

## ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES FOR AUGUST 27, 2007

In attendance, Bill Johnson, Dottie Munroe, Maggie Whitney, Leo Janssens, Jamie Piedrafite, and Marie Zbikowski. Also in attendance Jim Shanahan, Ashburnham's Town accountant.

### MINUTES

With one correction of the wording the minutes of the July 16, 2007 meeting were accepted as presented.

### QUESTIONS FOR OUR TOWN ACCOUNTANT

The Advisory Board at this meeting had the opportunity to ask Jim Shanahan, our Town Accountant, any questions pertaining to his job, concerning policy, reports or procedure as he maintains the financial records of the Town. Jim answered questions pertinent to the Town's purchase order procedure, and stated the Town does not have a P.O. system and a purchase order is only an authorization for a purchase. \$5000 or under is a verbal request, and \$25,000 or more must go the newspaper for advertising. All purchase orders are recorded on a monthly warrant and there is no form filled out that the Advisory Board could view before the warrant is generated. Jim also stated the warrant is not a public document, and that the Town Administrator is the chief financial officer of the Town.

The Town's total tax collection rate is at 99.3% with the property tax rate at 95.16%. Jim informed us also that the town has never had a bond rating, but obtaining one involves financial reporting of fixed assets and the growth in the town. Because we do not have substantial industry in town we rely on personal and property taxes as our main revenue source.

Jim went over the FY'07 year end budget transfers between Town department as of June 30, 2007, which is done in order to avoid deficits in some town departments, this according to M.G.L. Ch. 44s 33B. Each member of the Board received a copy of this report.

Jamie questioned the expense of moving the town hall to Oakmont and back, and also the cost of moving the Fire and Police Department to the new facility. The cost of this was addressed in Article #15 in the Town Warrant of the May 5, 2007 Annual Town Meeting. Jim responded to questions concerning the revenue of the Water/Sewer Dept. and he said the Water Dept. is doing fine, but the Sewer not so good.

### QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, INFORMATION, & REQUESTS FOR JIM

We, the Advisory Board would like,

The Projection Reports for the next four years, and the reports for the last four years.

Suggestion regarding "free cash" perhaps it should be moved into the "Capital Improvement fund or the Stabilization Fund" at the end of the year instead of the General Fund. Suggested we approach this idea to the I.T.A., he might accept it or may not, it all relates to the request of other departments, however, this request can go before the voters in an article on the Warrant at a Town Meeting.

It was brought to the Advisory Board's attention that the Town Hall renovations project may exceed the allocated funds limit. Can the Advisory Board get a report on a monthly basis on this???

Reserve Fund status report; can we get this report once a year? Jim to give us the balance as of June 30, 2007.

Questions regarding Kevin's salary for Paul Boushell salary, and what are the plan to fund the difference. Why does the Board of Selectmen need to pay that much more to an Interim Town Administrator?

The B.O.S. will be attending one of our meetings somewhere in the near future. We have questions and we need some answers. We need to be much more aggressive in our quest for information which we feel is on a "need to know" policy, as the A.B. is the official watchdog for the Town.

Bill to request info on the certification of the "free cash and the stabilization fund" from the years of 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007.

Suggested the Town Administrator look into having the Town Counsel under contract. We would like to what was the cost of the Town's legal services last year?

BUSINESS (will discuss the following next meeting)

Goal Setting 2008

Warrant Articles to deal with 92,000 budget surplus. We are all to think about this!

Warrant article to remove merit pay. No money in the budget.

Committee assignments for Town Departments. Discuss this at our next meeting.

INFORMATION

The 2008 Annual MMA Meeting and Trade Show is scheduled for January 11 and 12 in Boston, we will discuss who will like to attend at a later date.

Conflict of Interest Ethics Seminar will be held on October 17, 2007 in the Joe VonDeck Lecture Hall at Oakmont Regional High School at 6:00 p.m.

Association of Town Finance Committee Annual Meeting scheduled of November 3, 2007 at the Westford Regency Hotel and Conference Center, committee members will plan to attend.

A copy of the AWRSD Capital Plan Detail was given to each member of the Board.

Reserve Fund status will be updated.

Twenty One pages of research and questions by Maggie were to Chairman, Bill Johnson, Vice Chairman, Leo Janssens, and Secretary, Dottie Munroe.

NEXT MEETING

September 10, at 7 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20

Respectfully submitted,

Dorothy J. Munroe, secretary

