

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
DECEMBER 10, 2007
VON DECK LECTURE HALL, OAKMONT REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**

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

PRESENT: Mark Carlisle, Chair, Jonathan Dennehy, Member, Chris Gagnon, Clerk, Paul Boushell, Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: At 7:00 p.m., Carlisle read the agenda. Dennehy motioned to accept the agenda and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

II. PRESENTATIONS, REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

A. **Town Hall Renovation Committee Update:** Mark Carlisle asked Dave Sargent, the Chair of the Town Hall Renovation Committee for his update. Sargent stated that the progress continues to be very good and that the Committee is happy with everything. He noted that the project is about 60% complete at this time and that it looks like it would be complete in mid-March with the offices moving back at the end of April.

Sargent continued his update and stated that the cupola, the vault and the masonry were completed. He also noted that the interior was essentially done and had been approved by Mike Gallant the Building Commissioner. Sargent stated that the elevator would be installed by the end of January and then at that point the finish work would be remaining. He added that the contractor is doing a great job and is keeping costs down. Carlisle agreed and added that he was very impressed with the work they've done and also noted that they hired some local people to do some of the work such as the cupola repair.

Boushell also noted that he has already asked the Town Accountant for an updated spreadsheet on costs for this project. He thanked the Committee and Don Bucchianeri, the Project Manager for all their hard work and also noted that the General Contractor has done an outstanding job. He also mentioned that he wanted to acknowledge Stan Herriott and Don Ouellette for the work their departments have done on this project which has saved the Town money. He added that the paving is configured in for the spring as well.

Carlisle acknowledged the Committees for both projects and the great job that they have done.

Dennehy inquired about any additional appropriations that have been asked for and Boushell stated that he couldn't say for sure right now but that there is some money there. Carlisle thanked Dave Sargent for the update.

B. **Correspondence:** Carlisle stated that the Board received some correspondence from the Department of Conservation and Recreation on the proposed acquisition of 80 acres on Fitchburg Road. He went on to state that the property is currently undeveloped and if acquired, the property would be incorporated into the state system of parks, reservations and forests, for open space and natural resource protection and passive recreational use, as part of the Willard Brook State Forest. He noted that they asked the Board to announce this proposal and to waive the 120 day period required to proceed.

C. **Town Administrator's Update:** Paul Boushell stated that a ZBA form was re-done by the Conservation Agent and the Land Use Administrator. He added that Mike Gallant the Building Commissioner thought this form was a great step in making the process easier. Carlisle noted that the process could be very complicated but this will make it easier. Boushell noted that the form would be on the website the following day and would make the permitting process more streamlined.

Boushell noted that as a point of interest, last Monday's storm cost the Town approximately \$18,400. He added that the tax rate certification hearing would be held on Monday, December 17th in order to set the tax rate so that the tax bills can go out as soon as possible as the Town needs the cash flow. Dennehy stated that no short-term borrowing would be required with the quarterly tax billing system.

Boushell noted his thanks to the Town financial team, Carla Clifford, Donna Burton, Dick Coswell, Jim Shanahan and Anne Cervantes for all their efforts to get this done.

Dennehy stated that there was a meeting two weeks ago with MA Highway, Senator Brewer, Rep. Rice, Paul Boushell, Don Ouellette and himself to look into getting some help from the State for our town projects. He noted that Senator Brewer ran the meeting and stated that he has obtained the commitment on repairs of the Ashby Road Bridge. It was noted that our DPW would do the project themselves for less cost in late spring or early summer and then get reimbursed. Brewer also noted that Ashby Road is scheduled for 2011 and would be funded out of TIP funds. Dennehy stated that it was a very positive meeting. Carlisle inquired about maybe getting Ashby Rd. done before 2011 and Dennehy stated that Don Ouellette is working on engineering plans now and this may help and that because Senator Brewer has a lot of pull this is in the pipeline. He added that Senator Brewer is a great help to Ashburnham.

- C. Public Safety Building Committee Update:** Gagnon stated that the first floor of the office building is up and the truces would go up next week. He noted that the building should be closed in by Christmas as planned. He stated that 1) they would install a 10k gallon oil tank in the ground, which would be filled with water for now to keep it underground; and 2) they would do the trenching for the new sewer line, hoping not to hit any ledge. Boushell stated that he talked to Don Ouellette on the yard hydrant and could also do the sewer line work to help out with the project. Gagnon stated that they would be appreciative of this help and noted that August 18th is still the move in date, but that they have been given a 30-day leeway but not formally.

Gagnon also noted that the excavation work would take place in the spring for the oil tank but that the sewer line would be done asap. He added that the garage is pretty much finished and he expressed his thanks to the Town for their assistance. Carlisle noted that they're doing a wonderful job.

III. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Continued discussion on new Ambulance Procedure:** Carlisle asked for any comments from the Board and Gagnon suggested that they roll it past Town Counsel for her input on any follow-up of legal statements to follow this letter.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Review and approval of annual license renewals:** Dennehy read the list of renewals (attached) beginning with the Common Victualler's licenses. Dennehy motioned to approve and was seconded by Gagnon. He read the Liquor License list and motioned to approve. It was seconded by Gagnon. Dennehy read the Class IV Repairman's list and motioned to approve and was seconded by Gagnon. The Class II license list was read by Dennehy and he motioned to approve with a second by Gagnon. And the Coin-Operated License list was read and he motioned to approve this list which was seconded by Gagnon. All were in favor.

- B. Discussion on priorities for the Town Administrator:** Carlisle noted that the members have come up with a "wish list". He then proceeded to go over each item. Item 1 – Roads and Capital Plan. Boushell noted that this is ongoing and that State and Federal grants were being pursued and that this is also ongoing. Item 2 – Relocation of Town Barn. Boushell noted that this was ongoing. Item 3 – The Rezoning of Town Center. Item 4 – VMS Building. Item 5 – 5 Year Capital Plan. Item 6 – Fredericks Lease finalizing. Boushell noted that this should be completed within 3 weeks. Item 7 – Hiring of new Building Commissioner. Boushell noted that we are fortunate to still have Mike Gallant in this position as they have gone out twice now to see about filling this position and have come up with no one. Item 8 – Obtain Bond Rating for Town. Boushell stated that Anne Cervantes is working on this.

Item 9 – Sewer Contract with Gardner. Carlisle noted that this contract comes up in 2010 so we need to deal with this soon. Dennehy noted that there is a new Mayor in Gardner now so new negotiations would have to be started. He added that the next step would be to meet with him and this should be scheduled in February or March. Item 10 – Review/revise AWRSD contribution formula. Item 11 – On-line system for tax payments. Boushell stated that this is all ready up and running. It was noted by Carlisle that this should be placed on every agenda to let everyone know.

Item 12 – Work with Briggs Building Committee. Item 13 – Bresnahan Center project. Carlisle noted that they need help from the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen.

Carlisle noted that this is a tickler type of list and Dennehy added that this would be in addition to all the other things listed in the Town Administrator's contract. Dennehy noted that the Briggs project would be on Boushell's plate very soon and that the bond rating is the key thing due to all the projects in Town.

Carlisle noted that the sewer connection agreement with Gardner is a very important item. He advised Boushell to take the list under advisement and attempt to prioritize for a future meeting and further discussion.

Dennehy stated that he wants a budget calendar from now to the May Town Meeting as it is important to get this established at this time. He noted that it should include timelines and deadlines to track the process as well as schedule meetings with the Advisory Board. He added that the calendar should include the preparation for Town Meeting with the opening and closing of the warrant, drafts and language. He noted that he wants to avoid doing all of this at the last minute and that this calendar would be posted on the website. He asked Boushell to do up a draft calendar for their review. Carlisle added that he would like to see projections on the possible shortfall of the lottery funds from the state, etc. to be prepared to formulate the numbers for the next budget.

At this time, Bill Johnson noted his concerns with the timely financial reporting which he feels is very inadequate. Dennehy noted that this falls under the Town Administrator's job description. Carlisle noted that Johnson's point was well taken and that they would see that this is remedied. Boushell stated that the report in question was completed by 2:00 today, but that this "would not happen again under my watch". Carlisle noted that this would go on top of the Town Administrator's list of things to be done. Dennehy also added that they would work out a meeting schedule as well as a timeline going forward. Boushell stated that they should consider it fixed.

Dennehy also stated that having joint meetings with the Advisory Board would alleviate any issues going forward. Gagnon added that the Advisory Board has always made an effort to work with the Selectmen and he would like to see them get the information they have requested as well as having joint meetings. Carlisle stated that this would be his own personal priority to get a continual information stream from the Town Accountant to the Advisory Board as well as the Board of Selectmen and that this needs to be rectified. Boushell again stated that there would be no more "begging" for information. Johnson ended by stating that the Advisory Board wants to be able to participate as best they can and to advise.

- C. Discussion of Lottery Aid Proposal:** Dennehy gave a brief history regarding this issue which includes a petition to the legislature to return the funds to cities and towns due them from the Lottery funds, which amounts to about \$450m. He noted that these funds are in the State Stabilization Fund right now. He noted that he would like to see them take the money out of this fund and give it back to the cities and towns. He stated that Ashburnham would get \$419,044 which is almost half of what the Town received for FY08 from the State. He did note that this would be a one-time thing, but that its our money and we should demand it back. He added that the MMA is against this.

Dennehy stated that he is only concerned about the citizens of Ashburnham at this time and they need this back. He made the motion that a letter should be sent from the Board of Selectmen to support this measure as a moral issue and serious financial issue for the Town and was seconded by Gagnon.

Carlisle noted that a letter would be put together on this motion by the Board.

- D. MA School Building Authorization:** Gagnon reported on this recent event. He noted that the Briggs Committee met with the new MA School Building Authority on Friday of the last week. He stated that funds to build a school are slim pickings right now with only \$800m available state wide. He stated that Ashburnham has been right in there with their pleas asking the State to recognize us as in desperate need. He noted that Ashburnham has been invited to participate in a one-year plan where the state would pay more than 55.6% of the cost of a feasibility study.

He added that the Town would be expected to hire a project manager and an architect for the design and that the average cost for this is \$250k. He did say that the Committee has done a lot of work already and that they are looking at about \$100k in order to participate in the feasibility study if we go forward with this. He noted that this is an opportunity that won't come again and that once this is done the plans would be given to their Board and we could start earning more points, but that it would start at 55.6%.

Gagnon did say that they could work their way up with what they have already done and could push into the 60% range on the construction plan. He added that if this is acceptable, they would have to go before the Town to see about financing the remainder within a short period of time.

He stated that Mike Zapantis and Dave Christianson had done a tremendous amount of work which saved us a lot of money. It was noted by Dennehy that they all agree that a lot of money could have been saved on the Public Safety Building if a feasibility study had been done.

Gagnon stated that if they come up with a design and only have 120 days on the financing it could be a problem but that choosing the project manager would not be an issue. He stated that \$100k is a lot of money and that he wasn't sure where to get it but that they would have a design to follow as well as a plan.

Dennehy noted that it's good for the Town that we were chosen to be in this position but it will come down to the question of "can we afford to?" add one more project. Carlisle stated that he appreciates the Committee's work on this.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. November 19, 2007 – Regular Meeting

Dennehy motioned to approve the minutes of November 19, 2007 and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

VI. OTHER MATTERS

Carlisle noted that the Village Center Zoning District Study Committee needs one more member and he asked interested parties to please come forward and sign up by talking with Paul Boushell or Sylvia or to send a letter of interest.

Carlisle also noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 17th at 7:00 p.m. in the Von Deck Room at Oakmont. He stated that a Tri-Board meeting was scheduled for the next evening at Mt. Wachusett College.

It was noted by Boushell that the hours for the Town Offices on Christmas Eve had not been decided as of this meeting.

Gagnon brought up the subject of "snow days". Boushell stated that it is the School Superintendent's call. He also noted that a message would be placed on our phone to advise residents when the Town offices are closed due to weather concerns, to call 911 in regards to burial permits, etc.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:01 p.m. Dennehy motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Gagnon.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator