

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
JOINT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
AND ADVISORY BOARD – MINUTES
WEDNESDAY APRIL 1, 2009 – 7:00 PM
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM – TOWN HALL**

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, Belden Divito, Ron Reed and Jamie Piedrafite.

Bill Johnson stated that the purpose of this meeting was to review Norm Thidemann's revised budget again and decide on any changes.

Thidemann stated that they would know more about the State Aid figures in September or October and the numbers are already down. He noted that he had already cut some of the Quinn Bill funds as well as 100% of the revenue from meals and rooms tax.

Thidemann went on to say that the Water/Sewer revenue numbers were moderately conservative, far below the preliminary budget numbers. He stated that he cut more out of the major departments, Fire, Police and DPW and put these amounts in the reserve fund account. He also noted that he took out the SAFER grant from the Fire Department budget because it should be an article on the warrant.

At this point there was some discussion on whether to place the SAFER Grant on the warrant as an article. The Board of Selectmen unanimously stated they were not in favor of placing this on the warrant. Gagnon motioned to take Article 26 off the warrant and was seconded by Whitney. The motion was unanimous.

Some discussion followed on old special articles and using some of these funds in the FY10 budget and leaving a portion there for the future. Thidemann stated that he would suggest that the next Town Administrator transfer some funds into the Stabilization Fund.

Thidemann stated that the FY09 deficit was articulated differently but now the taxes seem to be coming in okay. He stated that Snow & Ice is addressed - \$150k deficit with the Ice Storm costs segregated out by Article 1 of the Special Town Meeting warrant.

Whitney noted that she had a suggestion from the Town of Westminster noting that most COA Directors are 20 or 30 hours a week while Ashburnham's is 40 hours.

Thidemann stated that he was working with the Water/Sewer Commissioners on putting an MOA together for job descriptions and the role of the DPW Director. He stated that there were only 537 customers to define how the Water/Sewer revenues are allocated. He added that they needed to do this to help the participants to understand. He noted that they were doing some research and it didn't look like much was in arrears maybe only about 3 households.

Dennehy stated that the Selectmen, the new Town Administrator and the Water/Sewer Commissioners would need to brainstorm on this to find the problem and resolve it.

There was some discussion on why the Town buildings were not billed for the sewer charges.

Reed stated that at the Town Meeting they needed to tell the voters to expect another meeting in September because the budget numbers may change.

The discussion turned to the ConCom Agent salary and possibly cutting the hours. It was noted by Whitney that most ConCom Agent positions are not usually full-time. Johnson agreed stating that this position should be cut to 20 hours with Elaine Cormier as a part-time Land Use Administrator. He added that she could also be a floater for Town Hall, helping with projects. He noted that they should go back again and look at regionalizing the ConCom Agent position with Westminster, adding that this is an important position but it should be part-time.

Johnson noted that Cormier could be assigned 20 hours in Land Use, 10 hours in Town Hall and 10 hours for Water/Sewer.

Thidemann stated that he would stay with his budget numbers but would change the Advisory Board numbers to reflect the cut in the ConCom Agent's hours.

Johnson made the motion to request that the ConCom Agent's hours be reduced to 20 hours in the FY10 Budget and was seconded by Munroe. All Advisory Board members were in favor.

Whitney made the motion to request that the ConCom Agent's hours be reduced to 20 hours in the FY10 Budget and was seconded by Gagnon. Unanimous vote in favor.

Johnson also noted that the ambulance billing should be taken out of the Town Administrator's account and moved to the Fire Department account, which is where it should be. Thidemann stated that he would check with the Accountant. Whitney noted that the Public Safety Building account should be taken out of the Police budget account as well.

Thidemann stated that he would move the new cruiser under the operating budget in the Police account. Both the Advisory Board and the Board of Selectmen were unanimously in favor of taking the police cruiser article off the warrant and moving it as suggested by Thidemann to the Police operating budget.

Thidemann asked where the money saved by reducing the ConCom hours would go and Johnson stated that it should be placed in the Reserve Fund and that Thidemann could figure the exact numbers.

There was some discussion as to where the funding of the articles would come from and Thidemann noted that it was all listed on the spreadsheet he distributed. (attached)

Dennehy stated that in the future he wanted to see all of the Chapter 90 funds go into the roads and not for equipment. It was noted by Reed that in the past few years the equipment was needed and that's why they used the Chapter 90 funds.

There was a short discussion on the citizens' petition and the impact it would have for the employees as well as the Town.

At 8:55 p.m. the Board of Selectmen adjourned their meeting with the Advisory Board remaining to discuss more business.