

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
MAY 7, 2007
STEVENS MEMORIAL LIBRARY**

This meeting was taped for local cable television Channel 8.

PRESENT: Jonathan Dennehy, Chair, Mark Carlisle, Member, Chris Gagnon, Clerk, and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator. Paul Boushell, Interim Town Administrator was absent due to illness and Kevin Paicos, Town Administrator was at military training.

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: At 7:03 p.m., Dennehy read the agenda noting that this meeting was being taped at the Stevens Memorial Library. Carlisle moved to accept the agenda and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

II. PRESENTATIONS, REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

Dennehy noted that Item A on the agenda, the reorganization of the Board of Selectmen, would be moved to the end of the meeting.

A. Correspondence

Dennehy noted that the Board has received a notice from MOC, the Montachusett Opportunity Council, stating that Ashburnham needs to appoint a representative for both Westminster and Ashburnham to serve on this committee. He stated that he was asking for any interested resident who might want to serve on this committee to please contact Sylvia Turcotte in the Administrator's office.

B. Town Administrator's Update

Paul Boushell, the Interim Town Administrator was absent due to illness so they passed over the Administrator's update.

C. Public Safety Building Committee Update

Gagnon stated that he was elated that the voters very graciously approved the Public Safety Building Project Article at Town Meeting and to also accept Cushing's gift. He added that the total cost of \$7,506m included: \$1.5m from Cushing; \$4.5m in borrowing; \$500k from Cushing; \$136k from the sale of the old fire station; \$270k from Cushing and \$600k from the voters.

Gagnon motioned to award BW Construction as the general contractor with the stipulation not to exceed the \$7.5m. Carlisle seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Dennehy noted that the vote on Saturday at Town Meeting was a borrowing authorization out of the operating budget of the Town. He stated that he had concerns about this and that the Board of Selectmen should agree that all non-recurring revenue would be used to make a dent in this \$600k borrowing. Gagnon agreed and stated that they may find grant money, such as Homeland Security money, etc.

Dennehy stated that they all have concerns over the long term of the operating budget and that they should keep diligently pursuing money towards this.

Carlisle inquired if they were all set with the ZBA and the building codes and Gagnon responded that they were and that he had already spoken with Dave Perry of the ZBA, the Building Commissioner, Mike Gallant and Lori Capone, the Conservation Agent.

Gagnon stated that Gallant would issue a building permit at risk as the ZBA is booked up right now. He added that everyone is scrambling to accommodate this and that a start date of May 28th may be possible.

Gagnon expressed his thanks to all the Boards and Committees and everyone for all their support. He noted that the groundbreaking may take place on Thursday, May 17th at 6:30 p.m. and that they may sign the contract on Friday, May 11th.

Dennehy then stated that he was asking to use the Town Letterhead on a letter he wanted to send out on the Regional School budget process. He noted that he needs the Boards permission to do so. He went on to state that there was a hearing the next day in regards to this issue and he was going to testify on the Town's behalf. He stated that this would commit \$150k a year over a five year period which would go towards the school's capital items in order to maintain repairs that were needed. He added that our legislatures have all signed on to sponsor this bill.

Gagnon motioned to authorize the letter as written on Ashburnham letterhead and Carlisle seconded with the motion carried unanimously. Dennehy stated that he would be asking for a preamble to the bill to have this retroactive due to the vote which was taken on Saturday at Town Meeting.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. Update on Delinquent Tax Collection Program (Jim Shanahan, Anne Cervantes and Carla Clifford)

Dennehy stated that the delinquent taxes has been an audit comment for some time and he asked Jim, Anne and Carla to come to this meeting to explain what they have done so far to alleviate this comment and what they will do in the future.

Jim Shanahan stated that six months ago he was concerned but since the program was put together by the Collector and the Treasurer, they have collected \$43,917.05.

Carla Clifford noted that the taxes are now billed quarterly and that if they are not paid by the date due, she issues a demand which gives them two weeks. If they still haven't paid the tax lien process begins which starts with sending out a nice letter. She noted that they have and are willing to work with people. She added that they need to pay the delinquent taxes by June 4th and if they are not, then they are off the Collector's books and now go to the Treasurer's books. Shanahan noted that they have a good collection system set up.

Clifford also noted that now the Light, Water and Sewer charges are all on the tax bills.

Anne Cervantes explained how her end of the system works. (See memo attached.) She noted that the Board of Selectmen is the authorizing agent to have an auction and noted that there is \$309k worth of property waiting for disposition.

Dennehy inquired as to whether there was some type of agreement for payment and Cervantes stated that they have set up payment agreements with some but added that these property owners must also keep up with their current taxes as well.

Dennehy also asked how long it would take to be up to date on past due delinquent taxes.

Both Cervantes and Clifford noted that it is hard to say and that the economy is a major factor.

Dennehy stated that he wanted to see an inventory of already foreclosed property and Cervantes noted that she would put the list together.

Dennehy stated that we were on the right track and that we owe this to the Town and the taxpayers. He thanked Clifford, Cervantes and Shanahan for putting this plan together.

Jim Shanahan stated that the Collector and the Treasurer are working hard and doing a great job.

B. Treasurer – re: Borrowing for Russell Hill

Dennehy noted that this is to authorize the borrowing consummate transaction to purchase the Russell Hill property for conservation. He added that this is similar to the purchase of the Bush Hill property but he noted that we would be reimbursed hopefully quicker this time. He noted that the borrowing amount was \$700k at 3.8% interest and that it was a bond anticipation note.

Carlisle motioned to authorize the borrowing as stated and Gagnon seconded. Motion carried.

Dennehy also added that they again extend their thanks to Gary Howland for his tireless efforts.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion and vote on Subordination Agreement

Dennehy stated that this Subordination Agreement was for property located at 7 South Main Street. Carlisle motioned to approve and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

B. Discussion and vote to set a date for the Town Election

Dennehy noted that the School District asked for the election to be held on June 12th. He proceeded to read the proposed ballot questions. (See the attached.)

Carlisle motioned to approve the three ballot questions as read and to hold the Town Election on Tuesday, June 12th. Gagnon seconded and the motion was carried unanimously.

Dennehy noted that if for some reason House Bill 586 didn't pass we may be forced to revote this but that he didn't think this would happen and that it was the worse case scenario.

Shanahan stated that the DOR realized the situation last year and that it may be a possibility that they could hold up setting our tax rate.

Dennehy stated that the election would officially be on Tuesday, June 12th at 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Briggs. He added that Westminster's election is on the same day.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. April 2, 2007 – Regular Meeting

Carlisle motioned to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2007 Regular Meeting and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

B. April 9, 2007 – Special Meeting

Carlisle motioned to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2007 Special Meeting and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

C. April 17, 2007 – Regular Meeting

Carlisle motioned to approve the minutes of the April 17, 2007 Regular Meeting and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

VI. OTHER MATTERS

Dennehy noted that the annual reorganization of the Board of Selectmen is required by the Town Charter in order to select a Chair and Clerk.

Dennehy motioned to nominated Mark Carlisle as Chair and he was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

Dennehy motioned to nominate Chris Gagnon as Clerk and was seconded by Carlisle. Motion carried.

Carlisle stated that it has been a pleasure and an honor to serve with Dennehy as Chair. He added that as a Board they have a lot to be proud of. Dennehy agreed that they work well together.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:06 p.m. Carlisle motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Gagnon.

Dennehy noted that the next Board of Selectmen meeting would be held on May 21st at the Stevens Memorial Library. He also announced the Town Hall closing.

Gagnon stated that on Friday, May 11th they would have the signing of the Public Safety Building Project contract at the trailers on the site.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator