

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 17, 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. **William J. Bresnahan Scouting & Community Center Bldg. Committee looking for approval of plans:** Committee members present were: Ron Skaife, Val Daigle and Dennis Driscoll. Val Daigle presented the Board with the proposed plan for the building. Driscoll stated that so far they have collected approximately \$32,480. Skaife noted that Monty Tech will put the framework up but that they need \$40,000 to do this and Daigle added that it would cost total about \$125,000. She noted that if the Board approves they would go ahead with the foundation this fall. She also added that the old scout house would be coming down and they would use this area for the foundation, going out further towards the dam.

Daigle then noted the following requests by the Committee: 1) the Board to sign the building permit with a letter for permission to build; 2) permission to waive all fees; 3) position on the warrant at the next Town Meeting to establish a trustee board (creating a new board); and 4) the town matches the funds that were raised. Carlisle noted that this last request would be difficult as there is a lot of uncertainty for FY09.

Dennehy noted that the Board could approve the first two requests at this meeting but that the last two would need warrant articles.

Boushell reminded the Board that he asked for everyone to submit non-money articles for the Special Town Meeting and that so far everyone has begrudgingly done so.

Dennehy noted that all the Board members were in agreement that FY09 would be extremely dire straights and that they would have to look at each article as they come in and see how funds look at that time. Boushell stated that as much as the Board wants to help, he would have to say no. Daigle asked that they take it under advisement.

Carlisle noted that the timing is tough, but that there is no question that this is a good cause. He added that they would take it under advisement. Dennehy stated that because of the possibility of problems with the FY09 budget funding, the overriding goal is to husband every dollar and cent. He added that they want to avoid cutting the budget or asking for an override and that they are fearful of what we'll get from the state.

Bill Johnson, Advisory Board Chair was present and inquired if the Committee had gone before any other boards yet and they responded that they had not.

Dennehy noted that the Selectmen would waive the fees not the by-laws. Carlisle agreed that they can at least waive the building permit fees.

Gagnon motioned to issue a letter to allow them to build on Town land and to waive the building permit fees and install a holder to establish an article on the Town Meeting warrant. Dennehy seconded and the motion carried. Daigle noted that the Board of Trustees would be the same members as on the building committee as they work well together.

It was also noted that the proceeds from Ryan's Road Race, to be held on Saturday, September 29<sup>th</sup> would benefit this building project.

**B. Correspondence**

- C. Town Administrator's Update:** Paul Boushell, Town Administrator noted the following: 1) they won't be paving Route 12 until next year; 2) he met with the health insurance company and he noted that they would see a decrease in the increases; 3) the Westminster Street bridge is due to be open around the third week in October; 4) the audit has begun; 5) he has met with the Treasurer on the bond rating; 6) the MEPPA reviews have commenced on the 40B Project; and 7) they have hit some ledge at Town Hall and they may have to blast.

Dennehy noted that they should give credit to the Highway Department as the Westminster Street bridge, which is very important, is on the fast track. Carlisle added that the loaders at Town Hall are working endless hours and they are all doing a great job there as well.

Don Ouellette, DPW Director was also present and gave an explanation as to why the bridge is so tall right now. He responded to this because of the many inquiries that have been received. Carlisle noted that all the work was also verified by an outside engineering firm and it was confirmed that Don was correct. Gagnon added that Don Ouellette should be thanked as he saved the Town some money.

- D. Public Safety Building Committee update:** Gagnon stated that everything is on schedule. He noted that the project manager wants a three month schedule review and that right now it is on budget. He noted that earth tones were approved by the Committee as the color scheme. He added that it is going really well, on schedule and on budget.

III. OLD BUSINESS

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Clarification – Water Ban Issues:** Carlisle explained the signs as he received a number of calls asking for clarification.

- B. Discussion with various boards and committees re: Issues that impact the future of the downtown area:** Carlisle began by stating that he wanted to send out an open invitation to all boards and committees. He added that there were two issues to be discussed: 1) the review of the Town Barn situation with Bob Fichtel and 2) downtown businesses. Carlisle stated that he wanted to look into an exit interview for businesses.

At this time Bob Fichtel was asked to report on the status of the Town Barn relocation. Fichtel noted that the Focus Committee had hired George Allen to report on the probable construction cost. He also noted that the Committee had visited other towns to look at their DPW sites. He added that Allen had put together a couple of scenarios and that they feel they are now ready to put together building costs. He also wanted to thank Donna Burton in the Assessors office for her help with finding lots and land for their search.

Fichtel stated that they want the DPW "Town Barn" to be centrally located, on 5 to 10 acres on town-owned land with water and sewer service.

Fichtel discussed the different parcels that the Committee had been looking into noting the pros and cons for each. He added that they basically need to put the final cost analysis together and finalize the site location and then present it to the taxpayers.

Fichtel also stated that once the Highway Department is relocated, the next step is what to do with their present site. He noted that there was a meeting sponsored by the Smart Growth Alliance where they did discuss a number of scenarios for this site, such as the ground floor used for retail while the upstairs would be for housing. He noted that the group that met all came up with the same scenarios, commercial development along Central Street and the back side used for elderly housing and townhouses. He added that the Focus Committee wants to work with the Planning Board on this.

Eric Smith, Town Planner, discussed this further. He noted the following: 1) should show public support; 2) should be ready to go in 2 or 3 years; 3) there is still funding available so we should move quickly; 4) is economically viable; 5) look at infrastructure requirements; 6) should take the time to finish this application; and 7) should look at the big picture of the village center.

Carlisle noted that the sole purpose at the beginning was to relocate the Town Barn and now it has expanded. He added that he personally wants the Focus Committee to continue to work on the Town Barn relocation. He noted that what needs to happen is 1) establish what we want to see in the downtown; and 2) how to do it.

Carlisle stated that it is important to establish objectives and keep the historical value and to keep in mind the property owner. He stated that they need to find a way to address all issues.

Carlisle continued by stating that they need to address why businesses are leaving Ashburnham by having all boards and committees work together. He added that they need some sort of draw to get businesses here and that he had heard complaints that Ashburnham is somewhat anti-business. He noted that the common-thread falls on Eric Smith and that they should get a few members of each board to get together to come up with something.

Gagnon noted that he would like to see programs put together and see the Town stay as colonial as possible.

Dave Perry, ZBA Chair, stated that he had some concerns about the environmental situation at the Highway Barn site right now and asked about the 21E report that was done. He suggested a more detailed 21E study be done. Fichtel noted that they did do an enhanced 21E study and the report on this study is available in the Selectmen's office files.

Christina Sargent, Historical Commission Chair, noted that retaining ownership is an issue and that they should find a creative way to get this done. Carlisle inquired about what could be done to streamline this. John MacMillan, Planning Board Chair, stated that they would have to involve the Building Commissioner and that the long term goal would be to incorporate something for a one-stop shopping to one board.

Carlisle asked if it made sense to take one member of each board and combine them into one board to work on this project? He noted that they should think about forming a sub-committee.

Dennehy stated that the key is the Building Commissioner and the Land Use Coordinator, adding that they could put her in training to guide the development thru various boards and committees. Carlisle added that we are fragmented but now with the Town Planner things need to be tightened up.

Smith noted that he had some concerns. He stated that they should establish rules and regulations that work to keep the Village Center.

Colin Balogh noted that the process needs to be streamlined and that we have the opportunity to do this with the Town Barn project. He added that there really isn't any good space available in Town but that this is an opportunity to develop the Village Center. He also noted that economic feasibility is something to think about. He stated that the land lease is not a good idea, adding that not many developers would consider this. Sargent stated that we have to think outside of the box and that this is something we should consider now. She added that all things should be looked into.

Joe Kalagher, Planning Board member, stated that they should change approvals and special permits so that they shouldn't have to go to the Zoning Board of Appeals as they only deal with variances.

Carlisle thanked everyone for attending this meeting and stated that there was a lot of important dialog exchanged. He asked that they think about the aspect of what their board can do to make things more streamlined and to work with Eric Smith on how to get there. Gagnon noted that there should be a meeting between the Planning Board and the ZBA to work this out.

Paul Boushell stated that now they all have to put things together and decide what to do. He also noted that he would like to ask Town Counsel about a moratorium. Debbie Phillips, Town Counsel, stated that they have already discussed exactly what should be done and added that the Historical Commission should be included. She noted that they could consider a moratorium which is a total prohibition, but there are risks involved. She added that they could have growth limits but the courts weren't happy with other towns that did this.

Phillips stated that she would be happy to work with whomever to come up with something. She stated that she could look into a moratorium with other cases such as Hadley. She added that they could allow "breathing room" and work with a committee where we could actually show progress, however, it could be challenged. She stated that she would keep them posted.

Gagnon questioned a moratorium as he noted there is a shortage of businesses as it is. Phillips noted that there may be other parcels available and they could say that they need a time-out to think. Fichtel agreed that there are 3 or 4 lots right now for sale and he proposed having all the boards meet with the Focus Committee when they meet next time.

MacMillan stated that the Focus Committee charge is the Highway Barn and the Planning Board should be the main board to redesign the downtown area.

Sargent asked about the terms of a moratorium process and Boushell stated that Town Meeting would establish a committee and charge which would temporarily amend the zoning bylaws. MacMillan stated that the Planning Board needs 14 days to post a hearing notice, etc., so it doesn't look like they could make fall Town Meeting.

Phillips stated that only the Planning Board can process any zoning changes and the other boards can only recommend.

Carlisle noted that they would need to look at the timetable and that this has been a valuable discussion.

- C. Announcement – Open and close of warrant for Special Town Meeting:** Boushell began by stating that he had already opened the warrant and that there were between 8 and 12 articles so far. He added that the move back to Town Hall is a concern. Dennehy noted that the opening of the warrant by the Selectmen is for public notice. Gagnon stated that they should open the warrant with a deadline of October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Dennehy stated that it is critical that the Special Town Meeting be scheduled before Thanksgiving week. Phillips noted that they would need a timeline for the zoning article. Dennehy also added that the availability of the Moderator and the auditorium would need to be verified.

There was some discussion about a date in December. Bill Johnson stated that it should be held in the fall and Dennehy agreed noting that they should aim for the week before Thanksgiving. Phillips noted that the Planning Board would need to have their hearing the last full week in October for the zoning board article.

Dennehy stated that the dates to look at in the week before Thanksgiving would be November 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Carlisle agreed that the fall town meeting should be held in October or November. He stated that they should set the deadline for warrant articles for October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Gagnon motioned to close the warrant for the Special Town Meeting for October 1, 2007 and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.

- D. Discussion on setting a date for Special Town Meeting:** Carlisle noted that the availability would be the issue in setting a date for the STM. The Board unanimously determined that if the availability of the Moderator, the Town Clerk and the auditorium were verified, the date for the Special Town Meeting would be November 15<sup>th</sup>.

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. August 6, 2007 – Regular Meeting**

These minutes were missed by the Board and will be placed for approval at the next meeting.

**VI. OTHER MATTERS**

Carlisle noted that the Oakmont Student Council had sent a request for permission to hold their annual Homecoming Parade on October 5<sup>th</sup>. He read the letter which mentioned that their route would be changing from the previous years. Carlisle noted that this should be reviewed by Police Chief Barrett and motioned to approve subject to the Chief's approval. Gagnon seconded and the motion carried.

Carlisle then took a moment to note the recent passing of Bob Powers who was very active in the Town. He stated that he would be greatly missed.

Carlisle reminded residents of the Ryan's Gift Road Race which would be held on Saturday, September 29<sup>th</sup>.

Carlisle announced that the next meeting of the Board of Selectmen would be a joint meeting with the Advisory Board on Wednesday, September 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at the VMS Building.

Carlisle also noted that the next regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen would be on Monday, October 1<sup>st</sup> and would be in the Von Deck Room at Oakmont.

**VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 9:13 p.m. Dennehy motioned to enter into Executive Session and was seconded by Gagnon. Carlisle stated that they would enter into executive session to deliberate upon matters which, if done in open meeting could detrimentally affect the position of the Town regarding the physical condition and mental health of an individual (Family Medical Leave Act) and the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property and not to reconvene into regular session.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

At 10:20 p.m. Dennehy motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Gagnon.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator