

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
MAY 5, 2008
VON DECK LECTURE HALL - OAKMONT REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**

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

PRESENT: Selectmen Chris Gagnon, Jonathan Dennehy and Maggie Whitney, Paul Boushell, Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: At 7:00 p.m., Gagnon read the agenda. Dennehy motioned to approve the agenda as read and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

Gagnon noted that the first order of business was the Reorganization of the Board of Selectmen and Dennehy added that this was customary after the Annual Town Meeting in order to decide and vote on naming the Chair, Clerk and Member.

Dennehy motioned to nominate Gagnon as Chair and was seconded by Whitney. Dennehy motioned to nominate Whitney as Clerk and was seconded by Gagnon.

Gagnon expressed his thanks to Mark Carlisle for his three years of service on the Board of Selectmen adding that he did a great job. He also thanked him for all the years of service on other boards and that he hoped that Carlisle would continue to be of service to the Town. He also welcomed Maggie Whitney to the Board.

Gagnon stated that ultimately the Town Meeting went well and that it was open and honest. He also noted that Jeff Lawrence was outstanding as the Moderator.

Gagnon wanted to clarify that the reporter for the Telegram misquoted and misprinted the school debt assessment issue. He added that this was missed by all involved during the budget cycle and that the voters will be asked to transfer a sum of money in the fall to correct this. He added that the Selectmen will be working on the budget with the Town Administrator and the Town Accountant.

II. PRESENTATIONS, REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

A. Correspondence

B. Town Administrator's Update: Boushell noted his thanks to Sylvia for handling things while he was in the hospital. He stated that the final inspection at Town Hall is underway and they are close to the punch-list. He added that he has started to plan the move back.

Boushell stated that Town Counsel has started working on the ballot questions which resulted from the Town Meeting votes. Boushell noted that he checked with Linda Ramsdell, the Town Clerk on a date for the election and that she had also checked

with her counterpart in Westminster and decided on Tuesday, June 17th for the date. Dennehy noted that this would be fine with him as long as everyone is in line with it. Gagnon stated that they need to get everything ready. Boushell stated that he should have the ballot questions ready for the Selectmen's approval on May 19th. It was noted by Gagnon that they would need to approve the ballot questions before that date and he suggested that they should meet on Monday, May 12th to do so.

Gagnon stated that the Board would like to see the unofficial punch list for the Town Hall project and that he would like to see someone from the Committee and the Project Manager come in at their next meeting to give an update. He suggested May 12th. Gagnon noted that he was pleased that the voters were good enough to approve the furniture purchase. He also noted that with the delivery of new furniture it would cut down on the time that the offices would be closed to the public. He added that the existing furniture would be given to the VMS Senior Center and whatever can't be used by them would be auctioned off.

Gagnon stated that he asked about the live drop at the VMS Building and he was told that it's still there and they just need to find it. He noted that it may be in the firefighter's training room. He also mentioned that the live drop at Town Hall would be installed in the meeting room by the Local Cable employees. He noted that they have saved money for just this purpose, to install live feeds at the Ashburnham and Westminster Town Halls as well as the VMS if needed.

Dennehy noted that they should focus on keeping the Board of Selectmen business at Town Hall maybe on the stage in the upstairs meeting room. He stated that they could maybe set aside an area with a curtain of some kind on the stage. He noted his disappointment in no space set aside for meetings. Gagnon stated that he thought this might be a good idea and that they may have a few options to look at.

- C. **Public Safety Building Committee update:** Gagnon stated that he didn't have much to report. He noted that the next day there was a construction meeting and also a full committee meeting in the evening. He added that he was pleased to see the foundation and pillars were installed. He also noted that he had met with the Town Accountant and worked to update his expense report and that he would be meeting with Chief Barrett to go over a minor issue.

III. OLD BUSINESS

- A. **Further discussion on new DPW location:** Gagnon stated that the process of a potential auction of town-owned properties for the purpose of purchasing land for the DPW relocation is going to be fairly complex. Dennehy noted that this could be discussed due to legal implications in Executive Session as this is regarding the sale or lease of property. He noted that Town Counsel should be present and that they could schedule the Executive Session first to make it easier for her. It was noted by all the Board that the Conservation Agent did a great job on the handout of maps and the list of properties to be reviewed on the issue.

Gagnon noted that he was interested in two properties on Lakeshore Drive located on Lake Watatic. He added that one is town-owned and the other is in foreclosure right now and that it could be used as a nice area for the Town, similar to Dunn Park in Gardner with a public beach as it would be a beautiful park. Dennehy stated that they need to look at the list again and get ready for an auction.

Gagnon then touched upon the Bresnahan Committee and their project and added that they are eager to begin. Boushell stated that he recommends they come back with a plan and then the Board meets with them. Dennehy stated that they will want a meeting soon as they have worked on this for quite some time and they are frustrated right now. He suggested giving them the opportunity to make their presentation and then come up with an action plan. He added that they will also have to check with Monty Tech and their schedule. Boushell noted that he would check with Town Counsel on the deed and Dennehy added that the title is not certified as such and there are a few deeds involved. He also added that the land did come from John R. Briggs.

- B. Discussion of Improvements at Oakmont/Town Hall Offices:** Gagnon requested copies of all the invoices incurred with the Town Hall offices move to Oakmont from Boushell. A short discussion followed on the move. Boushell stated that he would call Guardian to request the work orders involved. Gagnon noted that they would need to sort out these invoices and improvements made and then approach the landlord.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Potential appointment for Water/Sewer Commission:** Gagnon noted that the Water/Sewer Commission has been short a member since the resignation of Gil Carreiro. He stated that an interested party has applied. He said that Deborah Bickford of 3 High Street has applied for this spot as Commissioner and that she feels a better breakdown of financing needs to be done on the Water/Sewer Enterprise funds and that she could be a positive. Gagnon recommended her for this appointment and Whitney seconded. The vote was Dennehy and Whitney in favor and Gagnon abstained.

Dennehy made the motion to hold the Town Election on Tuesday, June 17th and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

- B. Review of results from Town Meeting/Ballot questions and date of election:** Gagnon asked the members if they wished to review the Town Meeting results at this time and everyone agreed to wait on this topic.

At this time Whitney informed the Board that she would like to see them avoid what happened at Town Meeting this year, by following what is stated in the Special Act, Sections 14 and 15, which outlines the correct procedure to follow in the budget process and reads as follows:

“SECTION 14. At least ninety days prior to the Annual Town Meeting, the Town Administrator shall submit to the Board of Selectmen a careful, detailed estimate in

writing of the probable expenditures of the Town government for the ensuing fiscal year, stating the amount required to meet the interest and maturing bonds and notes or other outstanding indebtedness of the Town, and showing specifically the amount necessary to be provided for each fund and department, together with a statement of the expenditures of the Town for the same purposes in the preceding year and an estimate of the expenditures for the current year. He shall also submit a statement showing all revenues received by the Town in the preceding fiscal year together with an estimate of the receipts of the current year and an estimate of the amount of income from all sources of revenue exclusive of taxes upon property in the ensuing year. He shall report the probable amount required to be levied and raised by taxation to defray all expenses and liabilities of the Town together with an estimate of the tax rate necessary to raise said amount. For the purposes of enabling the Town Administrator to make up the annual estimates of expenditures, all boards, offices, and committees of the Town shall, at least one hundred and twenty days prior to the Annual Town Meeting, furnish all information in their possession and submit to him in writing, a detailed estimate of the appropriations required for the efficient and proper conduct of their respective departments during the next fiscal year.

SECTION 15. The Board of Selectmen shall consider the tentative budget submitted by the Town Administrator and make such recommendations relative thereto as they deem expedient and proper in the interest of the Town. On or before the seventy-fifth day prior to the Annual Town Meeting, the Board of Selectmen shall transmit a copy of the budget, together with their recommendations relative thereto, to each member of the financial Advisory Board.”

Whitney noted that they should be better prepared. Both Gagnon and Dennehy agreed with Whitney and Gagnon stated that a meeting should be scheduled with the Advisory Board to start to set these meetings on their calendar. He also noted that a calendar would be compiled for both boards which could be filled in as they move forward.

A discussion followed on how to proceed. Whitney reiterated that she wants to follow the Special Act. Boushell stated that this may not be easily done and Whitney noted that the School does it and then if changes are required they make them as they go along. Gagnon noted that it could still have 90% done with 10% unknown. Boushell stated that such things as health insurance, labor contracts and liability insurance would be issues. Dennehy noted that for the past 11 years we have been level funded by the state so a draft could be possible by February 1st and could be a work in progress. He stated that “it can be done, it is done and it shall be done here”.

Pixie Brennan, a resident, stated that the Town should follow the Special Act for the taxpayers. Gagnon stated that the School Department has their budget built in December and then works on it in January, February and into March. Dennehy stated that this really has to start in July and to be sure that the Assessors do their part and get the tax rate in on time. He suggested a meeting in early June with the Accountant, Town Administrator, the Assessors and the Advisory Board. Gagnon added that they would go back through the FY09 Budget and should be done by mid-June.

Dennehy stated that they need to dissect what went wrong with setting the tax rate and address this with action.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. **April 22, 2008 – Regular Meeting**

Dennehy motioned to approve the minutes of the April 22, 2008 Regular Meeting and was seconded by Gagnon. Motion carried.

VI. OTHER MATTERS

Gagnon stated his concern about oil prices and the fact that the oil bid with the school ends on June 30, 2008. He stated that the cost of oil is steadily going up and could reach \$4.00 a gallon so we can't miss the earliest contract for setting the oil bid. He noted that he strongly recommends that we prepare for our own and do our own contract or bid process if need be. He noted that Sherry Kersey stated it was a long process and that she didn't have any help in getting this out. He also noted his concerns about the tank at the Public Safety facility and filling it before the contract expires on June 30, 2008. A short discussion followed on this issue.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, at 8:03 p.m. Dennehy motioned to adjourn the meeting and it was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Turcotte
Assistant to the Town Administrator