

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM  
JOINT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
AND ADVISORY BOARD – MINUTES  
MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2009 – 7:00 PM  
LOWER LEVEL MEETING ROOM – TOWN HALL**

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PRESENT: Chris Gagnon, Chair, Jonathan Dennehy, Member, Maggie Whitney, Clerk, Norm Thidemann, Interim Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator. Advisory Board members in attendance were Dottie Munroe, Bill Johnson, Belden Divito, Leo Janssens II, Ron Reed and James Piedrafite.

Bill Johnson, Advisory Board Chair, distributed the agenda which included the Council on Aging, Conservation, Town Hall and Land Use budgets.

Johnson stated that the Advisory Board presently had two Reserve Fund Transfers for the Town Hall FY09 budget, under sewer expenses and energy expenses and one for the Accountant salary account under FY09. Thidemann stated that they should take action soon but that it wasn't needed right now. He stated that he would discuss this with Haines adding that there seems to be money in the Debt and Interest bottom line and these extra funds may be moved into the Reserve Fund to cover these. Johnson stated that he was encouraged to hear this.

Thidemann stated that for the FY10 Budget he was looking at taking 1% from all department budgets and move this amount to the Reserve Fund with the understanding that it would be moved out as needed, except for any fixed accounts which he would not take from. Johnson stated that this would be the easiest way to deal with shortfalls without town meeting. Thidemann added that this would help to create "free cash" and then to lump it all where it could go to Stabilization or Capital, etc.

Johnson suggested that all energy budgets for oil per gallon should be changed to reflect the \$2.09 per gallon instead of the \$2.50 per gallon now budgeted.

It was also noted that the sign out front of the Town Hall noting those involved in the renovation process be taken down.

A discussion followed on the payment of Water/Sewer costs for Town buildings.

Johnson noted that next up for discussion was the Land Use budget for FY10 with Mike Gallant, Building Inspector first up to go over the proposed Inspections budget. Gallant noted that all inspectors were up to the FY09 numbers at this time.

A discussion followed on the 40B project and any potential revenue. Dennehy noted that they should be very conservative on revenues from this project.

Lori Capone, ConCom Agent/Land Use Administrator noted that the Board of Health FY10 budget had no changes.

Jamie Piedrafite stated that they should look into having all the Town buildings under one department, maybe the DPW and that they should go out to bid for elevator maintenance and

inspections, fire alarm systems and boiler maintenance for all Town buildings. He also stated that there should be a budget template for all building maintenance under one director or the Town Administrator.

A discussion on the missed numbers for the school budget last year followed, noting how it occurred and how to prevent it from happening again.

There was some discussion on Snow & Ice and how the Ice Storm costs would be handled through FEMA and MEMA. Thidemann stated that the Town would have to raise some money to cover some of the cost.

Members of the Conservation Commission were present and included Lori Capone, Marshall Denis and Chris Picone. Picone stated that Ashburnham has a lot of wetlands, three times the average in Worcester County and this is why they are proposing that Capone, the ConCom Agent continue serving as the Land Use Administrator. Capone noted that she was successful in obtaining a Self-Help and Land & Water Grants in the amount of \$500k during the year 2007.

Gary Howland was present and noted that granting has to reside with the state or town and with the agent it helps to foster this. He added that there are 700 acres of town forest at this time and funds would go in the Conservation fund.

Capone explained each account in the Conservation budget. She noted that the revenue from ConCom this year was about \$8k and \$20k the previous year. She added that she would reassess the by-law fees to see about additional revenue. It was noted by the Inspectors that Capone does a lot of administrative work for them and that she does a good job.

The next budget discussion was the Council on Aging and both Mary Lee Muessel and Brian Aho were present. Muessel discussed how the COA serves the seniors in Ashburnham and distributed a report to both boards. She discussed the food purchases noting that they have four events per month which promotes enthusiasm among the seniors.

Reed inquired as to whether there would be any cut backs from the State or MART and she responded that there were none and added that there actually would be an increase in the state formula grant. She also noted that the MART funds are a match as long as they have dispatchers and an administrator at the COA.

Dennehy questioned the Meals on Wheels stipends and Muessel noted that they were cut last year but brought back to the year before in this budget. Johnson noted his concerns regarding food items purchased daily noting that he saw this as poor eating habits because of the pastries purchased and consumed. Muessel responded that volunteers are now bringing in morning foods. Johnson stated that food items shouldn't be charged under the Professional Development account. Lorna Fields a member of the COA Board stated that they have a sign-up sheet for seniors who are willing to bring an item and in this way they have cut back on expenses.

Muessel noted that the VMS Building budget is significantly cut and that they presently have 912 gallons of heating oil in the tank. Piedrafite questioned why there were no costs listed in the VMS Building budget for a fire alarm system inspection and Muessel stated that it was taken care of by the Fire Department or by Ed Schlott, the Town Hall Custodian. She noted that Ed has kept good records in the past on the VMS Building expenses.

Johnson questioned whether they had realized any savings on oil consumption and whether they had the actual gallon consumption figured out because of the oil deliveries that were made by Burke Oil and that were not being paid for. Muessel noted that they were saving significantly. It was noted by Johnson that they should be analyzing the gallons used and start justifying the budget now.

The Planning Board budget was discussed with John MacMillan and Bruce Whitney in attendance. MacMillan noted that right now the Land Use budget reflects a half-time Planner and a half-time Land Use Administrator. He also noted that they have been using Eric Smith for special projects and would like to continue funding this in the form of consulting fees.

At this time Johnson thanked everyone who came in for their budget discussions. He noted that their next meeting would be Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. with the Police, at 7:30 p.m. with the Fire and at 8:30 p.m. with the Library.

With no further discussion the meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sylvia Turcotte  
Assistant to the Town Administrator