

# TOWN OF ADAMS SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, April 1, 2015 – 7:00 PM  
TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM, 1<sup>st</sup> FLOOR, ADAMS, MA 01220

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

*The Select Board Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.*

*The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.*

## READING OF MINUTES

- March 10, 2015
- March 11, 2015
- March 12, 2015

*Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to waive reading and accept the minutes as written  
Second by Member Snoonian*

*Unanimous vote*

*Motion passed*

## Citizen's Conference

### *Electricity Rates*

**Jeff Lefebvre** advised that on May 1, 2015 the electricity rate is going down from 16 Cents kWh to 8 cents kWh and the rate will go back up in June, July, and August only to go back down again in September. He inquired whether the Town was acting on the *Municipal Aggregation Program* to save the townspeople money.

**Town Administrator Mazzucco** advised he intends to add the *Municipal Aggregation Program* onto the Special Town Meeting warrant.

### *Roundabout Project*

**Jeff Lefebvre** inquired when the construction work would begin for the Roundabout Project.

There is no date set yet for this project to begin construction.

### *Economic Development Commission*

**Jeff Lefebvre** commended the Town Administrator for beginning the work to form an Economic Development Commission.

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### *School Budget*

**Barb Meczywor** said the percentage of elderly citizens in Adams is high and she recommends the Select Board take care when considering cutting the school budget because the Town won't get families moving in unless school is up to speed and economic development won't mean anything.

**Myra Wilk** said she is a strong supporter of schools, but also understands the Town has to look out for the entire community as well. She said she hopes both the Town and the School District will cooperate instead of the Town vs. the School Budget and all parties need to look at reorganization. She encouraged the Select Board to try to make this work.

### *Tax Increases*

**Peter Coussoule** said the town cannot sustain more tax increases for people on fixed incomes. He noted that he read an article in the paper stated in the coming years there will be more elderly than young people and he doesn't know how the Town will sustain all of the things it is proposing.

### **FY2016 Budget Procedural Issue**

**Chairman Harrington** gave a brief overview about this year's budget process, including a change in the way the Select Board voted on the budget. He advised the Select Board did not have the opportunity to vote independently on the Adams Cheshire Regional School District (ACRSD) proposed budget and he was also asked by a Select Board Member about rescinding the vote. He explained the process of rescinding the vote and how to move forward to vote specifically on the ACRSD budget. He also noted that the Select Board had not seen the ACRSD budget until last night and only got a copy of it today. The School Committee approved the budget as presented by the Superintendent.

***Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to rescind the March 18, 2015 vote to approve all FY2016 Budget Items***

***Second by Member Nowak***

***Voted against was Member Snoonian***

***Voted in favor were Vice Chairman Blanchard, Member Nowak and Chairman Harrington***

***Motion passed***

**Member Nowak** requested to abstain as his school employment represents a conflict of interest.

**School Committee Member and Attorney, Ed St. John IV**, advised that Member Nowak needed to remove himself from the table from all Select Board discussions, but he could participate by addressing the Board as a citizen if he wished.

**Member Nowak** left the Select Board table and sat in the audience during the vote.

If a request for a Proposition 2 ½ Override occurs the Town Meeting will decide. If the Town Budget proposal is approved it still must go to the Finance Committee for their recommendation. If the Finance Committee also approves the Town Budget to go forward, a Citizens' Petition could keep a



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Proposition 2 ½ Override on the table for the budget to be changed. At Town Meeting a vote can be made to increase or decrease the Finance Committee budget recommendation with a specific amount.

**Chairman Harrington** advised he had asked for what the School really needed versus a fiscally responsible budget request, and two Select Board Members had gone to meetings with the School to work together with the budget issue. He advised he had read all letters sent to the Select Board and State Officials, and emphasized the Town has no control over health insurance and there will not likely be any change in State funding for the communities. He noted it is time to work with other communities to be efficient despite resistance to change, and the Town Administrator is talking with the school about finding ways to try to save money by combining services. The Board helps to run the Town by making decisions on policy. In order to balance the budget, the Town would need to cut \$300,000 from the Municipal budget to accommodate the School budget. Chairman Harrington pledged to do more to work to create solutions for the 2017 budget and working together with both the school and the communities to make this happen.

**Member Snoonian** suggested that a carefully worded letter be written to the State addressing transportation reimbursement, taxes the Town is owed, and things the Town can do something about.

*Motion made to approve a 4% increase for School District as proposed in the Town Budget by Vice Chairman Blanchard*

*Second by Member Snoonian*

*Voted in favor were Vice Chairman Blanchard and Member Snoonian*

*Voted against was Chairman Harrington*

*Motion passed*

*Motion made to approve all FY2016 Town budget categories as amended with the exception of the Town Clerk, Assessor, Tax Collector salaries, which are set by Town Meeting, by Vice Chairman Blanchard*

*Second by Member Snoonian*

*Unanimous vote*

*Motion passed*

*Member Nowak rejoined the Select Board table for the remainder of the meeting.*

### Set the Date for Special Town Meeting

**Chairman Harrington** read a letter from *Community Development Director Donna Cesan* requesting a Special Town Meeting for April 30, 2015 for easements for the Rail Trail Extension Project to accommodate the Hoosac Valley Service Tourist Train, between Downtown Adams and Downtown North Adams. Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) must advertise right away as part of their process, and before doing so the Town must complete all Right of Way acquisitions, record the executed easements, and submit documentation to the State for approval. MassDOT will then issue the Right of Way Certificate for the project. Town Meeting must authorize the Select Board to approve and accept easements. There will be a few other items on warrant. There are no known costs to taxpayers from this process.



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*Motion made by Member Snoonian to approve Special Town Meeting for April 30, 2015 and open the Warrant*

*Second by Member Blanchard*

*Unanimous vote*

*Motion passed*

### Retiree Health Insurance Cost Share Change

Town Administrator Mazzucco advised this motion would be to adjust the split from 75/25 to 70/30 for all retiree plans in keeping with the budget. Do vote today, but would not go to town meeting.

*Motion made by Member Snoonian to change the Retiree Health Care Share from 75/25 to 70/30 in line with the budget to begin July 1, 2015*

*Second by Vice Chairman Blanchard*

*Unanimous vote*

*Motion passed*

### Subcommittee Liaison Reports

#### **School Committee**

Member Nowak was unable to attend meeting because went to the *Woodlands Partnership* meeting.

#### **Woodland Partnership Program**

Member Nowak advised this group is made up of 20 different towns from Northern Berkshire and Franklin County. BRPC is undertaking the study and will provide more information. He said economic development is centering on private land owners. One town is getting pellets for heating the Mohawk Regional School District as payment in lieu of taxes. The State has a lot of land in Massachusetts, and has a pilot agreement to pay a lower amount of money than private landowners.

#### **Berkshire Regional Transit Authority**

Member Snoonian advised the BRTA put out their bid for fixed routes. There is one bid, and it is double what it has been. The other option is to run at the current rate for FY2016 and issue an alternate request to hope for better results. He suggests citizens get in touch with local delegates because fares will be going up.

### Administrator's Report

#### **Auction**

Town Administrator Mazzucco completed a list of properties that can potentially be sold, and he will go over these with Assessor, Treasurer, Community Development Director and Town Counsel, before presenting a list to the Select Board. The goal would be to sell them at the next auction, scheduled for May. Some of these may require a Board or Town Meeting decision, depending on how the property came to the Town but they should be resolved before the auction.



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### ***Recent Losses***

The Board was informed of the sudden and unexpected passing of **Dick Biros** on March 20, 2015. Dick Biros has been a long time Wastewater Treatment Plant Operations Supervisor.

Town Assessor, Donna MacDonald's mother passed away as well on Saturday, March 21, 2015.

### ***Donate Life Event***

The *Donate Life* Flag Raising will be held on Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. to support the Organ Donation Campaign of the New England Organ Bank. Denise Swistak, a local resident and organ recipient will be speaking at this event.

### ***New Building Commissioner***

The new Building Commissioner, **Jeff Clemons**, will be starting his position on April 13, 2015, pending the Board's ratification.

### ***Town Lighting***

The Public Works Department is going to compile list of lighting in town to identify ownership, who has maintenance responsibilities, and if the Town can upgrade to LED lighting. This information is anticipated to be prepared for the Board within the next week.

### **Public Works Department**

#### ***Reserve fund transfer requests***

The Highway Department requested \$27,000 for the overtime fund, and \$3,000 for the permanent fund, which was depleted over the winter. These funds are needed for additional call-in hours for the remainder of the year and to assist with one retirement and one unexpected passing of a Wastewater Treatment Plant employee. The retired Superintendent will assist with the transition, and any unexpended funds will go on a warrant for Town Meeting to transfer back to the stabilization fund.

***Motion made to approve the reserve fund transfers in the total amount of \$30,000 for the Department of Public Works by Vice Chairman Blanchard***

***Second by Member Snoonian***

***Unanimous vote***

***Motion passed***

### **Police Department**

#### ***Nomination of Inspectors of Animals***

Paperwork must be done for the Commonwealth before each person is appointed at Town Meeting.

***Motion made by Member Snoonian to approve Daniel J. Lefebvre and Kimberly Witek as Inspectors of Animals for the Town of Adams***

***Second by Member Nowak***

***Unanimous vote***

***Motion passed***



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### Community Development

The State approved Scenic Railway funding so it is moving forward.

### Other Departments

#### *Building Inspector*

##### **Ratification of Building Commissioner**

Pursuant to Section 10 of the Town Charter, Jeff Clemons has been appointed by the Town Administrator at Grade 11, Step 8, pending ratification of the Board and passing a physical. He will begin the position on April 13, 2015. There were few applicants, and Don Fitzgerald sat through the interview process to help select someone appropriate for the community.

*Motion was made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to ratify Jeff Clemons to the position of Building Commissioner*

*Second by Member Nowak*

*Unanimous vote*

*Motion passed*

#### *Council on Aging*

##### **Reserve Fund Transfer Request**

A letter from *Council on Aging Director Erica Girgenti* was read by Chairman Harrington indicating that the Council on Aging has exhausted the \$3,000 Reserve Funds recently approved, and still has a full-time employee out with a medical condition with an unknown return date. The resulting shortfall will require additional Reserve Funds to be considered. Director Girgenti offered 3 suggestions for consideration by the Board to continue the operation of 2 vans.

- **\$6,171** would allow for normal operation of 2 vans, and 5 days a week until the end of June.
- **\$3,892** would allow for 2 vans operating 3 days a week, for 21 hours a week until the end of June.
- **\$475** would allow for 1 van operating every day, which would cover any sick time and pre-scheduled vacation days needed to cover up to one week of service. Operating only one van would likely have an impact on the downtown businesses.

Operating one van will likely have an impact on downtown businesses and would not be adequate to support the seniors in the community. July 1<sup>st</sup>, funding is expected and full transportation restored. The funding would be for fill-in van drivers and the full-time van driver will not be affected.

*Motion made by Member Snoonian to approve \$3,892 in Reserve Funds for Council on Aging for Van Service*

*Second by Vice Chairman Blanchard*

*Unanimous vote*

*Motion passed*



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## Town Counsel Report

*The Town Counsel Report was read by Ed St. John IV on behalf of Ed St. John III.*

Town Counsel reports the following:

- He assisted the Housing Department with a question regarding ownership of a parcel of land and researched records at the Registry of Deeds.
- He reviewed and commented on a question posed by the Town Administrator concerning the application of the Town Charter to a particular course of action.
- He reviewed documents presented by the Code Enforcement Officer issues, and was in communication with both the Code Enforcement Officer and Housing Court regarding Housing Court action against a property owner.
- He reviewed and commented on questions presented by the Town Administrator regarding potential amendments to personnel rules.
- He also reviewed and responded to questions posed by the Town Administrator's office concerning the rescinding of a previous vote by the Select Board and also to change the composition of the Conservation Commission.

## Announcements

### **Donate Life**

April is *National Donate Life Month*. Denise Swistak, an organ donation recipient, has spearheaded the *Donate Life Organ Donation Campaign* for the Town of Adams. There will be a *Donate Life* flag-raising ceremony at Adams Town Hall, Tuesday, April 7, 2015 at 11:00 a.m. The public is invited.

## Approvals

A Facility Use Request was submitted by *Adams Lassie League* to use Russell Field from April 1, 2015 to August 1, 2015 and Reid Field from April 1, 2015 to October 15, 2015.

*Motion made by Member Snoonian to approve the use of Russell Field from April 1, 2015 to August 1, 2015 and Reid Field from April 1, 2015 to October 15, 2015 by Adams Lassie League  
Second by Vice Chairman Blanchard*

*Unanimous vote*

*Motion passed*

A Facility Use Request was submitted by Martin Bush for *Little League Baseball* to use Valley Street Field and Beaver Bard Park April 1, 2015 to August 31, 2015

*Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to approve the use of Valley Street Field and Beaver Bard Park by Little League Baseball from April 1, 2015 to August 31, 2015.*

*Second by Member Snoonian*

*Unanimous vote*

*Motion passed*



# TOWN OF ADAMS

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### Agenda Items

#### **Intermunicipal Agreement**

The Intermunicipal Agreement with the Fire District will be discussed again, and representation from Town Counsel and the Counsel for the Fire District will be in attendance.

#### **Green Communities Initiative**

Continued discussion will take place about the Green Communities Initiative.

#### **Solar Pilot Agreement**

A Solar Pilot Program is looking for an agreement in lieu of taxes for the proposed solar array to be built on East Road. Maintenance for the current East Road Solar Project will be discussed as well.

### Good of the Order:

#### ***School Production***

**Member Nowak** attended Hoosac Valley High School production of *Grease*, and was well attended during all three days of the production. He noted the students were talented, and well received.

#### ***School Funding***

**Member Nowak** received an email from Lt. Governor Polito regarding school district funding. He said a different formula is needed for funding public schools, and more prominent Charter Schools should have their own formula. Special needs students don't attend charter schools but generate higher expenses.

#### ***Easter***

**Member Nowak** wished everyone a happy Easter, rejuvenation and a fresh start.

#### ***School Misinformation***

**Vice Chairman Blanchard** expressed he would like the Select Board to invite Julia Bowen from BART to clarify misinformation about charter schools so the school can defend themselves.

#### ***Bicycle Safety***

**Member Snoonian** advised checking before opening car doors on Park Street because cars are sharing the road with bicyclists.

The street will be lined with a bike lane and hopefully will have shared road signage. People on the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail are encouraged to come into the downtown and have a meal or cup of coffee.

#### ***State Survey***

**Chairman Harrington** advised the new Governor has sent out a survey because he wants to take care of communities and towns.



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### *Time Warner Cable Updates*

**Chairman Harrington** advised there are Time Warner Cable updates and free channels on their monthly report, and a copy is available at the office.

### *Handicapped Spaces*

**Member Nowak** noted there are no handicapped parking spaces on Park Street. They will be marked when the lines are painted.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

#### *Adjournment by Select Board*

*Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to adjourn the Select Board meeting*

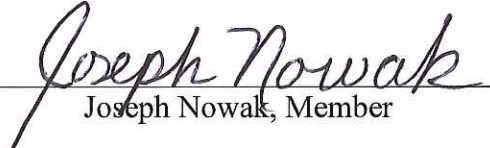
*Second by Member Snoonian*

*Unanimous vote*


*Motion passed*

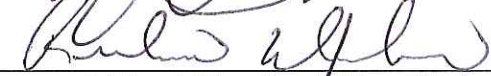
*Select Board Meeting Adjourned at 8:25 p.m.*

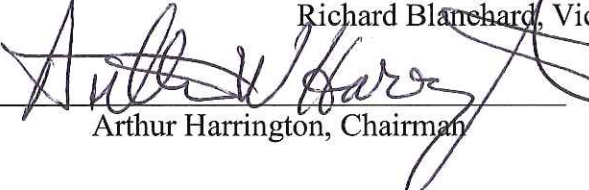
Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,  
Recording Secretary.

  
Joseph Nowak, Member

  
Jeffrey Snoonian, Member

  
John Duval, Member

  
Richard Blanchard, Vice Chairman

  
Arthur Harrington, Chairman