

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SEPTEMBER 26, 2007 JOINT MEETING W/ADVISORY BOARD
SENIOR CENTER – VMS BUILDING**

PRESENT: Jonathan Dennehy, Chair, Chris Gagnon, Clerk, Jonathan Dennehy, Member, Paul Boushell, Town Administrator, Advisory Board members, Bill Johnson, Dottie Munroe, Jamie Piedrafite, Marie Zbikowski, Maggie Whitney, Leo Janssens and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. and it was noted that the meeting was being taped to be aired on local cable channel 8.

The Advisory Board distributed a list of 27 questions for the Board of Selectmen and they were discussed as follows: Bill Johnson noted that the AB compiled this list in an attempt to move the Town forward.

1) Have all needed reports and information sent via email to all AB members? Purchase a scanner if needed?

Paul Boushell responded that there is an issue with where to place a scanner at the Town Offices present location. He also noted that this may be a violation of the Open Meeting Law. Mark Carlisle noted that once the Town Offices move back it would be a lot easier. Jonathan Dennehy stated that the public does have the right to hear about these reports and that they want to streamline the information flow. Carlisle noted that the Selectmen, as a Board, do have to be cautious when sending emails. Bill Johnson stated that he understood.

2) Can a list of Town Hall employee's phone extensions be put on the Town's website?

Bill Johnson noted that this information is already on the website.

3) Does a multi-year revenue/expenditure forecast exist for the Town? Is it updated yearly?

Boushell noted that this was completed up to the end of last year and that he is responsible to get this done now. Gagnon noted that a Capital Project list was submitted from the Department Heads to Kevin Paicos back in April which does list some of their expenditure forecasts. He noted in particular that the DPW's was very comprehensive. Johnson stated that we need to start working on this now that we're going for a bond rating. Boushell noted that he has already starting meeting with both Jim Shanahan and Anne Cervantes on the bond rating. It was also noted that this also answered question #15.

4) Does a cash management program exist? Is it updated during the year?

Boushell stated that the Town audit is now in process and there are checks and balances in place. Johnson noted that they would get back to this.

5) Does the Town have established financial policies regarding:

- a. Free cash
- b. Reserve fund
- c. Stabilization fund
- d. Cash management
- e. Debt management
- f. Investment management
- g. Banking relations

Johnson noted that these questions are stemming from the recommendations of the Association of Town Finances. Boushell explained that Free Cash is found at the end of the fiscal year and it is the funds remaining. He also stated that the Reserve Fund is determined at Town Meeting by a 2/3 vote and is always on as a Town Meeting article. Johnson noted that they are looking for guidelines and goals, as well as policies. Dennehy stated that they should work together on a policy.

There was a short discussion on the Reserve Fund and how the balance is controlled and used at the end of the fiscal year. Dennehy stated that the Advisory Board has the control to decide what to do with the balance and where to transfer it.

6) Can the AB receive Monthly Revenue/Budget Expenditure Reports via email?

Johnson stated that this goes back to item #1 and that he has met with Jim Shanahan and he will have quarterly meetings with him as well as Anne Cervantes, the Town Treasurer. Carlisle mentioned that the website would be up to speed once it's set up with the new company and Boushell added that it should be all set in 2 or 3 months with Virtual Town Hall. Whitney requested to see a copy of the "salary" for Virtual Town Hall and Boushell stated that he would get this for her.

7) Has the Town considered Establishing a Capital Planning Committee MGL 41s 106B?

Johnson stated that the Town needs to do more Capital Planning and maybe even set up a committee, if this is a possibility. Dennehy stated that it could be a sub-committee of the Advisory Board as the AB doesn't want to lose their control. Janssens stated that he would check with the Chair of the Planning Board to see if they would be interested in this. Johnson stated that they should adopt a similar format for this Capital report as the school has in place and Dennehy agreed.

8) Update on the DPW Relocation?

Dennehy noted that the Focus Committee has done a lot of work on this project and what is needed now is to do a cost benefit analysis of each site's pros and cons. Johnson inquired about a timeline and Carlisle stated that it was not definitive. Gagnon added that the grant they are pursuing is time sensitive and the cost analysis would be covered by this grant.

9) What was the result of the IG's investigation of the piano lease?

Dennehy stated that the IG had sent questions to Town Counsel and they may not have been answered yet. Carlisle added that this may have died out.

10) Has the lease been signed with the Fredericks on the Piano Museum?

Boushell stated that the lease has not been signed yet and is with the lawyers right now. Johnson asked if the Town owns the facility, why are there these lengthy lease negotiations? Dennehy stated that the Town does own the building but this is a different scenario. He stated that efforts have been made to try to match the best interests of the Town as well as the Museum. He noted that they are heading in the right direction but even though it is not the best scenario, it must be handled with diplomacy and delicacy. Gagnon added that we actually have a lease, but this is just changes to it for the last two and a half years of the lease.

11) How much money was spent on legal fees for the Piano Museum Lease?

Boushell stated that he would find out and get back to them.

12) Where will the money come from to move the Town Hall back when the renovations are complete?

Boushell responded that to move to the school it cost \$50k extra, which was unexpected. Gagnon noted that we did have \$125k that was voted and passed to use for the move but at the last town meeting, we gave back \$50k, not realizing at the time that it might be needed. Dennehy noted that this needs to be brought before the fall town meeting for the move back.

13) The AB would like to receive monthly reports from the Police and Fire Departments regarding overtime expenses?

Johnson noted that they have a concern regarding overtime for these two departments. Boushell stated that overtime is on the reports that the Town Accountant distributes each month.

14) All AB members should receive notice of all Selectmen's meetings to include the backup information and the TA's report via email.

Johnson stated that the AB would like to receive the second page of the agenda, the detail, and Dennehy stated that they cannot receive any detail on the Executive Session section. Carlisle noted that this would only be available to them after the agenda had been posted but after some discussion it was decided that they would not receive this page. Dennehy asked for the AB's agenda as well.

15) Does the Town have a 5-year capital plan?

This item was already covered.

16) Does the Town have a 5-year personnel plan?

Johnson stated that they were interested in the DPW, Fire and Police in particular. Boushell stated that this is the worst thing that they could do, although it is a great idea in theory.

17) Change the budget format with more historical information from prior years and change the style in which the document is laid out?

Johnson stated that they just don't like the present budget format and that it doesn't flow. Both boards agreed and Boushell stated that he would work on a better format.

18) Where are the additional monies coming from to complete the PSB?

Gagnon stated that the \$600k would be a part of the operating budget for the town by 2009 and that approximately \$50k a year would be budgeted under debt service. It was also noted that Cushing is donating the remaining \$270k in installments of \$25k.

19) Monthly report on "old" tax money collected?

Boushell noted that this report is part of the Tax Revenue report and Johnson stated that he would like a copy sent to him via email.

20) Where will the money come from to pave Route 12?

Dennehy stated that the money was supposed to come out of the article for the \$150k for roads and sidewalks which was turned down by the voters. Carlisle also added that the \$60k grant the Town received was used for the water lines and was not for paving. There followed a short discussion on roads and what has been done and is currently going on in Town. Carlisle ended the discussion by stating that Ouellette would be giving a report, master plan on all roads to be done in the near future. It was agreed that Ouellette was doing a good job.

21) What is the actual cost of the VMS study?

Boushell stated that the actual cost of the study is \$20k and that meetings of the committee have already started to take place. He added that we could get a grant to pay for the actual project.

22) Does the Town receive its fair share of state and federal aid vs similar sized towns?

Boushell stated that based on population, the Town is within a few thousand dollars of similar sized towns.

23) Has a plan been established for downtown renovations that will coincide with the work the Light Company is doing (sidewalks, street lights)?

It was noted that this had already been answered and that everything seems to be falling into place.

24) Will the Town have a need for South Station once the PSB is complete? What is the plan for that building?

Gagnon stated that with the location of the new PSB he believes the fire department would advocate for a North Station. Carlisle stated that the AB should ask Chief Zbikowski and Dennehy agreed that they should discuss this as it gets closer to the PSB completion.

25) Do all boat owners receive boat excise taxes on an annual basis from the Town?

Munroe stated that she has not received a boat excise tax bill for quite some time. Carlisle noted that he believes they are sent in two year intervals but Boushell stated that she should call the Tax Collector to verify. Munroe suggested that maybe the excise tax should be raised and Dennehy agreed and said that if it's only being collected sporadically then this should be looked into.

26) What will be the Town's policy regarding "snow days" when the schools are closed?

Boushell stated that if the schools are closed then the town offices will be closed due to the fact that the schools are usually last to be plowed and there is also the liability issues. He also stated that when the offices are closed the employees do not use vacation or personal time, they just get paid. He then reiterated that if there is no school the Town Hall is closed.

27) Do we have a municipal calendar in place?

Gagnon produced the BOS Calendar which was put together during the past year but doesn't have planning for a fall town meeting. Johnson asked if this was available on the website and he was told that it wasn't but they would work on it.

There was some additional discussion on the town's financial situation where Dennehy noted that the economy was much worse than was first thought.

Munroe inquired as to the status of the water trough at the Victorian House now that it is closed and Gagnon responded that this is renewed annually with the Town and that they are aware of the current situation.

Johnson suggested that both boards meet on a quarterly basis and the Selectmen agreed that this was a good idea.

Carlisle stated that the next two years will be rough and that the boards should be united in order to make it through this tough time.

At 8:58 p.m., Johnson adjourned the meeting with a motion from Munroe and a second from Whitney.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte
Assistant to the Town Administrator