

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
DECEMBER 18, 2006
SELECTMEN'S OFFICE, TOWN HALL**

This meeting was aired live on local cable television Channel 8.

PRESENT: Jonathan Dennehy, Chair, Mark Carlisle, Member, Chris Gagnon, Clerk, Kevin Paicos, Town Administrator, Bill Johnson, Chair Advisory Board and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Dennehy called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and read the agenda. Carlisle moved to accept the agenda and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

II. PRESENTATIONS, REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

A. **Correspondence:** Dennehy stated that they had received a letter from the Attorney for Mark Dymek who is planning the 40B Project in Ashburnham. Paicos noted that the letter outlines Dymek's plan and that this will be discussed further at the first meeting of the Board of Selectmen in January.

B. **Town Administrator's Update:** The report presented at the meeting is attached.

Paicos touched on a number of items on the report. Dennehy inquired about the Route 12 project paving and Paicos noted that this was at the top of the list for the spring.

Paicos stated that regarding the landfill closure, he had been notified by Waste Management that they are not making any money running the transfer station in Town and they want to close it mid-January. He inquired what the Selectmen wanted to do about this and added that only 30-40 people would be affected by the closure. He also added that a study is underway due to the licensing issue with the transfer station which may be almost finished at a cost to the Town of \$10k.

Gagnon stated that perhaps they should ask the Ashby Town Administrator how their transfer station is working out, as they run it themselves. Carlisle noted that maybe we could join with Ashby and that we could look into that possibility. Paicos stated that they would explore this possibility with Ashby.

Paicos noted that the interviews for the three finalists for the DPW Director position have been scheduled for the week of January 2nd.

Dennehy noted that he had heard that there may be some hesitation on the FY07 Budget state lottery payment installments. Paicos stated that he has been told that they will be on time. He added that we're not dependant on this anymore now that we have the quarterly tax bills coming in our cash flow is good and there's no need for borrowings.

Paicos stated that word was just received that we may be awarded a grant through the Land and Water Conservation Fund in the amount of \$300k. He noted that he wanted to recognize Gary Howland for the great work he has done in applying and getting grants for the Town. He also noted that because of this grant award which requires a town meeting vote; a Special Town Meeting will need to be scheduled before January 28th.

Paicos went on to state that he could have a draft warrant over the weekend and ready for the Boards first review by the first meeting in January or a special meeting. He noted that the warrant has to be posted 16 days before the meeting and that it will be challenging to meet this deadline.

Paicos noted that the Board would need to meet no later than January 8th to finalize the warrant so that it can get to the printers no later than January 10th.

Dennehy suggested that they should abandon the one Annual Town Meeting concept and replace it with an annual fall meeting as well as the spring Town Meeting. He added that then we could plan ahead. Paicos noted that many towns do this now.

Dennehy noted that he would prefer to have two meetings before the Special Town Meeting but that they should also deal with the sewerage matter in January. He suggested a meeting on January 2nd and January 8th.

Paicos suggested that the meeting on January 2nd be exclusively to go over the warrant and that the January 8th meeting would be regular business, the sewerage discussion and finalizing of the warrant. Dennehy asked if the date for the STM should be on January 23rd and Paicos stated that we would need to talk with the printer and then let them know.

C. Public Safety Building Committee update: Chris Gagnon gave a brief update stating that the Committee had a meeting scheduled for December 28th and that the cost estimator's report would be submitted and reviewed at that time. He added that they are still looking into additional work by the contractor at the site. Gagnon also noted that they are waiting for the numbers but "so far, so good".

D. Geoff Evancic – Discussion re: Building Inspection Department: Dennehy asked Mr. Evancic to voice his concerns. Evancic began by stating that he feels that the Town should get the Building Department to be more compliant and up to the MA Building Codes. He added that right now Ashburnham doesn't comply with these codes.

Evancic went on by suggesting a change in fee structure to put on additional building inspectors and a Board of Health agent.

Dennehy inquired if all inspections were happening at inconvenient times and Evancic stated that not always but that sometimes he is booked up and communication is erratic. He added that the Town needs full time inspectors or another part time inspector and noted that he would be willing to pay higher fees to get more convenience.

Dennehy noted that the Town had recently raised the fees a few years ago and Evancic stated that from a business point of view the costs are palatable and that he is willing to pay for the service.

Dennehy stated that they should also take into account the perspective of the homeowner who is his own general contractor. Paicos noted that new construction makes up 70% of the income to the Town. He added that he did a quick analysis and that 22 permits were issued for new construction this year so it is predominantly new construction.

Paicos noted that we currently charge very high permit fees. He stated that Evancic is not offering criticism of the staff. He added that our inspector does a professional job and has said that the Town needs more. He stated that we could raise the fees and put on a 20 hour a week, daytime inspector. He also added that the Town is growing.

Evancic stated that he is looking for daytime hours and is looking to trade dollars for service. Gagnon asked if he was looking at the elimination of Wednesday and Saturday hours and Paicos stated that he was but that they could keep Monday night hours. He added that it would be a modest increase in hours but during the day. He noted that the reality in a Town like ours is that we have to have a certain amount of residential growth.

Evancic stated that it takes forever to pull a permit and Carlisle noted that one person covering four towns is a problem. Paicos stated that our Town has 35 permits available but only used 22 which is a financial loss to the Town.

Dennehy stated that we want to encourage development but that we need balance and to go slow with developments in order to protect needs. He added that we should think of ways to improve services in Town and look at ways to make it more streamlined and easier. Paicos noted that it's the ideal time to discuss this because it's budget season.

Dennehy noted that Paicos would look at ideas and changes in our budget and the Board would look at his ideas. Gagnon reiterated that Paicos would put in a proposed plan to remedy the situation.

III. OLD BUSINESS

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Road Race Request:** Bogie Dumitrescu, who is in charge of this road race, explained his request to the Board. He stated that there would be no more than 20 or 30 people involved in this event. He noted that this would be the last 8 miles of a 50 mile race and that there would be only 10 runners on this stretch.

Dennehy noted that they should refer the decision on whether to have a police officer there to Chief Barrett and Dumitrescu stated that he did speak to the Chief.

Paicos suggested that a port-a-potty would not be needed and that in regards to the need for a police officer, they should let the Chief make the call.

Dennehy noted that the Board can waive the need for a port-a-potty but that they usually ask the Chief about coverage, so he can ask the Chief for his recommendation. Paicos stated that the Chief would make a reasonable judgment and that it really needs to be his recommendation.

Gagnon motioned to approve the permit, waive the port-a-potty and make it subject to the Chief's recommendation if coverage is required. Carlisle seconded and the motion carried.

Dennehy wished Mr. Dumitrescu luck with the race.

- B. Renewal of Licenses for 2007:** (The list of renewals is attached.) Carlisle motioned to grant the renewal of licenses on a blanket motion for the attached applicants and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.
- D. Relocation of Town Hall Fire Horn:** Present for this discussion, were Chief Zbikowski and Captain Nolan of the Fire Department.

Dennehy took a moment to thank the Oakmont Marching Band and Santa for Saturday's festivities. He stated it was a great success.

Dennehy stated that a discussion is needed on the historic fire horn placement which is now located at the top of Town Hall. He noted that now that they are building the new Public Safety Building and renovating the Town Hall the question has come up as to what to do with the fire horn.

Dennehy stated that the first discussion would be if it's necessary or important for the fire department to have it. Chief Zbikowski stated that this is a difficult question because while Dispatch can read the number, it's a good back-up if the radio system is down. He added that the Town gets credit on the insurance premium rating. He noted that we just barely made a 4 rating the last time so the horn has insurance value.

Skip Nolan stated that moving the fire horn would cost between \$5k and \$10k. Carlisle stated the when they renovate the Town Hall the cupola would be taken down and he wondered if this would affect the fire horn. Nolan stated that it wouldn't because they would turn it off anyway during the renovation.

Paicos noted that small traditional towns have fire horns and for people who do care, it means a lot and doesn't cost much money. He noted that his recommendation and the simplest thing to do is put this on the Town Meeting as a warrant article, asking for funds to repair the horn and in that way get the public's input.

Nolan stated that the best option would be to spend the \$12k to get a state of the art electronic horn which would be easier to move and no annual inspection would be required. Paicos noted that if the Town wants it, they should opt for the state of the art.

Dennehy stated that Paicos had a good idea to put it on the warrant as this is an emotional issue that needs to be addressed. Gagnon noted that this issue could wait to be put on the Annual Town Meeting warrant as there was no rush.

- C. Discussion on the Special Municipal Employee Status issue:** Gagnon began by stating that all boards run on volunteers in Ashburnham. He also noted that they would have to designate an entire board as Special Municipal Employees, not just one individual. He stated that the Board needs to vote to designate all boards as Special Municipal Employees. He noted that the way to format would be to designate them as an annual thing when appointments are made in June.

Dennehy noted that this would actually allow more people to serve on different boards. Paicos agreed with Dennehy that this was a good idea for all boards.

Paicos stated that Sylvia would work with him to put together a comprehensive list of all boards for the Board of Selectmen to review.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. **December 4, 2006 – Regular Meeting**

Gagnon noted a few changes to be made on the minutes. Carlisle motioned to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2006 Regular Meeting, as amended and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

VI. OTHER MATTERS

Dennehy noted that the Board had to approve a Discharge of Mortgage for 28 Hillandale Road. Carlisle motioned to approve the Discharge of Mortgage for 28 Hillandale Road and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

Dennehy then announced that the next meeting of the Board of Selectmen would be on January 2, 2007 and that they would also meet on January 8th and again on January 16th.

Dennehy announced that the Town Hall would be closed on Friday, December 22nd and would reopen on Tuesday, December 26th from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. for the Christmas holiday. He also noted that they would be closed on Monday, January 1st for the New Year holiday.

He announced the next Town Hall Renovation Meeting would be held on December 27th and the Public Safety Building Committee would meet on December 28th.

Dennehy wished everyone Happy Holidays!

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 9:10 p.m., Carlisle motioned to enter into Executive Session to deliberate upon matters which, if done in open meeting could detrimentally affect the position of the Town regarding the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property, contract negotiations with non-union personnel and not to reconvene into open session. Gagnon seconded and the motion carried.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 10:58 p.m., Carlisle motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte
Assistant to the Town Administrator