

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
APRIL 21, 2009
FAIRBANKS MEMORIAL TOWN HALL – UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM**

This meeting was aired live on local cable television.

PRESENT: Chris Gagnon, Chair, Jonathan Dennehy, Member, Maggie Whitney, Clerk, and Norm Thidemann, Interim Town Administrator.

Pledge of Allegiance.

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: At 6:30 p.m., Gagnon read the agenda. Whitney motioned to approve the agenda as read and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.

II. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. **Town Administrator Search Update:** Thidemann stated that they would need to have an Executive Session this evening on initial contract negotiations on the Town Administrator candidate. He also noted that he has initiated the background check and the CORI check has also been submitted. Gagnon stated that he spoke with Briggs and that things were moving along well.

Thidemann stated that Briggs was in the office that day and had discussed when he would be leaving his present position and that it could be around June 6th or 9th. He added that this would work out well as his, Thidemann's, last day was June 10th.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. **Further discussion on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles and the Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles:** Article 29 was discussed, in particular, the funding mechanism of this grant.

Thidemann touched on the budget, Article 2, stating that he had already taken off half of the number between the Governor and the House budgets. He stated that the budget is conservative enough and is probably okay, but that it is always difficult to really predict. He did add that these numbers would probably have to be adjusted in the fall.

B. **Further discussion on the Special Act Study Committee:** Whitney read the names of the seven people who have already been appointed to this committee and noted that there was a total of seven. Gagnon stated that they were still seeking any interested parties to serve on this committee. He noted that Lorna Fields had asked to serve and Dennehy motioned to appoint her to the committee. Whitney seconded and the motion carried.

It was suggested by Whitney that this Committee should begin meeting and Gagnon asked Ed Vitone, who was appointed the Chair of this committee to go ahead and begin scheduling a meeting. Dennehy noted that the Committee should have a written charge and that they should have a draft of this charge at their next meeting. Ed Vitone was in agreement.

C. **Further discussion on the IT Study Committee:** Whitney noted that at this time they had only one person who sent in a letter of interest to serve on this committee and that was Greg Fagan. Dennehy stated that he knew someone who might be considering serving on this committee. He stated that this person is a new resident and was very knowledgeable in computers. Gagnon asked for more volunteers.

- D. Further discussion on appointments to the Affordable Housing Trust Committee:** Whitney stated that she had called Donna Brooks to check on this and that Brooks had stated that the Affordable Housing Committee was scheduled to meet on April 27th and that they would discuss this at that time and advice.
- E. Further discussion on future of So. Station:** Gagnon stated that the DPW Director, the Fire Chief and the Town Administrator were working on this but that there was no update at this time. Dennehy added that the Capital Planning Committee should discuss this as well.
- F. Further discussion on “Application for Use of Town Property”:** Gagnon touched on a few points in the rules and regulations connected with the Use Form and stated that this was a good idea. Thidemann noted that the main difference was that it included the Public Safety Building which wasn’t listed on the form originally. Dennehy stated that the Board of Selectmen can make any exceptions if needed on a case by case basis. Gagnon noted that the policy is for non-profit and town committees only. Some discussion followed on the improper use of these facilities. Thidemann stated that it is ultimately the Town Administrator’s responsibility.

Whitney motioned to accept the amended Application for Use of Town Property form and regulations and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.

- G. Further discussion on “Vehicle Use Policy”:** Gagnon noted that this was a draft copy. Thidemann stated that he needed to work on this some more and that they should note that some contracts will be exceptions such as the Police and Fire Chiefs. Whitney motioned to accept this as a first reading (draft) and Dennehy seconded. Motion carried.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Appointment of Ashburnham-Westminster representative on the MOC Board of Directors:** Gagnon stated that for the past few years our representative had been Ashburnham resident, Beth Wojnas but this year she was not interested in serving again. A Westminster resident, Louise Janhunnen, has asked to serve as both towns representative.

Whitney motioned to accept Louise Janhunnen as the Ashburnham-Westminster representative on the MOC Board of Directors and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.

- B. Discussion on offer of land donation:** Gagnon stated that the Schofields wanted to donate property at 585 Lakeshore Drive, Map 44, Parcel 57 which he added was not a buildable lot. Thidemann noted that the Board members should take the time to go and look at this parcel.

Dennehy discussed other parcels in Town in the Far Hills area that were grandfathered and are actually buildable lots. He noted that the lot in question may have been grandfathered but that he wasn’t sure if it is buildable. He noted that the question to the Board is should they take this property off the tax roll and accept the donation. He stated that they needed a plan before they decide and that they should do a title search as well. He also questioned if a Town Meeting vote was required in order to accept this donation and Thidemann stated that he would check with Town Counsel on this but that he didn’t think a vote was needed. He also noted that the taxes were current on this property. It was decided to put this off at this time, pending more research.

- C. Discussion on Water/Sewer Commission appointment:** Gagnon stated that they had received a letter from Paul Johnson who stated that he was retired and would not be able to serve although he did ask to be appointed as an alternate member. Gagnon also noted that Valorie Daigle had submitted a letter to the Board asking to be appointed as a Water/Sewer

Commissioner and that a letter from the Water/Sewer Commissioners was also received recommending her appointment.

Dennehy stated that they should make three motions on this issue. Dennehy motioned to accept Paul Johnson's resignation and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried. Dennehy motioned to appoint Johnson as an alternate subject to confirmation that this is an appropriate appointment and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried. And Dennehy motioned to appoint Valorie Daigle to the Water/Sewer Commission and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

- D. Initial consideration – Police Union Contract:** Thidemann noted that this was the official contract which had been recently approved by the Selectmen but that it was the hard copy of the final version. Dennehy motioned to approve and sign the contract and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

At this time Whitney stated that she had an item to recommend. She noted that they should have a meeting on Thursday, April 30th which would include the Board of Selectmen, the Advisory Board and the Moderator to go over the articles for the Annual Town Meeting. She added that this would be better than the 9:00 a.m. meeting that they usually have before the Town Meeting which would make things run more relaxed. Dennehy stated that he thought this was a good idea but that he had a previous appointment for that night. He did say that he would try to reschedule his appointment in order to be there. Ed Vitone stated that he thought this was a good idea as he felt that people needed more explanations and background on issues presented at the Town Meeting. After some discussion Thidemann stated that he would be sure to get this meeting posted for Thursday, April 30th at 6:30 p.m.

There was some discussion on the budget article number 2 on the warrant regarding the difference in the TA recommend and the Advisory Board recommend columns. Thidemann stated that normally the vote is taken on the Advisory Board recommended budget number at Town Meeting. Thidemann also stated that he would be prepared to talk about the budget at Town Meeting.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of minutes of:

March 23, 2009 Minutes – Joint Meeting w/Advisory Board
March 26, 2009 Minutes – Joint Meeting w/Advisory Board
March 30, 2009 Minutes – Joint Meeting w/Advisory Board

Dennehy motioned to approve the minutes above and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

VI. CHAIR'S REPORT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gagnon noted the following Town Clerk Reminders:

- April 27, Monday, 12 noon, last day for filing applications for absentee ballots re: Town Election.
- April 28, Tuesday, Town Election at Briggs, 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- May 2, Saturday, Annual Town Meeting 10:00 a.m. in Auditorium at Town Hall.
- Dog licenses are now available at the Town Clerk's office. The 2008 licenses expired on March 31st.
- Absentee ballots for the April 28th election are available at the Town Clerk's office.

He also noted that the next meeting of the Board of Selectmen was on Monday, May 4th at 6:30 p.m. in the upstairs meeting room at Town Hall. And that the Memorial Day ceremonies would be held on Monday, May 25th on the lawn in front of Town Hall and that more details would be announced.

Whitney stated that she had attended the meetings of the MRPC Regional Municipal Services and that they had given them a survey on intermunicipal agreements which she found very interesting. She also stated that she had a question on MART and the fact that they had announced a decrease in funding and that the Board of Selectmen decided on the level of services. She stated that they suggested that the Treasurer and the Town Administrator should be involved and that they should look at this more closely.

Whitney also noted the letter sent by Rep. Rice on the Snow & Ice funding. Thidemann stated that Rep. Rice had filed the bill to get the 25% reimbursement funding from the State although it may not pass, and that it could be spread out over a two year period.

VII. BOS REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Whitney read a letter from Donna Brooks who stated she was resigning from the ZBA. It was noted that this was a Town Administrator appointment. Gagnon asked that anyone interested in serving should please send a letter of interest.

VIII. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Thidemann stated that he would put together a briefing book for the ATM and that he would also make a presentation on the budget.

Thidemann stated that he did meet with the Water-Sewer Commissioners and that it was a friendly meeting which resulted in preparing a memo on job descriptions as well as the relationship with the DPW Director. He added that they would need to meet with the Selectmen on setting the rates as it wasn't fair to leave it as their sole responsibility. He stated that the main thing was to have everyone on the same page and that eventually there would be the need to stabilize the rates with some form of contributions from the Town.

At this time Gagnon thanked the Board members noting that this would be his last official meeting.

At 7:55 p.m., Whitney 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 contract negotiations with non-union personnel and not to reconvene into regular session. Dennehy seconded and the motion carried.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:50 p.m., Whitney motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte
Assistant to the Town Administrator