

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES  
DECEMBER 4, 2006 (Amended)  
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 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. **Review of FY05 and FY06 Audits:** In attendance were Bill Fraher, Auditor, Jim Shanahan, Town Accountant, Anne Cervantes, Treasurer, Carla Clifford, Tax Collector and Advisory Board members Bill Johnson, Dorothy Munroe, Leo Janssens, Jim Piedrafite and Marie Zbikowski.

Dennehy stated that the full financial team was in attendance and added that this should be noted as a joint meeting with the Advisory Board. Dennehy stated that Bill Fraher has been the Town's auditor for the past 4 years.

Dennehy gave the floor to Fraher and he began by noting that there weren't a lot of big issues on either audit. He added that the FY05 Audit had been held up due to GASB34.

Jim Shanahan proceeded to explain what was involved to convert to GASB34 and what the results would mean for the Town and the fixed assets.

Fraher noted that GASB stands for Government Accounting Standards Board and he added that Ashburnham is one of the few towns who do this work themselves. Dennehy extended his congratulations to Jim Shanahan and those who worked on the GASB34.

Fraher then proceeded to go over the reports in some detail noting that the Town's revenues have increased by 3.2%. He went on to note that in the Management Letter the comments were considered "other matters" which is the least serious category, and added that Ashburnham has the same issues that every town struggles with. He also noted that having a Treasurer now is a good thing as she has consolidated accounts, which is definitely an improvement.

Dennehy stated that we need to do more and be more efficient in regards to tax title liens. Fraher stated that we need to get a more public priority to collect taxes adding that the staff is making this a priority.

Dennehy inquired as to the Water/Sewer transition to the enterprise fund and Fraher noted that software is the biggest issue because it doesn't show a report of aging accounts and has no backup. He stated that this needs to be fixed.

There was a short discussion on Title 5 Accounts Receivable collections.

Kevin Paicos then proceeded to explain the comments in his memo (attached). He noted that Bill Fraher did a great job on the Management Letters. He also noted that the finance team, Anne, Carla and Jim all did an outstanding job.

Paicos reported that audit comments regarding the Light Department were minor issues and did not intend to take corrective action by the Board of Selectmen. He went on to say that the Board agreed that no corrective action concerning the Light Department audit comments were necessary at this time.

Paicos stated that the Water/Sewer and Tax Title are major issues that have been on our audits for the past two years and added that they are beginning to see improvement in these items. He noted that Jim Shanahan has done a good job. He also noted that Anne Cervantes did a great job of clearing the bank account structure and other issues.

Paicos stated that the Water/Sewer Munis software should be installed in January or February at the Town Hall for now. He added that they would physically bring the clerk to the Town Hall to do the billing. He noted that the plan is in place but that there still is a lot of work to be done.

Paicos went on to say that the Town has an absolutely great finance team and that they would see much progress.

Gagnon inquired as to how the tax rate would be affected by the approved Town Hall Renovation and Public Safety Building overrides and Paicos noted that they can now begin to look at the drawback schedule and look into the tax rate impact.

Dennehy thanked Bill Fraher and the financial team for all their hard work.

- B. Correspondence:** Dennehy stated that there was no significant correspondence to discuss.
- C. Town Administrator's Update:** The memo and report is attached.

Paicos reviewed the attached revenue report memo first, touching on the highlighted problems/issues. He noted that they are well underway with the Tax Title liens and anticipates that there will be more than predicted. He also noted that the Town should collect \$100k in Cherry Sheet funds adding that this would offset any shortfalls.

Paicos also wanted to assure the Board that the Town Accountant watches this very closely so they shouldn't be concerned. Paicos did state that Jim would be updating this report once a month.

Paicos then proceeded to go over the highlighted points in his TA report. Dennehy commented on the Page Beach update stating that Chapter 80 betterments would be going out to the residents and he wondered if we had a plan to advise them. He suggested putting a period of time that they can pay the betterment. Paicos noted that this is a standard and it will be done the right way.

Paicos stated that the Frederick's have asked for a copy of the appraisal which was done on the Stevens Building a few months ago and that he doesn't recommend giving this to them. The Board unanimously agreed.

Paicos noted that the Town Hall has a new phone system and Dennehy asked that the new extension number list be placed on the Town's website. Sylvia Turcotte stated that she would do this.

Dennehy inquired about the proposed feasibility study on the Stevens Building and the VMS building. Paicos noted that the Stevens building needs repairs and that the VMS building has massive problems. He added that Paul Boushell is working on the RFP and once it is finished he would pass it by the Board of Selectmen and the Advisory Board.

Paicos then noted that once they review it the RFP will be put on the Special Town Meeting warrant for the money to get this done.

Gagnon inquired if the rent of office space for the Town Hall employees during the renovation would cost more than the actual cost of inflation. Paicos noted that it shouldn't cost more. He added that he did an analysis on this last year and it showed that it makes good financial sense.

Paicos touched on the issue with the Habitat lot on Sherbert Road stating that they have to consider going back to a Special Town Meeting to donate the lot next to it. He added that neither lot is buildable by itself but together it would be possible. He stated that his recommendation would be to have an article on the STM warrant to ask the Town's people to donate this second lot. He also noted that he wanted to expedite this. Dennehy agreed that they need to take the steps to actually get a building built for Habitat. Paicos stated that the perk tests would be donated and that we need to support this to fulfill the original intent.

**D. Public Safety Building Committee Update:** Gagnon stated that the site has been black-topped and drain pipes have been put in. He added that all the vulnerable areas have been black-topped and contained. He then gave a quick review of the past months work by the committee.

**E. Rick Sicard of the Fire Department – re: Public Safety Building Bidding:** Rick Sicard stated that he was representing the Ashburnham Fire Association not the Department. He began by stating that there was a rumor of another override and he is concerned about this and wanted to get an RFP out there to at least build the part of the building to store the vehicles. He also stated that he would ask to possibly put the RFP out on the old design at the same time as the new one for the taxpayers to decide.

Dennehy stated that Sicard had gone before the Public Safety Building Committee on Thursday night. He questioned what was left out of the design that Sicard thought should be included. Sicard stated that there was no room for expansion and that this building would be high maintenance and he also added that he didn't feel that this building would suit the needs for the next 20 or 30 years.

Gagnon responded that he disagreed regarding the maintenance issue and that he felt it would be interesting to look at both. He stated that going out for bid again would be costly, doubling the cost. He noted that he would be willing to wait after they receive the bids and then compare. Sicard questioned how this would help the taxpayers and Gagnon responded that in 2 weeks time they could use the construction drawings to really see the costs.

Carlisle stated that he wanted to bring up two points: 1) He would like to see the alternate on the apparatus bays separate adding that these should be up by the summer or fall. He also noted that he felt very strongly about this. 2) He doesn't want to see any shortcomings going back to the taxpayers, adding that he doesn't want to "nickel and dime them".

Dennehy noted that construction could continue even if a shortfall was encountered and they could try to find ways to get the extra money while it's going on. Gagnon noted that the committee would have to work really hard on this.

Sicard reiterated that the primary concern should be getting the bays built. Dennehy agreed adding that he was relieved at what he was hearing and that things would fall into place once all the information is received. Chief Barrett added his comment by stating that he feels that the entire building would be built by the set timeframe and the bays would be included.

Dennehy stated that more discussion would follow once they get the cost estimates in.

Dennehy then took a moment to personally thank Chief Zbikowski and his department for having responded so quickly to the incident at his home. He noted that you never really appreciate this until they have to respond. He added that the Town has quality men and women and that he is thankful and extremely grateful.

III. OLD BUSINESS

IV. NEW BUSINESS

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**A. November 20, 2006 – Regular Meeting**

Carlisle motioned to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2006 Regular Meeting and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

VI. OTHER MATTERS

Dennehy stated that the next meeting would be on Monday, December 18<sup>th</sup>.

Dennehy also announced that Santa Clause is coming to Town on Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. and would be at Town Hall.

Dennehy also wanted to congratulate the Oakmont football team, the Spartans who won the Super Bowl game 20-0. He stated that this was an amazing feat!

Dennehy stated that the Fire Department was saddened by the news of the death of Harvey Salo who was very active in the community.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 10:01, 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 10:26, Carlisle motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte  
Assistant to the Town Administrator