

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
JOINT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
AND ADVISORY BOARD – MINUTES
MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2009 – 6:30 PM
VON DECK ROOM – OAKMONT REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**

PRESENT: Chris Gagnon, Chair, Jonathan Dennehy, Member, Maggie Whitney, Clerk, Norm Thidemann, Interim Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator. Advisory Board members in attendance were Dottie Munroe, Bill Johnson, and Leo Janssens II.

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

At 6:30 p.m. Gagnon read the agenda. Whitney motioned to approve the agenda and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.

II. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

Dr. Michael Zapantis and Dave Christianson were present to get the Board's approval of the final amended Intermunicipal Agreement for the Briggs Project. Gagnon explained that the suggested changes had been made and incorporated in the agreement and Zapantis noted that this needed to be approved by the School Committee the following night. Whitney motioned to approve and sign the Intermunicipal Agreement as presented and Dennehy seconded. Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Zapantis proceeded to give the Board an update on the status of the Owner Project Manager stating that there were 11 applicants and they interviewed six. He noted that they would re-interview 2 out of the 6. Christianson stated that they hope to have the approval by April and then go forward.

Next on the agenda was Fire Chief Zbikowski to give a short update on the recent ambulance presentation in Afghanistan and the plaque that was presented to the department and the town. Also present was Lt. Rick Sicard, President of the Firefighters Association and Jason Bergeron. Chief Zbikowski discussed the turnover ceremony and how well it went. He noted that our military is not only there fighting but most are provincial reconstruction teams, helping to create jobs and well-being. He stated that they were awarded a flag and a beautiful plaque which they brought to display at the meeting. Lt. Sicard read the statement on the plaque and noted that it would be on display at the Fire Department. Zbikowski stated that they were still sending supplies and two more ambulances, one from Fitchburg and the other from Norton, and that they were also helping them to build a new hospital. He added that their goal is to raise \$4m for this. He closed by stating that this whole project started because of Kevin Paicos and that the people of Afghanistan are very appreciative. Gagnon thanked them, applauding their efforts.

Gary Howland was up next to discuss the proposed Agricultural Committee warrant article. Also in attendance were Pat and David Steward, farmers in Ashburnham. Howland gave some background noting that other surrounding towns have this already.

He stated that there are many small farmers in Ashburnham and he was asking for the support of the Selectmen. He noted that they would need five members for this committee. Don Ouellette, DPW Director spoke about his proposed article for a Farmer's Market and revolving fund which would coincide with Howland's Agricultural Committee. Howland noted that there was a lot of interest for fresh produce. Whitney motioned to approve Article 22 on the draft ATM Warrant and was seconded by Dennehy who noted that he thought this was a good idea in order to protect the rural character of the town. Motion carried. Article #5 of the draft ATM Warrant money articles was amended as requested by changing who would expend the funds in the revolving fund to the Agricultural Committee instead of the DPW. Dennehy motioned to approve this article as amended and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried. There was some discussion on the revolving fund.

Bob Fichtel of the Focus Committee was in attendance to give an update on the Highway Department move. He stated that they were in a holding pattern at this time waiting on the Briggs decision. He discussed the soccer field noting that they could relocate the field and build there. He also added that they had moved away from Williams and Turnpike Roads as there were too many problems. He stated that they are meeting with the Village Center District Zoning Committee to develop an RFP for the present site. Dennehy noted that the Committee excluded the Highway site and specifically did not address it. Fichtel stated that there weren't many feasible sites in Town. The Briggs site was discussed as well as Landry Field, which Gagnon stated was only hypothetical at this time. Fichtel did note that the Highway move would not happen for some time.

Fichtel inquired about the status of the list of default properties to be sold which would generate one-time funds and Gagnon stated that this would come up at a future meeting, and the Treasurer and Assessor are working on the list at this time. Dennehy stated that they needed to think of the bigger picture such as all the other capital projects in Town and he added that he was not in favor of dedicating funds from this sale to the DPW. Gagnon noted that part of the discussion would be a battle for the dollars. Fichtel was invited to the next Capital Planning Committee meeting on March 30th.

Next up was Tom Flanagan, Richard Egan and Donna Brooks, all members of the Affordable Housing Committee to discuss the establishing of a trust. Donna Brooks stated that they questioned whether the trust should be a liaison or independent and she stated that they are soliciting members, not less than 5 and no more than 7 members. Gagnon stated that anyone interested in participating in the Affordable Housing Trust should contact Sylvia at Town Hall and that time is of the essence.

Don Ouellette was present to discuss the brush removal, potholes and snow removal costs. Ouellette stated that since the ice storm the brush has been pushed back off the road and is still on the shoulder which can be a danger. Gagnon stated that residents should not plan on private property pick-up. If it does happen, it would only be on Town land and he also mentioned that they are accepting wood debris at the DPW.

There was much discussion on this issue and the ordering of a flail mower. Thidemann stated that he would recommend purchasing this as it could save money and maybe take

it out of Chapter 90 money and might also include the purchase of a chipper. Ouellette stated that at this time they were using the Light Department's chipper.

Ouellette did state that at this time there were no funds in Chapter 90, but he added that the flail mower is eligible under this. Thidemann stated that they would have a Special Town Meeting in the Annual Town Meeting to get funds earlier.

There was much discussion regarding the Ice Storm clean up and Thidemann noted that they should do as much as possible themselves, adding that the flail mower and the chipper would be useful in the future. Ouellette recommended the purchase of the flail mower and the chipper.

Gagnon stated that there was no guarantee to the residents that the Town was planning to pick up the brush from private yards but that residents could bring the brush to the Transfer Station on Saturdays or get a burn permit at a cost of \$25 from the Fire Department to burn in their yard, as there was no guarantee that the Town would pick up the brush.

Ouellette stated that the Transfer Station would be open for the next two weeks for debris only.

Ouellette stated that all the Ice Storm costs were included in the Snow & Ice account and that he was hoping that they were out of the snow season at this time. He stated that patch for the roads was expensive, about \$1k a day and that there was a problem with Waste Management and the transfer station as they want us to have a person there when it's open. There was some discussion on using seniors to do this as part of the Senior Workoff Program.

Discussion followed on the paving of Route 12 and when it would occur and also the Lake Road Bridge project.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review of FY10 Annual Town Meeting Warrant: Gagnon noted that there was a list of customary articles and they were as follows: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 14. Dennehy motioned to accept these articles as written and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

Gagnon questioned Article 4 which was the approval of prior year invoices. Thidemann stated that they didn't know if they had any invoices at this time but they should keep it on the warrant. Dennehy motioned to accept Article 4 and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

Gagnon read Article 10 which was the customary article for road and sidewalk repair and Thidemann recommended that they wait on this until the fall meeting.

Thidemann stated that they should hold off on further discussion on the remaining warrant articles and have a work session with only this on this agenda. He added that

they should pick a time and then invite the Capital Planning Committee to attend. Dennehy stated that the Capital Planning Committee was set to meet with the Advisory Board and Selectmen on Monday, March 30th and they would combine the budget discussion and the warrant.

Gagnon noted that they would move this meeting to the upstairs meeting room at Town Hall in order to accommodate all the participants. It was noted that the meeting should be posted for 7:00 p.m. in the upstairs meeting room at Town Hall for Monday, March 30th.

Ouellette noted that on the draft money article list, article 6, the Strap Grant would be at no cost to the Town and he was asking for permission to apply for this grant. Whitney motioned to approve this article and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.

There was some discussion on Article 5, excess of Municipal Light Plant Funds to the Town treasury and the possibility of the amount being changed. Thidemann stated that he would look into this.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

Thidemann noted that under the Consent Agenda they would place routine items and the Board would approve them with one vote.

Dennehy motioned to approve the Special One-Day Liquor License and the April 28th Election Warrant. Whitney seconded and the motion carried.

VI. CHAIR'S REPORT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gagnon read the Town Clerk announcements including that dog licenses were now available in the Clerk's office.

He also announced Candidate Night which is sponsored by the Ashburnham Business Council to be held on Thursday, April 16th at 7:00 p.m. in the Von Deck Room at Oakmont Regional High School.

Gagnon stated that the next BOS meeting would be a joint meeting with the Advisory Board on Monday March 30th at 7:00 p.m. and also on Thursday, March 26th at 7:00 p.m. He added that the Selectmen's regularly scheduled meeting would be held on Monday April 6th at 6:30.

Dennehy announced that there was a Public Hearing by the Village Center Zoning Committee to be held on Thursday, March 26th at 7:30 p.m. in the upstairs meeting room at Town Hall. He also announced the Hockey Benefit to be held on Saturday, April 4th at 5:00 p.m. at the Iorio Arena at Cushing and this was to benefit a child cancer patient. He added that Ray Bourque would be there from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. to sign autographs as well as playing.

VII. BOS REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Whitney stated that she had attended a Regionalization Meeting held in Gardner recently and that Thidemann also attended this meeting. Thidemann noted that there was a lot of interest due to the economy. Whitney stated that she found this meeting very informative.

VIII. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Thidemann stated that he had a list of items from the last meeting that he was working on. He stated that the work order is in for the lights on the side of Town Hall.

He stated that the Town Meeting and the Board of Selectmen meetings should be held back at the Town Hall in the upstairs meeting room. He noted that he was working with Ouellette on portable walls for the winter months for the meeting room for a small investment.

He noted that any sale of Town property taken for tax title has to go into the Capital Fund not to be used in the operating funds.

He stated that he sent a letter to the State on the mandated dam funding to request an extension and there was also a warrant article on this.

He noted that he was meeting with Guardian to discuss the phone message change as well as IT costs.

Whitney stated that they need letters from people who would like to serve on the Town's IT Committee.

Thidemann stated that the Board needs to revamp the Town's FMLA Policy and the Board needs to vote on accepting this policy. Dennehy noted that they would review the policy submitted and would discuss it further at the next meeting.

Thidemann stated that it looks like the FY09 Budget is more of a concern than FY10 right now and noted that the major issue was the debt interest account money which they could transfer to the Reserve Fund at Town Meeting. He added that this would cover all the accounts that have been overspent.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:40 p.m. Whitney motioned to enter into Executive Session and was seconded by Dennehy. Roll call was taken. Gagnon stated that the purpose was to discuss Collective Bargaining and to not reconvene into open session except to adjourn.

X. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:52 p.m. a motion was made by Whitney to adjourn and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.