

ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES FOR SEPTEMBER 26, 2007

In attendance, Bill Johnson, Dottie Munroe, Maggie Whitney, Marie Zbikowski, Leo Janssens, and Jamie Piedrafite.

Also in attendance, the members of the Board of Selectmen, Jonathan Dennehy, Mark Carlisle and Christopher Gagnon, the Town Administrator Paul Boushell, and the Assistant to the Town Administrator, Sylvia Turcotte.

DISCUSSION WITH THE B.O.S. AND THE TA

This meeting was a session of questions and answers, with a list of questions between the Advisory Board and the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator for the purpose of having more open communication between the two Boards.

THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1) Have all needed reports and information sent via e-mail to all AB members?
Purchase a scanner if needed?

ANS. Scanner is no problem, we have no where to put one.

Reports and Information may be a violation of the opening meeting law. Cannot send out information, which is public business, which will not be discuss in an opening meeting.

2) CAN A LIST OF TOWN HALL EMPLOYEE'S PHONE EXTENSIONS BE PUT ON THE TOWN'S WEB SITE?

ANS. The list is on the website and in the Town Report.

3) DOES A MULTI-YEAR REVENUE/EXPENDITURE FORECAST ESIST FOR THE TOWN? IS IT UPDATED YEARLY?

ANS. It is complete up to end of fiscal year June '07. Paul Boushell responsible for this report. This report is projected from '08 through 2012

The framework has been started for capital recommendations for the Police, Fire and DPW Departments and the Town Planner has two year plan in place.

4) DOES A CASH MANAGEMENT PROGRAM EXIST? IS IT UPDATED DURING THE YEAR?

ANS. This is a matter of checks and balances, and is the combined responsibility of The Town Accountant, Treasurer, and an Auditor.

5) DOES THE TOWN HAVE AN ESTABLISHED FINANCIAL POLICY REGARDING THE FOLLOWING?

a) Free Cash – an amount set aside annually of unrestricted funds from previous fiscal year, and is generally distributed into the general fund.

b) Reserve Fund – policy in Finance Committee Handbook, the Advisory Board has the authority on this Fund. We as a Board can recommend on an article at a Town Meeting that the remaining funds be transferred to the Stabilization Fund. The more money the town has in this fund is a positive toward a bond rating for the town.

c) Stabilization Fund – Working on these funds are between the Advisory Board and the Board of Selectmen on goals for the next five years. A fund designed to accumulate amounts for capital and future spending purposes

d) Cash Management – See question #4.

e) - Debt Management

f) - Investment Management

g) – Banking Relations

6) CAN THE AB RECEIVE MONTHLY REVENUE/BUDGET EXPENDITURE REPORTS VIA E-MAIL?

ANS. – We already receive this information; will receive this report sometime in October. This info will be put on Website in 2 to 3 months. We have a professional service, “Virtual Town Hall” to create a website for the Town. Paul to get information on the contract.

7) HAS THE TOWN CONSIDERED ESTABLISHING A CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE MGL 4s 106B?

ANS - Advisory Board and Planning Board need to do Capital Planning. Create a committee to spear head this project. May involve a by-law change. Who do we want to have the authority to be responsible for this capital plan? Suggested to follow along the lines of the School Committee, have representative from each Department and/or Board to establish a capital plan. Leo to speak with the Planning Board on this matter.

8) UPDATE ON THE DPW RELOCATION?

ANS - Discussed in Ex. Session. Focus Group has looked at several sites for the DPW location. Questions to be answered, “what land is available, how much land do we need, what land is preferable”? There needs to be a cost benefit analysis done of each site.

9) – WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THE IG’S INVESTIGATION OF THE PIANO LEASE?

ANS. –Questions have been sent to the Town Counsel; do not know if questions have been answered.

10) - HAS THE LEASE BEEN SIGNED WITH THE FREDERICK’S ON THE PIANO MUSEUM?

ANS. – No not yet. In the hands of lawyers on both sides, and answers have not been received from either side.

Town of Ashburnham has proposed a lease, and why is it taking so long? Trying to accomplish what is best for the town and piano museum, it is an ongoing process. The Town is still collecting \$250 per month, and the lease continues.

11) - HOW MUCH MONEY WAS SPENT ON THE LEGAL FEES FOR THE PIANO MUSEUM LEASE?

ANS. Paul will find out this information and get it back to us.

12) – WHERE WILL THE MONEY COME FROM TO MOVE THE TOWN HALL BACK WHEN THE RENOVATIONS ARE COMPLETE?

ANS. –Warrant article or free cash, any money left under the debt ceiling for borrowing.

13) –THE AB WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE MONTHLY REPORTS FROM THE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS REGARDING OVERTIME EXPENSES?

ANS. – Paul to get this information, broken down by each department on a monthly report, and the reports will show percentages.

14) - ALL AB MEMBERS SHOULD RECEIVE A NOTICE OF ALL SELECTMEN'S MEETINGS TO INCLUDE THE BACKUP INFORMATION AND THE TA'S REPORT VIA E-MAIL

ANS. – Selectmen only to receive the “enhance agenda”, AB can receive basic agenda. Paul said he is not sending TA reports because of time restraints. AB to send information we have to the Selectmen.

15) - DOES THE TOWN HAVE A FIVE YEAR CAPITAL PLAN?

ANS. Answered on question #3.

16) - DOES THE TOWN HAVE A FIVE YEAR PERSONNEL PLAN?

ANS. It would be the worst thing we could do, wrong perception, becoming a reality!

17) – CHANGE THE BUDGET FORMAT WITH MORE HISTORICAL INFORMATION FROM PRIOR YEARS AND CHANGE THE STYLE IN WHICH THE DOCUMENT IS LAID OUT?

ANS. – AB does not like the current format, and Board would like to have a specific breakdown reported. We would like to look into another format.

18) – WHERE ARE THE ADDITIONAL MONIES COMING FROM TO COMPLETE THE PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING?

ANS – The additional money is \$600,000. \$50,000 per year through the Town's operating budget for 20 years starting in FY'09, debt exclusion.

19) – MONTHLY REPORT ON “OLD” TAX MONEY COLLECTED?

ANS. Excellent program in town, There will be a quarterly report on this.

20) – WHERE WILL THE MONEY COME FROM TO PAVE ROUTE 12?

ANS. Originally this money was to come from a ballot question, on the June 12, 2007 ballot, however the ballot question failed to pass. Looking into fixing road in possibly 2009 and 2010

21) – WHAT IS THE ACTUAL COST OF THE VMS STUDY?

ANS. - \$20,000 study gets the plan, another year to study, possibility of getting a grant.

22) – DOES THE TOWN RECEIVE ITS FAIR SHARE OF STATE AND FEDERAL AID VS SIMILAR SIZED TOWNS?

ANS. – formula in place, which is based on population. Based on EPV. (equal portion value)

23) – HAS A PLAN BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR DOWNTOWN RENOVATIONS THAT WILL COINCIDE WITH THE WORK THE LIGHT COMPANY IS DOING (SIDEWALKS, STREET LIGHTS)?

ANS. – It is all falling together.

24) – WILL THE TOWN HAVE A NEED FOR SOUTH FIRE STATION ONCE THE PSB IS COMPLETE? WHAT IS THE PLAN FOR THAT BUILDING?

ANS. – Ask the Chief. Will all trucks fit into new building? We need to have an in depth discussion on this question when we get closer to the completion of the PSB.

25) – DO ALL BOAT OWNERS RECEIVE A BOAT EXCISE TAX ON AN ANNUAL BASIS FROM THE TOWN? ANS. TA to look into this.

26) – WHAT WILL BE THE TOWN’S POLICY REGARDING “SNOW DAY” WHEN THE SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED?

ANS. – Employees will not work, it is a plowing issue, and a liability problem.

27) – DO WE HAVE A MUNICIPAL CALENDAR IN PLACE?

ANS. – Selectmen have started on this, it will be put on the website when completed.

OTHER MATTERS

Maggie passed out information on “special acts” which was instated in 1986 under the guideline of a “Town Administrator form of government”.

The town will be going with the school on the fuel oil program this year.

Meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dorothy J. Munroe

