

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
FEBRUARY 21, 2006
SELECTMEN'S OFFICE, TOWN HALL**

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

PRESENT: Jonathan Dennehy, Chair, Mark Carlisle, Clerk, Ron Reed, Member, Kevin E. Paicos, Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Administrative Assistant.

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, Reed seconded and the motion was carried.

II. PRESENTATIONS, REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

A. **Tax Classification Hearing:** (Dick Coswell and Donna Burton of the Board of Assessors were present) At 7:05 p.m. Reed motioned to open the Tax Classification Hearing and was seconded by Carlisle. Motion carried.

Coswell stated that everything was settled and that the Town has a verbal okay to go ahead. Donna Burton confirmed this statement. Coswell stated that the new values totaled to \$625,403,918 which reflects a 10% jump from last year. He added that the residential and open space value is \$655,573,380 and the industrial and commercial is \$19,830,538 and that this is 3.2% down from last year.

Coswell stated that the Board needs to vote on a single tax rate which is the norm for most towns. Reed made the motion for the town to adopt a single tax rate for fiscal 06 and Carlisle seconded. Motion carried.

Paicos stated that because this certification is so late, the Town will only send out one bill for this fiscal year. He added that he will make sure that a public release goes out to the papers advising residents of this.

Paicos added that at the last meeting both he and the Board had expressed their displeasure as to how long this had taken but he wanted to note that Dick and the others did a great job to get this done in time for this meeting.

At 7:15 p.m. Reed motioned to come out of the Tax Classification Hearing and was seconded by Carlisle. Motion carried.

Paicos added that the tax rate will not be known until next week and that bills will go out a week after that.

B. **Town Administrator's Update:** A copy of the update is attached to these minutes.

Paicos stated that a decision had to be made on the 40B Proposal. Reed stated that the original intent of the current sewer system was to service existing homes and that the Board needs answers to some questions, such as, average flow, etc. before making a decision. He stated that they need a true average.

Carlisle asked how many EDU's were originally specked out and how many have been hooked up and not built on, etc.

Dennehy added that if the Town decided not to increase the EDU's the developers could take it to court against us. Carlisle agreed that a long-term vision was needed.

Paicos stated that right now they are looking at a possible rate increase again next month. Dennehy added that there's no question that houses with a connection are more valuable. He stated that when the Board met with the Water/Sewer Commissioners they found no options that weren't overly expensive. He stated that we can't say no to expanding the system until a meeting is set with Gardner first to discuss our possibilities.

Paicos stated that the Town would need to get federal funds to set up their own sewer system but that it would need to be regionalized to qualify, adding that it is a very expensive and prohibitive process. Paicos stated that he would do his homework on this and get back to the Board.

Paicos discussed the Town Hall Roof topic stating that when the Town Hall Renovation Committee met recently, without a quorum, they casually discussed some options. He stated that the current plan had been to relocate the town hall staff to the VMS building once the PSB was built, looking at 15-16 months out.

He went on to say that building costs are going up 1 to 2% a month which was taken into account when the bid for Town Hall renovations was brought before the residents at Town Meeting. He stated that if we started now to do the renovations we could save a phenomenal amount of money, between \$500k to \$750k, even with the cost of moving out. He added that he spoke with Rich Wright about leasing his new addition for a year and Wright stated that he didn't have a restaurant yet to move in so he would consider the move for a monthly lease fee of \$3,200. Paicos stated that this was a great opportunity to save the Town a lot of money and these advantageous events occurring at this time would make it possible. He stated that this would be discussed further at the next Town Hall Renovation Committee meeting on Monday, February 27th at 6:15 p.m.

Paicos stated that he was pleased to announce that we have a new Treasurer, Anne Cervantes. He added that he was very impressed with her and that she is a real pro with a strong background. He also stated that he was very pleased to have her on board and that she would be at the next meeting to be introduced to the Board.

Paicos announced that he has hired, on a part-time contractor basis, Lori Capone as the ConCom Agent for the Town. He stated that she will be in on Fridays and maybe Saturdays depending on the workload and that she would also attend the ConCom meetings. He stated that if Westminster goes along with a shared agent, then we will advertise and may hire her, depending on her work.

Paicos noted that he has been in touch with DEP regarding the landfill closure and that they have been very helpful, giving us names to contact for assistance. He mentioned John Regan in particular, was very helpful.

Paicos stated that the FY07 budget is balanced and that when he put in the revenue numbers he did include the Governor's proposal. He added that we may get more but he wanted to be conservative. He stated that he put the school budget in for 4.8% of new monies which equals to only 3.5% increase in the budget.

Paicos stated that the town budget has only grown about 3% and that the department heads deserve a lot of credit. He also wanted to acknowledge the Town Accountant, Jim Shanahan for doing a terrific job. He added that he is very impressed with Jim.

Paicos noted that he has set up a meeting with everyone concerned on the Murray Road rezoning issue and it will take place on Monday, February 27th at 4:00 p.m.

Paicos also noted that we applied and received a grant from MIIA in the amount of \$2,500 for a safe driving program.

III. OLD BUSINESS

No old business.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Dennehy stated that the MMA has sent out an action alert to ask town officials to write to the legislators to lift the lottery cap and they urge the town officials to send an official letter. Dennehy stated that this is a strong message. He added that in 1971, the towns and cities were promised to get 100% from the lottery but only received about 20% this past year.

Reed motioned to instruct the Town Administrator to prepare letters as instructed by the MMA and Carlisle seconded. Motion carried. Paicos stated that he would send letters to Rep. Rice and Sen. Brewer.

A. Review and approval by the Board on the warrant for the Special Election on March 21, 2006: Dennehy reminded the public that there would be only one question on the ballot and he proceeded to read the warrant (copy attached). Carlisle motioned to approve the warrant for the Special Election on March 21, 2006 and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 6, 2006 – Regular Meeting
Carlisle motioned to approve these minutes and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.

B. February 6, 2006 – Executive Session
Carlisle motioned to approve these minutes and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.

Carlisle motioned to release the above mentioned executive session minutes, which are pertaining to the Town Administrator's contract and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.

C. February 9, 2006 – Joint Meeting with Public Safety Building Committee
Carlisle motioned to approve these minutes and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.

Dennehy stated that at long last Kevin Paicos' contract has been signed. He added that the Board has been very pleased with his efforts on their behalf. Paicos stated that he still loves the job.

VI. OTHER MATTERS

Dennehy announced the Town Caucus is on Monday, February 27th at 7:00 p.m. downstairs in the Drop-in Center and that the purpose is to nominate candidates for public office in town. He added that the Town Election is scheduled for Tuesday, April 26, 2006.

Dennehy listed the following scheduled meetings as well: Advisory Board meeting on Monday February 27th at 7:15 p.m. in the Selectmen's meeting room, Town Hall Renovation Committee meeting on Monday, February 27th at 6:15 p.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting room and Tuesday, March 21st is the Special Election at J.R. Briggs School

Dennehy stated that the next meeting would be held on Monday, March 6, 2006 at 7:00 p.m.

Carlisle stated that the Town is facing a lot of projects right now and that we need to do proactive type work. He stated that a committee should be set up to look at how we will do maintenance on our town buildings. He added that we need to allocate money towards keeping our buildings maintained. He stated that in particular we should focus on the town barn relocation and a way not to impact the town taxes. He stated that it would pay off with huge dividends down the road and it is a huge priority.

Dennehy stated that Town Administrator should start working on this and Paicos stated that he would work out drafting a charge. Reed noted that a capital plan fund was started 10 years ago with a vision to put \$100k a year into this fund but it hasn't happened.

Carlisle stated that unless people are willing to step up to the plate this won't happen and volunteers are needed. Reed added that if the state understands local needs then we can have a line item. Carlisle stated that it has to happen.

Dennehy asked who was in favor and it was a unanimous "aye" vote by the Board.

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:23 p.m., Dennehy stated that the Board would enter into Executive Session to deliberate upon matters which, if done in open meeting could detrimentally affect the position of the Town regarding contract negotiations with non-union personnel and not to reconvene into regular session.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:15 p.m., Reed motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Carlisle. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte
Administrative Assistant