

MARCH 13, 2008 ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

In attendance, Bill Johnson, Dottie Munroe, Leo Janssens, Marie Zbikowski, Jamie Piedrafite, and Maggie Whitney. Also present, Town High Superintendent Don Ouellette, Board of Selectmen Chairman Mark Carlisle, and Town Administrator, Paul Boushell.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

Don Ouellette went over each account for the DPW budget for FY '09. Total at this time is \$973,625.

Same budget as FY '08, hours and wages are the same with the exception of an increase for one employee is now full time and three individuals who received licenses and raises are automatic, also Dave Whitney was promoted to foreman. Don said he did bring on two additional people in the Water Department. One employee is an extremely gifted mechanic. Steve Nims is second in charge of under the Supt. of DPW, and is the head of the Highway and Municipal Grounds. Mark Petersen is second in charge at the Water Dept.

Discussion concerning which department is responsible for mowing town lawns. Municipal Grounds is responsible for all lawn care with the exception of the Town Hall lawn, which is mowed by custodian Ed Schlott.

The question arose as to who will do the grounds at the PSB? This will be addressed by the B.O.S. The Fire Dept. has their own plow to plow the snow. The Town hires private contractor to assist in plowing snow on the public roads at a cost of \$30,000 to \$35,000 per year.

Sen. Brewer called Paul B. on March 11th, and said "Ways and Means" is seriously considering giving back to cities towns some portion, some amount, towards snow and ice removal for this past winter.

Paul to get a list of all town personnel cell phone users. Nextel tower due in April.

WATER DEPARTMENT

Don reported that the State says we ought to have three employees working full time strictly on the sewer department.

Don reported the Water/Sewer is getting the job done with the employees the Town has at the present time.

Discussed the cost fuel, and Don said they stayed with the same dollars as last year. Bill suggested we may be putting the Town in a difficult position, as cost per gallon would probably not be going down. Paul said we need to watch this situation, and it might be a good idea to put \$2000 at least in the Reserve Fund, or back into the departmental line items for fuel. Bill suggested the Reserve Fund would not be a bad strategy, not only to this issue but other issues, perhaps revenue from the State or other source to be put in Reserve Fund.

Collection for Water/Sewer is about 80%. Mark said sometimes there is a gap between the Water Department and the Town Hall in regards to water bills.

Because unpaid water bill are tied to the house, and should the house be sold with an unpaid water bill we are able to collect from the new owner. Mark also stated realtors should be made aware of this.

Discussed significant jump in wage/overtime, part of this is on call time. Also pump stations are not working, problem with debris going down the lines, clogging up the pumps. This is clearly a sump pump issue, with people pumping water from their basements into the sewer. Will correct this situation with a smoke test on any house with suspicion of water being pumped into the sewer.

Discussed different funding process for the Water/Sewer Department because this department is an enterprise system, it has to fund themselves.

Maggie pointed out that we need to raise \$120,000 to \$130,000 to cover snow & ice removal for FT '08, which is 1/3 the yearly cost. Don said his is one item we can go underneath on the budget, because to fully fund money for snow and ice removal, which is around \$200,000 would triple the department's budget. Paul said there are three ways to deal with this, first, at the end of the fiscal year pull money from one department to another,

second, go to a Special Town Meeting and have an article to transfer money from Free Cash, and third, just take it off the top of next years money. Paul hopes the state will ship back some

money to the deficit. If we put \$200,000 in the budget and used only \$120,000, the town has tied up \$80,000 which the Town cannot touch, or even get back and it would go into Free Cash. Discussion on vacation that have not been taken, because of the extra work with the Westminster Bridge, drainage problems, etc. Come April and May the Grounds and cemeteries is a really busy and cannot afford to have anyone on vacation.

Dry Hydrants discussed and Leo to speak to the Fire Chief in this regard.

Don spoke on the projects for the roads for the coming year. Chapter 90 has gotten out of hand, can do only certain things with Chapter 90 money.

Water tanks were discussed. Proposed moving High Street/Lashua Road water tank to a location on Cushing Street. Need to have a serious discussion on the "sewage" situation, suggest we address this at the Special Fall Town Meeting.

Jamie asked about the relocation of the DPW Garage.

Short discussion on possible new location for DPW.

Don said at some point we need to make a decision and it cannot be 10 years down the road. There are issues adversely affecting the DPW office in its present location, like water in the office, with \$35,000 worth of electronic equipment, no outside pavement, sand and dirt track into the office, and the electronic wiring is not what it should be. Don said it is amazing the State has not hit us about the salt shed.

Don will be meeting with the Mass. Hwy. On March 24, 2008, to discuss Center Street, Central Street, Water Street and Rindge Turnpike. Town must do the engineering, and the State will do the work. No sidewalks and no signs, town will need to find the money for this.

NEW BUSINESS

Maggie gave each member informational copies of reports, which included information on Athletic Fees, Taxes, Proposition 2 ½ override, teachers union, and the Oakmont School Road.

Leo to send a thank you note to Anne Cervantes for her quick response to sending us the information on “final payment on long term debt”, “properties in land court”, and the “estimated issuance cost for the Town Hall and Public Safety Building permanent debt”.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Next meeting March 24, 2008 at 7 p.m. in the Von Deck Room at Oakmont.

Respectfully submitted,

Dorothy J. Munroe, secretary

