

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 25, 2008 – 7:00 PM
FAIRBANKS MEMORIAL TOWN HALL**

This meeting was taped for viewing on local cable television Channel 8.

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

I. FAILED BALLOT QUESTIONS

Gagnon stated that this meeting was called by the Board of Selectmen to address the failed ballot questions. He noted that the Briggs question failed by 7 votes, the Roads question failed by 16 votes and the other two questions failed by a larger number of votes.

He stated that the Board of Selectmen make the decisions as to whether a Prop. 2½ Question gets on the ballot and they are the ones who chose to put all four questions on the ballot. He added that there would be no input from anyone at this meeting only discussion between the Board members.

Dennehy stated that the voters said “no” now the important question is “why”. He noted that there are many possible reasons but that it is difficult to know. Whitney had a statement prepared which she distributed to everyone in attendance, copy attached, which basically stated that the voters said “no” and she is not in favor of another vote on this question.

Gagnon stated that he thought the Town asked for too much too quickly and more importantly, the question is, do we really want an elementary school in this Town. He stated that the elementary school is a basic part of the Town and it is falling apart. He added that the Town has a great opportunity offered by the State to build or repair the school and it’s time to ask the voters “do you want an elementary school?” He went on to state that it was the Selectmen’s job to put this on a ballot and if we don’t get into this program the Town would have to wait and Briggs may be condemned by then.

Gagnon stated that he checked with Dr. Zapantis and was told that the Town would be allowed to ask the voters on this issue more than once. He noted that the Selectmen need to decide if a vote would take place in September or January.

Dennehy stated that he has always been excited about this opportunity and he was so in favor of this that he had voted to add it in the operating budget, but the School said no even though they knew that the vote wouldn’t pass on the ballot.

Dennehy asked Boushell if this amount could be funded in the fall with Free Cash as he didn't want to go back to the voters. He stated that the Selectmen should be acting in the voters' best interest and that he does realize that Briggs is important to the Town. He suggested that they should push with the voters and find a way to increase the possibility of success without a 2½ override.

Dennehy also noted that they should find out why the Roads Program didn't pass and added that they need to get active feedback from the citizenry and then work to do their bidding. He suggested that they pose specific questions in a flyer or survey to the residents and then they would have something to be more successful in re-doing the Town's roads, as Chapter 90 money is not enough.

Dennehy stated that he would propose a study without a Prop. 2½ ballot and use the feedback from the citizenry. He also stated that maybe thru advocacy and education they could move the State to change their program requirements.

Gagnon stated that it is a one-year override, tax exclusion and it would be three years at \$70k a year divided by 2,600 households. He added that it's if we get into this program and if we don't follow their rules, they would back out.

Gagnon stated that they were not going back with all four questions, only one.

Whitney asked about the \$3k cost to hold another special election and Boushell responded that the Town would pay this. Gagnon stated that if one question was put on a ballot in September it would work out better because if we wait until the fall there would be many more questions on the ballot and the chance for a successful ballot vote would diminish.

Dennehy noted that they should look at the history of a re-vote which is not good. He stated that we have plenty of choices and the Board has to take a real honest stand on the priorities and be bold and stick to it. He added that they have to carefully study what is more important.

Gagnon stated that if they could prove to the State that they tried twice on a ballot, they may reconsider. He went on to say that it's time for the Town to decide if they want an elementary school and if not, then they should tell the MSPA to just go away as this needs to be done in 2008 and it's the Board of Selectmen's job to work to get this done. Both Whitney and Dennehy agreed with this statement.

Dennehy did state that he didn't agree that it would be wise to do this in September. He did state that if it couldn't be done with Free Cash, then it should be on the Fall Special Town Meeting ballot.

Gagnon stated that they had two more meetings to continue the discussion on this but the question is, "do you want a school or not"? Whitney inquired about mailing out some type of survey in the Light bills and Dennehy noted that the responses wouldn't come back in time.

Gagnon noted that the Board really needs to focus on this.

II. ANSWER TO KEVIN PAICOS

Gagnon stated that Kevin Paicos has asked to start back to work part-time, about 20 hours a week, on July 7th and then full-time on July 24th.

Gagnon noted that this was fine with the Board and that they would like to discuss the financial side at another time with Paicos. Whitney inquired if there were sufficient funds in the FY09 line item and Dennehy noted that the budget assumed Paicos' salary and Boushell stated that they built in 3 or 4 weeks of overlap. Whitney noted that she would like something in writing on his schedule.

Gagnon stated that Boushell should contact Paicos to let him know that it has been approved by the Board. Boushell noted that any contract discussions should be in Executive Session. Dennehy stated that they would invite Paicos to come back on July 7th part-time and then back full-time on July 24th.

III. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, at 7:50 p.m. Dennehy motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Turcotte
Assistant to the Town Administrator