

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
JULY 7, 2008 – 6:00 PM
LOBBY - OAKMONT REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**

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

PRESENT: Chris Gagnon, Chair, Jonathan Dennehy, Member and Maggie Whitney, Clerk, Paul Boushell, Interim Town Administrator, Kevin Paicos, Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

Gagnon apologized for the location confusion of this meeting.

- I. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** At 6:10 p.m., Gagnon read the agenda. Whitney stated that they should pass on two items under New Business, D and E, as they had a lot to discuss. Dennehy motioned to approve the agenda as amended and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

Gagnon welcomed Town Administrator Kevin Paicos back after being away on military leave for the past year. He was welcomed by all present with much applause.

II. **PRESENTATIONS, REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE**

- A. **Treasurer – Bond approval:** Gagnon asked Anne Cervantes, Town Treasurer to come up and give them some background on the bond approval that she is requesting.

Cervantes stated that the Board of Selectmen needed to approve and vote the borrowing. She stated that the Town received a bond rating of A3 by Moody's which is an above average credit rating. She noted that she received nine bids with the lowest being 4.12% and that this borrowing was for both the Public Safety Building and the Town Hall Renovation. A short discussion followed on how payments would be processed.

Boushell stated that both Anne Cervantes and Jim Shanahan did an outstanding job on this even with the Town Hall move going on. He expressed his thanks to the staff.

Cervantes noted that this borrowing would be reflected in the tax rate in January. Boushell added that the Town would be all set with this bond rating between 5 to 7 years and that he was very pleased with the rating received by the Town.

Dennehy noted that the tax bills that just went out would reflect the FY08 tax rate. And on this note, Boushell stated that the next tax rate should be set earlier, in September or October this year.

Gagnon proceeded to read part of the report from Moody's on how our rating was set. Dennehy motioned to approve the bond sale as presented, (copy attached to these minutes), and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried and was unanimous. The

Board thanked the Treasurer for her attendance as well as the work she did on this borrowing.

- B. Correspondence:** Gagnon stated that the Board had received correspondence from Carol and Steven Blanchard who noted their support for a recreational facility in Ashburnham. He noted that many residents expressed an interest in serving on a committee to study programs, potential sites and ideas in comparison with other communities. He added that he encourages anyone interested to send something in writing to the Board.

Whitney stated her concerns with the upcoming fiscal year which included conserving gas, personal use of Town vehicles as well as maybe going to a 4-day work week in order to conserve heating fuel.

- C. Town Administrator's Update:** Boushell informed the Board that the cell tower lease which was in the works was no longer useful as Nextel has ceased to exist so the contract is moot. He added that this technology is headed to satellite. He noted that Town Counsel stated that the Town may go out with another RFP on this. He added that it's unfortunate that this happened as it is a loss of potential income for the Town.

Boushell stated that the move back to Town Hall went well but that lightning struck which caused the Town Hall to be without phones for a day. He added that the Highway Department employees were great and that there is virtually no punch list right now for the contractor.

Whitney noted that she believed meetings could be held in the downstairs meeting room at Town Hall. Gagnon stated that the downstairs room may not be large enough and that he was working with Matt Bourgeault from the Cable Studio who has some ideas on how they could use the upstairs room for meetings and that the current PA system could work for this purpose. Dennehy noted that they should explore his ideas. Gagnon asked that Boushell work with Bourgeault to get this accomplished.

Boushell then made note that both Jim Shanahan and Anne Cervantes did an enormous amount of work for the bond rating and he wanted to reiterate his thanks to them both.

Whitney inquired about the lights in back of Town Hall and how she has been contacted on how bright they seem to be. Boushell responded that they are energy efficient lights for safety and they are bright but do provide security.

- D. Public Safety Building Committee Update:** Gagnon stated that BW Construction had some siding removed because they were dissatisfied with the quality of the product and he noted that the replacement pieces hadn't come in yet and that's why the delay. He stated that a September 15th deadline was more realistic at this time due to the flooding in the Midwest which caused a problem with the doors that were ordered. He added that they are ordering the doors from a new vendor but they won't be in before the beginning of September. He stated that everything else was going all

right and was on time. He also stated that they were looking to fill the oil tank and whatever is used would be replaced by the contractor.

III. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Continued discussion on Briggs Ballot question:** Gagnon stated that Dr. Zapantis was present to speak on this issue. Zapantis distributed a handout to all in attendance and proceeded to go over each point listed. Zapantis noted that September 15th would be the last date for a ballot vote with August 6th as the last date for the Town Clerk to be notified. He stated that historically Ashburnham has always held their Special Town Meeting and then their election after, but they could have the election first.

Zapantis went over the options on the handout, which is attached to these minutes. He noted that there is clearly a sense of urgency as the MPCA won't keep the money available forever. He also noted that there is no firm policy in place on requesting another vote.

Zapantis stated that his first recommendation would be to have the Board vote on July 7th to notify the Town Clerk of an election date while his second would be to vote on July 7th to notify the State for placement of this question on the State ballot. He emphasized that whatever the decision is it needs to be very public and visible.

Whitney stated that she did some research on past Town decisions and their impact and she has had second thoughts on her decision to not have a re-vote on Briggs. She stated that this would only be for a one-year period which would average out in taxes to about \$69 per household. She stated that her recommendation is that she can't let this pass us by, but that she wants to include the Senior Center in the re-vote which would take care of the children as well as the seniors.

Dennehy stated that this is a very difficult decision to make and it's not easy to make everyone happy, but that he always felt something needed to be done at Briggs. He went on to say that he had some concerns about the options set by Dr. Zapantis and noted that he would like to see one other option. This would be to take the time from now to the fall Special Town Meeting to look at other options besides the ballot question. He noted that in his opinion they could put this right in the budget and look at the types of funding available. He added that he realizes there's a narrow window of opportunity and that they can't let this slip away. He stated that it was up to the Board of Selectmen to find a way and that they have several months to come up with a successful plan. He noted that he was against putting this before the voters again and stated that they should look for ways to fund this at the Special Town Meeting. Boushell noted that he has no way of knowing what funds might be available at this time.

Dennehy stated that if the other two members of the Board cast a vote to go forward, he would cast his vote along with them as well but that he would still be worried about the vote. Gagnon stated that if they wait to see if the funds are available in the budget it may be too late.

Gagnon also stated that if it is placed on the November 4th State ballot, as a brand new ballot question it could be approved at the November Special Town Meeting. Dennehy noted that it will come from taxation one way or the other.

At this time some discussion followed from residents in attendance. Gagnon explained how the Briggs study would work and more discussion followed on how to proceed. It was noted that more explanation should go out and that they shouldn't wait, but should go forward.

Dennehy noted his concern that whatever is done, they should not include the VMS question. Gagnon stated that he wasn't happy with the furnace situation at the VMS but that they need to solidify the Briggs vote and that should be the only ballot question.

Bill Johnson reminded everyone that the roads aren't going away either. He also noted that an election would cost \$3k which hasn't been budgeted. He went on to say that there's not much hope for the Free Cash option but that he did like the idea of a vote on November 4th as it won't be an additional cost to the Town. He also stated that it might be easier to find \$80k for the VMS Study in Free Cash as it is a lesser amount. He added that it is a wise business decision to take the State's funding for Briggs.

Dennehy noted that in his opinion they really need to focus on one project at a time, Briggs and then focus on the VMS. He added that both the Board of Selectmen and the Advisory Board should look at more user-friendly ways to fix the immediate issues at the VMS.

Gagnon noted that if the votes were combined on November 4th they could consolidate at no additional costs. He also stated that they would not be the same ballot questions and he liked the idea to look for money for the VMS in the Operating Budget. He noted that signs should be placed in strategic areas to remind people to vote. Dennehy stated that he agreed that the November 4th vote would be a good choice.

Kevin Paicos, the Town Administrator suggested that the consensus was to have the election at a later date and that they were really talking about September 15th which would be when they would have a pretty good idea of the free cash amount. He also stated that if a vote takes place in September it would impact the tax rate.

Paicos also noted that override ballot questions have a notorious poor passage rate and he suggested that they pick a date for a Special Election in late September or early October with the Special Town Meeting after in order to maximize the chance of the vote passing. He noted that it's pretty unlikely that we could find the \$400k in the Operating Budget. He also noted that if it is held in late September or early October this would give enough time to inform people. Whitney stated that Paicos had a good point as on November 4th the vote for President would be the focal point of voters.

Gagnon stated that the Board's next meeting would be held on July 21st which still gives everyone enough time before the deadlines and to also ask the Advisory Board to discuss this further as well. He stated that they could go for a brand new question on an October ballot or on November 4th. Dennehy stated that they should do whatever has the greatest likelihood for success.

Gagnon suggested Tuesday, October 14th for the "new" ballot election and Thursday, November 13th for the Special Town Meeting. He noted that they should pencil these dates in for now. Paicos stated that he would work with Zapantis to verify the information. Gagnon thanked everyone for their participation.

- B. Discussion on appointments to Capital Planning Commission:** Gagnon noted that this topic would be put off until the next meeting. Boushell stated that we still need confirmation from the Attorney General's office. He said that he'd feel more comfortable discussing it once that happens. He also stated that they need to advertise for citizens-at-large. Dennehy stated that anyone interested in serving should send an email or send in the form which is available on the Town's website. Gagnon also asked for interested parties to serve on the Recreation Committee.

Dennehy also expressed the Board's thanks to Steve Nims and his crew for the perfect condition of the grounds and added that they deserve a lot of credit for doing such a great job.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- B. Presentation by the Planning Board:** Gagnon stated that the Planning Board had been waiting patiently so they would go directly to them and their presentation. Planning Board members in attendance were John MacMillan, Joe Kalagher, Bruce Whitney and Skip Nolan, as well as Eric Smith, the Town Planner. A copy of their presentation is attached to these minutes.

MacMillan noted that there were two issues that they would be presenting. The first was the Wind Energy By-Law, with the exception of the Mt. Watatic area, and he noted that any comments should be directed to Eric Smith on this second draft. He also added that this would be placed on the fall Town Meeting Warrant for approval as well as the Open Space revisions.

MacMillan then noted that the second topic they wanted to cover was the Industrial Land Study and also presented a slide presentation covering the 8 potential sites for the DPW relocation. Smith discussed the possible funding sources for Industrial Development as well as 43D projects.

Gagnon inquired if they were focusing on any one area and if any sites were being developed more than others. MacMillan responded that 4 or 5 lots were being considered.

Dennehy brought up the Village Center District Zoning Study questionnaire and if it had been sent out yet and Smith responded that it was out to residents. Dennehy

asked residents to please complete these questionnaires and send them back to the Committee as their feedback is needed. MacMillan also noted that this survey is on the front page of the Town's website as well. Dennehy stated that this Committee was meeting every three weeks and going forward in a comprehensive way to go over the Zoning By-Laws to determine a Village Center and that Smith has been very helpful in this process.

Gagnon thanked the Planning Board for their excellent presentation.

- A. Appointment to Historical Commission:** Gagnon stated that Bettyna Donelson has asked to be appointed to the Historical Commission. Whitney motioned to approve her appointment and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.
- B. Discussion of Town Administrator overlap schedule:** Gagnon stated that he had recently signed a letter approving to roll-over vacation time for Paul Boushell but that no other members of the Board had signed. Boushell explained the reason behind this roll-over request. Gagnon stated that an open discussion was needed on this subject and that they needed to know when this vacation time would be used as well as the timeline for both the Interim Town Administrator and the Town Administrator. He stated that they basically only want to know what their schedule would be.

Boushell reiterated that many things needed to be done and that he just couldn't take the time off. Gagnon again stated that they needed both their schedules.

Paicos stated that he wasn't sure on his schedule for the next week but that he was planning on coming back full time on Monday, July 21st. He suggested that there was money appropriated for Boushell to work the overlap as he needed him around until the end of July. Dennehy agreed that in the FY09 Budget they anticipated Paicos' return and the overlap with Boushell.

Paicos stated that he would have a timeline for the Board for their next meeting on July 21st and that he would give them a memo prior to the meeting. Gagnon stated that this would be on the next agenda for July 21st.

VI. SCHEDULE OF COMING EVENTS

- A. Schedule of Town Hall Turnover Ceremony:** Gagnon asked about the Town Hall turnover ceremony and Boushell stated that he would be more prepared to discuss this at a later date as they had only recently moved in. Gagnon agreed stating that they would need more time to discuss this and communicate amongst themselves.
- B. Special Fall Town Meeting potential dates:** The Board discussed this topic earlier in the meeting.

VII. OTHER MATTERS

Gagnon read a request from the Rotary Club (attached to these minutes) and stated that this would be placed on the next agenda early and that a memo would be sent in response to this request.

Whitney noted that tickets for trash would be available for purchase at the landfill on July 21st and after that they would be available for purchase at Town Hall.

She also noted that there would be a Town Barbecue on Wednesday, July 16th to welcome Kevin Paicos back from military duty hosted by the Ashburnham Fire Association and the Fire Department.

Gagnon stated that their next meeting would be held on July 21st hopefully at Town Hall and reminded everyone that they start at 6:00 p.m. during the summer months.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, at 8:55 p.m. Whitney motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Turcotte
Assistant to the Town Administrator