Minutes

Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to waive the reading of the minutes for March 4, 2015 and to accept the minutes as written, Second by Member Snoonian. Unanimous vote. Motion passed

CITIZEN'S CONFERENCE

Congratulations to Basketball Teams

Jeff Lefebvre congratulated both the boys' and girls' basketball teams for a successful season.

FY2016 Budget Presentation

Jeff Lefebvre gave praise to the Town Administrator for a good budget presentation. He inquired where the budget went wrong and when the Select Board knew about it because he was always told the Town was in great shape financially. *Chairman Harrington* advised that the Town Administrator did the budget a different way this year, showing that the community is in financial difficulties. There is no blame placing, but instead it is identification of a problem and moving forward to solve it. This year's budget presentation showed financial trends over the years but there was no individual or single circumstance that caused it. This year there is a health insurance increase but over the years several items have been factors that led to this point. Considering the financial condition of the region, the Town is not on the verge of bankruptcy, and not asking for an override. The budget has been in bad shape for years, and is not a big surprise.

Memorial School

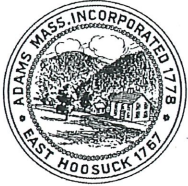
Jeff Lefebvre asked the Select Board to take second look at Memorial School and mothball it because the taxes are at the maximum right now.

Community Economic Development

Jason Hnatonko noted that a few years ago Vice Chairman Blanchard brought forth ideas for business in Adams. He encouraged the community and Board to bring up any ideas that might make this community more successful since Adams is at number 330 of 351 communities for income level. He suggested the community get the area developing and to market this area better to bring bigger industries into this town. He noted that everyone has been very quick to blame Walmart for how Adams and Downtown North Adams have diminished but there are no high paying jobs left since General Electric and Sprague Electric closed. He wants to try to bring back an economic development strategy for the entire area as a whole instead of individually.

Dog Licenses

Haley Meczywor, Town Clerk advised that dog licenses are due April 1, 2015. Citizens can go to the Town's website to print out an application and mail in the dog license. Rates for spayed/neutered animals are \$8 and non-spayed and non-neutered are \$20.



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Town Elections

Haley Meczywor advised that the upcoming Town Election is **May 4, 2015** and the last day to register to vote is April 14, 2015.

PUBLIC HEARING

There was no public hearing at this meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business discussed at this meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

FY2016 Budget

Chairman Harrington proposed that since the budget process was conducted differently this year the Board may want to consider adopting the process of voting by consensus instead of individually by page and line. He recommended the Board opt to hold a category for further discussion if a Member felt it warranted questions or discussion, and then voting at one time on all other categories.

Consensus was reached by all Board Members to proceed as the Chairman proposed.

Audience Budget Comments: Members of audience wishing to address any particular part of the Town's or McCann's budget were given the opportunity to speak.

Retiree Healthcare

Pat Wol, a Town Retiree, noted that at the first budget meeting the split on employee/retiree healthcare was discussed. 70 retirees are on the insurance plan and 45 are on the Medex Plan. The Medex plan only increased 5.5%, but went up 15% for those under age 65. She respectfully requests the Board reconsider the split based on information she gave to the Board. She advised most of the retirees are not eligible for Social Security. The average Medex Plan is expected to increase \$22 per month, but no numbers were available for those on the plan under age 65. The windfall reduction act is a factor. Many retirees are not yet eligible for Medicare. The Town reimburses those who have to take Medex.

Study on Russell Field

James Fassell wants the Town to invest in Adams by putting \$15,000 toward the grant application to get a study done for the two year process at Russell Field. He advised the Town would not be redoing the field this year or next, but this investment will get a return to the Town of \$250,000 to \$300,000 once the study is done.

Select Board Budget Vote

Chairman Harrington read off all of the budget line categories and Select Board Members requested to hold the following topics for discussion before voting: Finance and Technology, Public Safety, Public Buildings, Public Works, and McCann Technical School. All other budget categories were to be voted on en masse.

Motion was made to approve the budgets for the categories of Executive, General Government, Community Development, Public Service, and Public Health, by Member Duval, second by Vice Chairman Blanchard. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

Finance and Technology

Retirees should have the same Health Care share as other current employees. The Town is not able to cut those splits that were negotiated through a contract negotiation, as those will take time to renegotiate. The next scheduled negotiations are to be held in the next couple weeks, and after that it is two to three years before the next negotiation will take place. *Town Administrator Mazzucco* will discuss the employee split



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when time is right. The dollar savings comes to \$27,000. To adjust the number for McCann will have to rely on state aid. *Board Members* said they wished they could give retirees the extra money they deserved, but also don't want an override for the community so they have to make the right decisions to minimize problems in the future. Knowing the current fiscal situation everyone must pitch in to pay extra for health insurance. Most places in the private sector have no pension, and though the Town wants to fund something for the retirees, if the trend keeps going the same way, there won't be anything left. A pledge was made to look into changing the share for the rest of the employees in the future to be fair to everyone. The Social Security System is a poor example of how to run a retirement system, and is running out of money.

Motion made to approve the Finance and Technology Budget as presented by Member Snoonian, second by Member Duval. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

Public Safety Budget

The request was for a purchase of two police cruisers but being on the Vehicle Purchase Plan would indicate the purchase of one cruiser. Chief Tarsa explained that the last Crown Victoria was not purchased but instead replaced by insurance due to being struck in an accident. Last year and in 2013 there were purchases of Ford Explorer Sport Utility Vehicles, but for several years prior to that there was no purchase because the Town's financial situation precluded it from happening. The Town adhered to the purchase plan through most of past years but strayed away from it in 2008. Ideally the program advises purchasing one cruiser per year. Getting away from the plan is what has put the Town in the predicament of needing 2 cruisers in the same year. Vehicle maintenance and treating the undercarriage with undercoating products were discussed to prolong the life of each cruiser. Member Duval requested to see a 3 year plan going forward with police vehicles identified and their mileage, what years they were bought, and what cruisers are coming up to be replaced. This plan should be received by the Board well before budget season to help the Board make decisions. The Select Board cannot commit a purchase each year, and can only commit to the purchase in each budget season, but will consider the need in the plan presented. No officer would be endangered by having one cruiser rather than two replaced this year. The Police Department would be able to manage with the purchase of one cruiser per year over the next 3 years. The increase of tires and maintenance to keep one vehicle in service another year would be an increase of 10% to 15% over what is in the current budget request for maintenance and repair. Oil and lubrication would stay the same, tires and tubes would incur a 10% increase, and about \$4,000 for parts and accessories would be needed. The chance of catastrophic failure increases. A transmission would be \$1,500 to \$1,700 if the DPW does the labor. The cars may be able to stretch to 2 years, but 3 years is unrealistic for any of the next 3 cars needing replacement. If any vehicle becomes a detriment to officer safety it will be sidelined.

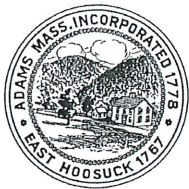
Motion was made to approve one police cruiser and reduce the line item 04210 to \$36,000 by Member Duval, second by Member Snoonian. Voted in Opposition was Chairman Harrington. Voted in favor were Vice Chairman Blanchard, Members Nowak, Duval, and Snoonian. Motion Passed.

Motion made to increase the maintenance costs by \$1,000 in line item 52420 for Repair/ Maintenance by Member Duval, second by Member Nowak. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

Motion made to approve the Public Safety budget as amended by Member Snoonian, second by Vice Chairman Blanchard. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

Public Building Budget

Town Administrator Mazzucco advised that "mothballing" the Memorial School building is effectively keeping it at 40 to 50 degrees. Insurance costs for maintaining the vacant building are enormous. The First step taken to reuse the building was to get grant money to fix the roof, and the Town is now looking for



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grant money to fix the heating system to move forward. Tearing down the building would incur a significant cost. Being dependent on grant money puts the Town at the whim of someone else to determine the money allotted, and the Town has building with a viable plan.

Motion made to approve the Public Buildings budget line items by Vice Chairman Blanchard, second by Member Snoonian. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

Public Works

Member Duval took a look at the truck and it needs to be replaced, but he hopes that staff attrition works to the Town's favor. By not purchasing the truck this year it might allow the Town to keep a cut position, but the cost of a person is \$250,000 over a 5 year period. He said his opinion was to continue with the purchase of the truck as suggested.

Motion made to approve the Public Works budget as written by Member Snoonian, second by Vice Chairman Blanchard. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

McCann Vocational School Budget

Town Administrator Mazzucco advised the correct amount as given by Superintendent Brosnan was \$708,445, as the McCann numbers were more dependent on state aid and enrollment and the cost increases for per pupil were changing.

Motion was made to amend the line item 53210 to total \$788,446 by Vice Chairman Blanchard, second by Member Snoonian. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to approve the McCann Vocational School Budget as amended, seconded by Member Duval. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

Approval of Town Budget

Town Administrator Mazzucco advised by adding the Adams Cheshire Regional School District (ACRSD) to the vote, the Board approves the allocation to ACRSD based on the whole budget. Their needs are not met by the number the Town had, but it will not be able to change without substantial reductions on the Town side or an override. The Board can approve the allocation to the schools based on what the Town can afford. This would conclude the budget process and allow it to be forwarded on to the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee will either go with that recommendation or issue a different recommendation and ultimately Town Meeting will make the final decision. The Town's budget schedule did not align with the ACRSD schedule, partially due to the Governor's budget coming out late this year and also due to the School budget being presented after the Town's need to get the budget completed.

Motion was made by Member Snoonian to approve all FY2016 Town Budget categories as amended with exception to the salaries of the Town Clerk, Treasurer and Assessor, which are to be set by Town Meeting, second by Vice Chairman Blanchard. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORT

ACRSD School Committee

Member Nowak attended the School Committee meeting, but did not attend the school fiscal outlook meeting, as that was attended by the Board Chairs, Administrators and Finance Committee Chairs from both communities. The Town is giving the schools the best percentage possible, though it can't possibly meet their needs. The schools have been making some tough cuts and education is important to the students and the community.



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Park Commission Meeting

Member Nowak attended the Parks Commission Meeting, and there was nothing significant to report.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Revaluation

Town Administrator Mazzucco advised the Town received bids on the revaluation, and the bids are still being reviewed. It looks as though it came under the projected \$60,000 needed for each of the 3 years.

Farewells

Wastewater Treatment Plant Superintendent Joe Fijal is retiring after over 30 years of employment with the town, and *Building Commissioner Don Fitzgerald* is leaving Adams for another opportunity. The Town hopes to hire a new Building Commissioner within next 3 weeks. A farewell gathering will be held Friday at 2:00 p.m. to wish them well.

Building Commissioner Position

The Town is in the last of the hiring process for the Building Commissioner position and hopes to make an offer soon. The position hopefully will be filled within the next 3 weeks.

Economic Development Commission

There have been several calls received by those interested in forming an Economic Development Commission for Adams. There seems to be great support, and this would be the potential budget use for the meals/lodging tax. Ideal candidates for this Commission would be business owners with a passion for this community, willing to put in a lot of time. The Town Administrator will screen and interview people to put forth a committee for the community.

School Committee Budget Meetings

March 19, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at Hoosac Valley High School will be a School Committee Budget Meeting. The joint meeting between the Finance Committee, School Committee, and Board of Selectmen will be held on March 26, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at Hoosac Valley High School so all three Boards can discuss the challenges with finances and funding the schools. March 31, 2015 the School Committee will have a final vote on their budget.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

There were no items brought forth by the Public Works Department.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

There were no items brought forth by the Police Department.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

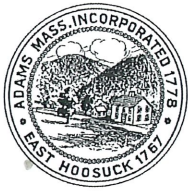
Ratification of Alternate Building Commissioner

Town Administrator Mazzucco recommends the ratification of Alternate Building Commissioner Don Fitzgerald to keep continuity of processes until the new Building Commissioner begins. There should only be a gap of a couple weeks.

Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to ratify the appointment of Don Fitzgerald as Alternate Building Commissioner starting March 20, 2015, second by Member Snoonian. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Adams Free Library



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Ratification of Library Aide: The Library Aide position has been vacant at the Library; the Town has gone through the hiring process and selected a great candidate. A letter was submitted to the Select Board by the Town Administrator requesting ratification of the appointment of Jessica Trimmer to the position of Part Time Library Aide, a 19 hour per week position, at Grade 4, Step 1, and the rate of \$13.56 per hour, beginning March 19, 2015.

Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to ratify the appointment of Jessica Trimmer as Part Time Library Aide beginning March 19, 2015, second by Member Duval. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

TOWN COUNSEL REPORT

Ed St. John IV read the Town Counsel report on behalf of Ed St. John III, who was not present. Attorney St. John III reviewed a question regarding the placement of a citizen's article on the Town Meeting Warrant. He reviewed questions and contracts concerning the maintenance of the solar array at the former landfill site. He had communication with the Board concerning maintenance responsibilities regarding solar panels. He had communication with the Board and with representatives of the Adams Fire District regarding the upcoming meeting. He reviewed a proposed agreement with the solar array developer and had communication with the Town Administrator concerning the same. He also reviewed and provided comments to the Town Administrator concerning a proposed service contract termination letter.

APPROVALS

Facility Use Request

MASS DASH requested the use of Town roads and the Visitor's Center for a Road Race on July 18, 2015. Chief Tarsa gave an overview of the entire race, and advised only will be about 6 to 10 runners so there will be no need for anything from the Police Department. The race will start in Lanesborough, go through North Adams and take Route 8 into Adams. It will then progress into Savoy and out to Route 2 from there, ending at UMASS. The use of the Visitor's Center is for the transition of runners.

Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to approve the facility request for MASS DASH to utilize Town Roads and the Visitor's Center for their road race on July 18, 2015, second by Member Novak. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no Other Business discussed at this meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS

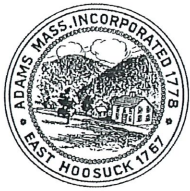
Economic Development

Town Administrator Mazzucco will draft up an Economic Development Ordinance to show what it would look like. He proposes continuing discussion on the meals and lodging tax, and what the budget would look like for an economic development fund should it be adopted. He advised he would bring to the table a draft description of the position of Marketing and Economic Development Coordinator funded out of the Economic Development Fund for discussion.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Congratulations to Hoosac Valley Sports Teams

Member Nowak congratulated the Hoosac Valley Girls' and Boys' Basketball Teams. He noted it is rare to see two teams from the area go to State Championship games in the same year, and both teams worked very hard to get there.



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Pet Cleanup

Member Nowak reports that finding dog droppings on sidewalks is a constant problem. He asks citizens to pick up the droppings while walking their dog as part of caring for their pet.

Alert Hose Fire Department

Member Nowak pointed out how lucky the Town is to have the *Alert Hose Fire Department*, and personally thanks all of the members of *Alert Hose Fire Department* for all the work they do for the community.

Salt Issues

Member Nowak requests the Town Administrator update the Board when a reply is received regarding the Salt Issues.

Crosswalk Safety

Vice Chairman Blanchard noted that the crosswalk markings were plowed away over the winter and for safety both pedestrians and vehicles should look for crossing signs. *Chairman Harrington* said the Park Street lines were painted in less than optimal temperatures so the bike lane and center lines are now gone. Signs are also confusing because some say "crosswalk ahead" but don't show the one it is at.

Budget Presentation

Vice Chairman Blanchard reports the overall budget presentation and joint meetings with the Finance Committee went very well. *Member Duval* advised the next step the Board needs to take after budget season is to evaluate the tax rate. He suggested having public forums throughout the year, and to break down the tax rate for the Board and the public to understand what makes up the tax rate. This will help the Board to look at it and decide where the community wants to be at in the next few years. He recommends the public come to these forums, hold their negative thoughts, and start to help determine ways to do things differently to bring the number down.

Stormwater Regulations

Member Duval suggested the Town of Adams to get involved with applying for a grant for Stormwater Regulations, and said Donna Cesan will talk with BRPC to move forward.

Citizen's Budget

Chairman Harrington recommended putting the budget into a format that is attractive and not spreadsheets, but more of a pie chart or a different kind of look to show where money is spent. Many people don't understand the budget as it currently reads. He suggested those interested in working on this to look at the Park City one, and also to help provide both a print form and an online version. Once the format is created, it will be easier to recreate it year after year.

Greylock Glen

Member Nowak advised that Representative Cariddi let the Greylock Glen Committee know that she met with Daniel Siegel with Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and they will visit the Greylock Glen site after mud season. Members Snoonian and Nowak are liaisons for the Greylock Glen Committee. Subleasing of Greylock Glen will take place, and the lease money should be earmarked for maintenance and improvements of the site so it won't be a tax burden in the future as it gets developed. The campground is the least expensive project to get going and can take place in one season.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

#6 - To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body;



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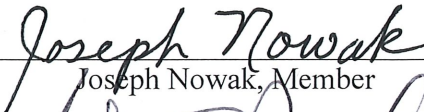
Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to go into the Executive Session at 9:15 p.m., second by Member Snoonian. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Harrington, Vice Chairman Blanchard, Members Nowak, Duval and Snoonian. Motion passed.

Motion made by Member Snoonian to adjourn the Executive Session at 9:26 p.m., second by Vice Chairman Blanchard. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Harrington, Vice Chairman Blanchard, Members Nowak, Duval and Snoonian. Unanimous vote. Motion passed.

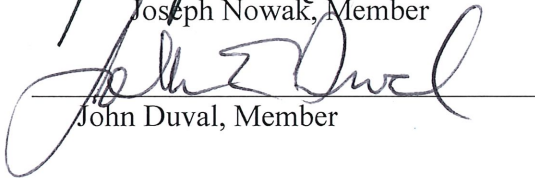
ADJOURNMENT

Motion made to adjourn by Member Snoonian, second by Member Duval. Unanimous vote. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 9:27 pm

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary.

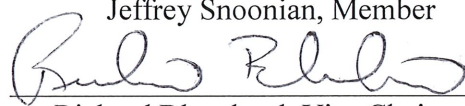


Joseph Nowak, Member



John Duval, Member

Jeffrey Snoonian, Member



Richard Blanchard, Vice Chairman

Arthur Harrington, Chairman