

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES  
APRIL 17, 2007  
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.

Paicos noted that he wanted to add two items to Other Matters on the agenda. The first being consideration of waiving fees for both the Public Safety Complex and the Town Hall Renovation Projects. The second item is the appointment of special counsel.

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

II. PRESENTATIONS, REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

A. Correspondence

B. Town Administrator's Update

Paicos began by reporting on the recent storm damage noting that Steve Nims, the Municipal Grounds Superintendent had stated that this was the worst he'd ever seen in Ashburnham. He added that both FEMA and MEMA have asked for a damage list in order to give us funding.

Paicos stated that the crews were out all weekend and that this means serious budget implications. He also noted that it would take at least 6 months for us to get money from the State. Paicos also stated that the fire crews did an outstanding job helping families who were stranded. He stated that the DPW, Don Ouellette, Steve Nims, Jim Zarozinski, Dave Whitney and all the crew did an extraordinary job, which also included saving the Public Safety Building site from damage.

Paicos also stated that on Hardy Road, the DPW had managed to fix the road but that the work would go on for weeks to get it done. He noted that they will use Chapter 90 money for now. He again stated that they did an outstanding job and that in the near future he wanted to bring them in for recognition at a future meeting.

Paicos stated that Don Ouellette had saved the town \$35k on the Ashby Road contract and that he wanted the public to be aware of this fact.

Paicos then reported on the Town Hall Project, stating that the work would start on May 21<sup>st</sup> and that the staff would be moving the week of May 14<sup>th</sup>. He added that Paul Boushell would take care of the move while he was away at military training.

Paicos stated that our website will be replaced by a state of the art website in about 6-8 weeks when it will be up and running. He noted that they should be very impressed and that it is extremely user-friendly.

He went on to state that our webmaster, Ken Dolder says that he will be very pleased to give over the website and he stated that it was a great move for the Town.

Paicos touched upon the FY07 Budget noting that he wanted to give credit to Jim Shanahan the Town Accountant and the Fire and Police Chiefs for keeping within the budget. And he stated that the Snow and Ice came up close to \$200k.

Paicos also stated that the FY08 Budget looks like its all set with change memo #5 which the Board will need to vote on.

He added that the Board of Selectmen and the Advisory Board were at 80% in agreement on the ATM warrant.

Paicos stated that the Chair of the Water/Sewer Commission refused to adopt the rate increase and that hopefully the Board of Selectmen will advice them to reconsider.

Dennehy inquired about the Delinquent Tax Collection and Paicos stated that both the Collector and the Treasurer did a memo on this giving an update. Dennehy stated that he would like it to be on the May 7<sup>th</sup> agenda and Paicos noted that they should bring in the Collector, Treasurer and the Accountant for this update. He added that a lot more delinquent taxes would be coming in thanks to Anne Cervantes and Carla Clifford's efforts and noted that Anne already brought in \$100k in just 2 months time.

**C. Public Safety Building Committee Update**

Gagnon began his update by extending the Committee's thanks to the DPW on the site work and added that it was greatly appreciated.

He then stated that the Committee met last Thursday and discussed the options noting that they recommended Option 2 - \$600,000. (The list of options is attached.) Gagnon noted that this would include \$80k for the training area.

He noted that this would be a 20 year borrowing, \$54k a year for borrowing cost and that in the 2009 budget it would be interest only and that in the 2010 budget it would be the permanent financing. He added that it would be factored in the operating budget of the Town.

Gagnon stated that they would need to do a letter of intent for the contractor, B.W. Construction during this week.

**III. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Discussion on Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles 2-4, 20-21, 26, 38-40**

Article 2 was the first up for discussion. The list of proposed supplementary budget transfers is attached to these minutes. Paicos stated that any of the items listed could be done either at the Annual Town Meeting or as a Reserve Fund Transfer.

Dennehy read the list of proposed supplementary budget transfers. Paicos noted that they were either mandatory or discretionary.

Paicos noted that up until the day before both the Police and Fire were running well as far as overtime expenses were concerned. Chief Zbikowski stated that even though they would submit for help from the state, it would take at least 6 or 8 months to get the funds. He noted that with this storm, they worked about 9 hours which would come up to approximately \$1k and Paicos stated that this would be a good candidate for a reserve fund transfer.

Paicos stated that regarding his vacation, it would be inevitable that he may not use it before he is deployed. He added that a lot is going on right now and he suggested that the Interim Town Administrator should come and work with him for at least 2 weeks before he leaves.

Paicos noted that at this time the Town has about \$45k in the Reserve Fund, and if the Board approved the Debt, Police, Fire, DPW and Treasurer transfers, which all meet the Reserve Fund criteria, it would be more than what is available. He added that we don't want to deplete the Reserve Fund.

Paicos inquired as to what the Advisory Board would feel is appropriate Reserve Fund transfers. Janssens stated that both the Fire and Police fit the criteria.

Dennehy stated that the Debt Service and DPW expenses should be free cash not Reserve Fund transfers.

Bill Johnson noted that in regards to the TA vacation buyback, they should do it the proper way and do Budget Change Memo #6. Paicos noted that either way was fine.

Dennehy stated that it should be done by Budget Change Memo #6 and that the \$4k for the Interim TA and the \$1k for the advertising for this position should be done the same way. Johnson stated that the ITA and advertising should be free cash.

Paicos noted that the finance plan for the Town Meeting had to be buttoned up soon.

Dennehy noted the following should be out of free cash at Town Meeting under Article 2:

\$17,642	Debt Service
4,000	Interim Town Administrator
1,000	Advertising for the above
910	Treasurer

He noted that the Police, Fire and DPW should be Reserve Fund transfers.

Carlisle motioned to amend Article 2 as discussed above and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

Dennehy then stated that he needed a vote on Budget Change Memos #5 and #6 for Article 3. He stated that #5 puts \$17,000 in Snow and Ice making the TA budget's new amount \$144,280 and the total budget \$12,587,500.

Gagnon motioned to accept Budget Change Memos #5 and #6 and was seconded by Carlisle. Motion carried.

Dennehy stated that they could not vote on Article #4 or take a position because the School Committee meeting which was taking place at the same time as this meeting is where they would determine the dollar amount for the override. Gagnon noted that the school is working very hard to bring their number down.

At this point Dennehy stated that the Treasurer Anne Cervantes was present to go over Articles 20 and 21. Cervantes stated that both she and Barbara Brown surveyed the retirees by sending out letters, (25 of them) and that they received 17 responses with 8 stating that they might be interested.

Cervantes went over the figures that she distributed to the Board. Paicos noted that during the next couple of years there shouldn't be many retirees and he then explained how this would work.

Paicos admitted that he did not know where the funds would come from at this time and that he had been counting on state aid but we aren't getting any. He also noted that if the Town doesn't do this they could lose some good employees to towns who have this benefit and that we have to do this in the next year or two. He also added that it is possible that we may get more money from the State, \$30k to \$40k more than what the governor's budget states if the House budget passes but that it is only speculation at this time.

A short discussion followed on Section 18. Dennehy stated that with only a \$15k increase in state aid, how would this be funded? Paicos stated that the \$21k needed is just not available right now.

Carlisle stated that there is the fall town meeting and if things fall into place then the money could be available to do this by then. He added that in his opinion it should be put on the fall town meeting.

Paicos added that it could be on next year's budget because no one should be retiring this year. Dennehy noted that he thinks the most creative job of the Advisory Board and the finance team is to try to achieve goals in a measured fashion. He added that he doesn't disagree that we should offer this but that we need to find a way to offer it that is within our means.

Paicos stated that the Selectmen should express at Town Meeting that this is something that we believe needs to happen and send this message. Dennehy noted that the Town of Lunenburg pays 90% while we are only looking to pay 50%. Gagnon stated that they should take things incrementally and put them on a priority list.

Johnson stated that they should put additional public safety personnel on the fall town meeting as well and be prepared to look at other funding options. Dennehy stated that they would keep it on the radar screen.

Carlisle noted that additional fire and police personnel as well as the retiree insurance are the three top priority issues for the fall meeting and that we should see this happen within the year.

Zbikowski took a few moments to discuss the hiring of additional personnel and the possibility of adding an override for the Town to do this. Dennehy stated that he agreed that it has to be done and that it is critical that they act successfully as an override may not be a successful way to do this. Zbikowski noted that 2½ doesn't fund what the Town needs.

Gagnon motioned to recommend to pass over Articles 20 and 21 and Carlisle seconded. Motion carried.

Paicos stated that they did not have the dollar amount yet for Article 26.

The next Articles up for discussion were 38, 39 and 40. Paicos noted that his recommendations were as follows: Article 38 - \$15K; Article 39 - \$10k; and Article 40 - \$25k.

Gagnon motioned to approve Articles 38, 39 and 40 per the recommendation of the Town Administrator and was seconded by Carlisle. Motion carried.

Johnson inquired about the Capital Exclusion for the school and Gagnon stated that at the last School Committee meeting both Senator Antonioni and Senator Brewer were present and stated that this would be heard on May 8<sup>th</sup> by the Sub-Committee for Education and they noted that there is a potential that this could be done by June 15<sup>th</sup>.

**V. OTHER MATTERS**

Paicos asked the Board of Selectmen to appoint Attorney Gruge as Special Counsel. Gagnon motioned to approve this appointment and was seconded by Carlisle. Motion carried.

Paicos asked the Board of Selectmen to waive all building fees for both the Public Safety Building Project and the Town Hall Renovation Project. Carlisle motioned to waive the fees and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.

Dennehy announced that the next regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen would be on Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

Dennehy also announced that there would be a Joint Meeting of the Advisory Board and the Board of Selectmen on Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. before the Annual Town Meeting.

He also noted that the Annual Town Election would be held on Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup> at Briggs from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and that the deadline for absentee ballots for this election was noon on April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 9:01 p.m., 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 and not to reconvene into regular session. Gagnon seconded and the motion carried.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

At 11:30 p.m., Carlisle motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator