

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES  
JANUARY 7, 2008  
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. Also, Don Ouellette, DPW Director was in attendance to present his proposed Road Plan for the Town.

- I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: At 7:03 p.m., Carlisle read the agenda. Dennehy motioned to approve the agenda as read and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

Carlisle noted that he would start the meeting with an item listed under "Other Matters". He stated that the Board received a letter from Police Chief Barrett regarding Officer Ahearn, who was injured and is currently out on disability, and the urgency in bringing in another officer while he is out. Boushell stated that it is tragic that Officer Ahearn was hurt but there is a real need for a replacement officer during his absence.

Carlisle read the last paragraph of Chief Barrett's letter (attached) and emphasized that they would not be adding an officer, just replacing an existing officer. Gagnon noted that it is obvious that if they go the overtime route the cost would be \$30k versus the hiring cost of \$2k. He added that hiring a replacement officer would be the financially sound decision. Dennehy agreed stating that the Town does get reimbursed 80% of Ahearn's salary from our insurance company so the cost of a new officer would be mostly covered by insurance. He also stated that he had concerns about when and if Officer Ahearn comes back full time, what would happen next, would we be able to afford to keep the new officer when he returns.

Boushell noted that the Town really has no choice but to do this at this time. He stated that he has discussed this in length with Chief Barrett and that he is confident this is sustainable.

Carlisle stated that this officer would be replacing the bottom line and this would bring us back to where we were with level services. He added that the Board would deal with it if and when Officer Ahearn returns.

Bill Johnson noted that he also spoke with Chief Barrett about this issue and hiring a replacement officer makes sense and he personally supports this. Boushell stated that his recommendation is to go forward and hire the replacement officer.

Sergeant Brennan was asked to speak on this subject stating that they are just trying to maintain level services as they have been for years now. He added that they need the support of the Board of Selectmen at this point. Dennehy agreed that this is a safety concern right now and basically this has been the goal for some time to hire an additional officer. Carlisle again stated that right now they are just talking about covering Officer Ahearn's shifts.

Dennehy noted that now is the time to commit to hire this officer as a permanent position and once again Carlisle noted that at this stage hire the officer to cover Officer Ahearn's shifts and then down the road look at this as permanent if possible.

Dennehy stated that they are all in agreement to hire a person and Carlisle added that they should do this first and then work on hiring an extra police and fire employee.

All members were in favor of hiring an officer to replace Officer Ahearn during his absence.

## II. PRESENTATIONS, REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

**A. DPW Director Road Repair Presentation:** Don Ouellette was asked to give his presentation on his long-term type of planning.

Dennehy stated kudos were in order for Steve Nims on the great job he and his department has done on the plowing in Town. It was noted by Ouellette that the snow budget was depleted after the most recent storm.

Ouellette then proceeded with his presentation. He noted that he had just completed an extensive survey of the roads in Town and came up with 7 alternatives on how to get all the roads repaired and maintained.

Ouellette noted that the Westminster Bridge project was done at a cost to the Town of \$92k in a 6 month timeframe which is really an unbelievable feat.

Ouellette then proceeded to review each Course of Action that he had put together. They are as follows:

Course of Action #1	Do all roads at once @ \$7m
Course of Action #2	Same as #1 but remove water main and 4 rds., (Central, Center, Water & Rindge Tpke.) also low volume rds. @ \$5m
Course of Action #3	Same as #2 but upfront \$1.5m and each year for 4 years \$1m.
Course of Action #4	Same but \$1.5m upfront and \$800k a year for 5 years.
Course of Action #5	\$750k
Course of Action #6	Do nothing
Course of Action #7	Aggressive - \$2.5m upfront and \$500k a year for 10 years.

Ouellette went on to state that about 80-90% of the roads in Ashburnham are bad and 10% are really bad. He noted that public safety is a real concern due to road conditions. He also stated that the sidewalks are not good either but that they are not

included in the course of action estimates. He stated that Lakeshore Drive is a major concern.

Gagnon noted that it wouldn't be a wise move to do all the roads at once as we would not be eligible for many grants so Options 1 and 2 are not really the good way to go. Ouellette agreed with this and noted that whatever plan is chosen, they would need a commitment from the Town as they can't do things piecemeal as any plans would just fall apart.

Ouellette stated that the estimate for Stowell Road is \$380k and would be a multi-year project. He added that all work would be done by contractors with the DPW's help.

Ouellette stated that Option #5 was the most expensive Course of Action and that #7 would require two bonding actions with \$2.5m upfront and \$500k a year for 9 years.

Ouellette stated that at this time they could spend \$120k for general maintenance of the roads because preventive maintenance is the key to long-term solutions and life cycle costs and crack sealing does extend the life of roads. He noted that his number one choice is Option #7.

Carlisle stated that Ouellette should put together the numbers for his top three choices and present them at the next meeting. Ouellette stated that the top three are Options 1, 3 and 7 which is his recommendation. He added that this problem will never go away and that this is a complete plan which impacts the entire town.

The Board thanked Ouellette for his informative presentation.

## **B. Correspondence**

### **1. Letter of Resignation from Fred Sweeney**

Carlisle read the letter from Mr. Sweeney (attached) announcing his resignation from the Council on Aging Board, the Cemetery Commission and as Election Constable due to health issues. Carlisle stated his thanks to Mr. Sweeney and noted that it has been an honor to have him serve on all these Boards and Committees through the years. Dennehy added that it has been at least 60 years on many boards and committees.

Carlisle stated that the Board will send him a proclamation with our thanks.

Dennehy wanted to touch on a response to his inquiry sent to our legislative representatives regarding the Lottery Aid Proposal, House Docket #4651 and the response from Senator Brewer on this inquiry. He noted that this response basically stated why it wouldn't be a good idea to do this and how it would be reducing the State's rainy day fund, affecting the bond rating.

Dennehy stated that he appreciates that Senator Brewer took the time to respond while no one else did, but that he respectfully disagrees and will continue to

beat the drum on this as every nickel counts in order to fund things that are needed for the Town.

- C. Town Administrator's Update:** Boushell stated that he put together a draft calendar as the Board requested and that he was looking for their input. He also stated that at the next meeting he would like the Board to open the Annual Town Meeting warrant.

Dennehy stated that he would like this calendar to ducktail with the Advisory Board and School District calendars. Bill Johnson, Chair of the Advisory Board noted that they would try to set up joint meetings with the Selectmen in order to eliminate the need for extra meetings.

Boushell noted that the Town Hall renovation is going well and that the drywall is up and the cables are going in.

Boushell noted that the tax rate hasn't been set yet due to problems with the Department of Revenue's new process. He noted that the tax rate will be \$12.93.

Boushell took a moment on a personal note to thank the fire department for their assistance last week when he was in distress and needed medical attention.

Bill Johnson then brought up an issue regarding the Town Hall Renovation and the \$30k of work that was done by the DPW. He noted that this should have been in the project total. Boushell noted that it was cheaper to have the DPW do it so he went with it. A short discussion followed. Carlisle stated that they would get the report on this from Jim Shanahan the Town Accountant as they need a good accounting on the project. He added that Johnson had a good point.

Gagnon noted that they would need to use the DPW as well on the Public Safety Building Project because it is cheaper to go with them on some parts of the project.

- D. Public Safety Building Committee update:** Gagnon noted that the roof is up. He added that the weather did delay it a little as the prisoner's cells aren't done yet because of roof needs. He noted that the weather did cause the roofing contractor to put snow and ice shield on the entire roof at no extra cost to the Town.

Dottie Munroe commented on her concerns about the 10k gallon in-ground fuel tank and a short discussion followed regarding this with Carlisle stating that he would ask the Project Manager why the spec included this 10k gallon tank.

Gagnon ended by stating that so far the project is on schedule and on budget and he thanked the DPW for their help.

### III. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Review of Warrant Calendar:** This was discussed under the Town Administrator's update.

#### IV. NEW BUSINESS

**A. Presidential Primary Warrant Posting:** The Board signed the warrant.

#### V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**A. December 10, 2007 – Regular Meeting**

Dennehy motioned to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2007 Regular Meeting and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

**B. December 17, 2007 – Regular Meeting**

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

#### VI. OTHER MATTERS

Carlisle noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, January 22, 2008 due to the Martin Luther King holiday on Monday, January 21, 2008.

He also reminded residents that tax payments can now be made on-line.

Carlisle also announced the following reminders from the Town Clerk:

- Wednesday, January 16<sup>th</sup> – is the final registration of voters for the Presidential Primary from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Town Clerk's office.
- Monday, February 4<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 noon is the last day to file for absentee ballots at the Town Clerk's office.
- Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup> is the Presidential Primary and voting hours are 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at J.R. Briggs Elementary School.

Carlisle stated that the Presidential Primary notices would be announced at the next meeting again just as a reminder.

#### VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### VIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:37 p.m. Dennehy motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sylvia Turcotte  
Assistant to the Town Administrator