

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
AUGUST 3, 2009 – 7:00 P.M.
FAIRBANKS MEMORIAL TOWN HALL – UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM**

This meeting was aired live on local cable television.

PRESENT: Ed Vitone, Chair, Jonathan Dennehy, Member, Maggie Whitney, Clerk, Norm Thidemann, Interim Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Maggie Whitney. Vitone called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was noted by Vitone that they would make a few minor changes to the agenda. He stated that they would wait for one more member of the Council on Aging Board to arrive so they would skip over their presentation until then. Whitney noted that she wanted to give an update on the recent meeting she attended at MRPC and to make an announcement for the Town Clerk. Dennehy motioned to approve the agenda as amended and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

III. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of BOS Initiatives

Dennehy gave an update on the activities of the IT Study Committee stating that they have been meeting weekly and are now in the process of working on finishing the inventory of equipment. He stated that they are working on a very aggressive plan and will come before the Board of Selectmen with an update in September.

Whitney gave an update on the short-term disability insurance issue for Town employees stating that on August 17th the Board would be meeting in Executive Session and a report on this would be presented to them.

Vitone stated that the Special Act Study Committee has worked to come up with a skeletal version and their next task is to review the Town's Bylaws. He stated that once this has been accomplished the Committee would report to the Selectmen probably in September.

Vitone also gave an update on the Capital Planning Committee stating that they had a version of their report now and their next step was to meet with the departments and they would start with Fire, Police and DPW.

Vitone stated that the newly formed Tax Base Study Committee is scheduled to have their first meeting on Tuesday, August 11th.

B. Review BOS Task List

Whitney stated that they had 118 tasks of which 10 were completed at the last meeting, 77 total tasks were completed, and 32 are pending in progress.

Whitney stated that she would research the possibility of day care during Town Meetings. Vitone stated that they should work with the peer groups in the school system on this. Dr. Zapantis, who was present, stated that as long as they had advance notice he didn't see any problems. Vitone stated that he would send out a letter to Dave Uminski on this.

Whitney also noted that they should invite Senator Brewer and Rep. Rice to their meetings and Vitone stated that they should do this twice a year.

Whitney asked about receiving monthly reports from the Department Heads. Briggs inquired as to how detailed the reports should be. He stated that he would work with Whitney on this.

Whitney stated that Westminster is celebrating their 250th anniversary this year and that part of their celebration is a parade in September which they have asked the Selectmen to participate in. She stated that she would march in the parade. She also mentioned getting a banner up for Ashburnham's 250th in 2015. Vitone stated that the Committee should look into this as their first task.

Whitney noted that the Board had requested feedback on the Town's legal consultants. Vitone stated that they had input from some boards and committees and it was mostly positive. Briggs stated that he would talk to Town Counsel on a few issues that were brought up.

Whitney stated that they should be scheduling the Water/Sewer meeting with the City of Gardner to begin discussions on the agreement with them. Vitone asked Briggs if he would be willing to work with the Water/Sewer Commissioners on the negotiations with Gardner and he responded that he would be willing to be a part of the negotiations and that he had also spoken with Leo Collette that morning and had touched on this briefly during their conversation. Briggs stated that he would push both Dave Berger and Leo Collette on this issue in order to get this started. A discussion on Brigg's experiences in Rutland and their negotiations with the City of Worcester followed.

Whitney inquired on the status of the Scout Community Center and Vitone stated that the Committee had chosen five sites that they might be interested in for this project, with their first choice being River Street. He discussed his vision of an ideal area in South Ashburnham encompassing the old Cauoette property, which was a total of about 20 acres and included 3 ponds. He noted that this area could be an outdoor recreation center for residents, and could be the Ashburnham version of Gardner's Dunn Park. He stated that he would like to solicit residents to see if they would support this. Dennehy stated that there were positives and negatives with this idea and that they would need to investigate with soil and water samples before they proceeded.

Whitney asked about the status of holding the Board of Selectmen meetings at the Public Safety Building in the winter months. Briggs stated that he would look into this adding that the live feed for the cable would be the issue. Whitney stated that there was money to set up a live feed and that they should check with Chris Gagnon on this.

Whitney noted that the IT Study Committee should research remote access for the Town Clerk during elections at J. R. Briggs.

Whitney also noted that there is still a need for 5 members to serve on the Affordable Housing Trust. She added that they also needed members to serve on the South Station Re-Use Committee and one member is also needed to serve on the ZBA. Vitone noted that this information should be placed on the Town's webpage and Sylvia said that she would get this on.

IV. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS (7:30 p.m.)

A. Council on Aging Board Report

Present for this report was Brian Aho, Chair, Lois Somers, Lorna Fields and Mary Lee Muessel, Director)

Brian Aho stated that he would present the COA Board Goals and Objectives. Aho stated that at their recent meeting they established 5 goals. He stated that their first goal and objective was to form a Friends Group. He stated that they definitely see the need for more involvement and ways to defray costs. He noted that their second would be to work on deciding where the Senior Center would be in the future and that a small committee was working on getting information on this including the pros and cons. Vitone noted that they should work on a thoughtful analysis. Lorna Fields stated that they really needed a new furnace in the VMS Building. She noted that someone she knows would be willing to gift the Town \$2k a year towards the furnace but that they would need to know where they stood on this issue.

Aho noted that their third goal & objective was to create an outline and agenda for their meetings to help them to move forward and to make it more streamlined. Vitone added that they needed some strategic initiatives similar to what the Selectmen have developed. Vitone also noted that the Council on Aging should be applauded for their efforts.

Aho stated that their fourth goal & objective was to establish a training seminar structured by the Town Administrator and Town Accountant for their accounting in order to get it resolved, tighter and basically more accountable. Vitone noted that the Board of Selectmen supports this.

Aho noted that their fifth goal & objective was to revisit the Director's job description due to all the new activities coming up, as they would need to work thru this with her.

Vitone noted that in the Town Bylaws, the responsibility for the clarification of the job description for the Director is clearly with the Council on Aging Board.

Aho added that a few of the 5 goals & objectives that he just described would be reached very soon and then they would move on to others.

Briggs thanked the Council on Aging Board for being the first to do this and he added that this has been an excellent opportunity for open communication.

Whitney inquired about their newsletter and Muessel stated that right now it is distributed quarterly.

B. Swampscott Senior Center Visit

Dr. Michael Zapantis and Maggie Whitney put together a slide show of their visit to the Swampscott High School/Senior Center. Zapantis stated that Whitney took many photos while they were there and they had incorporated them into a slide show.

Both Whitney and Zapantis gave a good overview of the facility and their visit. A discussion followed along with a question and answer period. Vitone stated that they should gather the questions from everyone and then they could evaluate the results, getting the facts on the table as well as all the opportunities presented.

Whitney stated that they would show this presentation on the cable channel and it would also be available for the seniors.

Lois Somers stated that the feasibility study that was done a few years ago on the VMS Building should also be presented and Vitone agreed stating that both options should be available for review.

V. OLD BUSINESS (continued)

C. Discussion on possibly providing babysitting services at Town Meeting

It was noted that this was discussed earlier in the meeting.

D. Appointments to the 250th Celebration Committee

It was noted by Whitney that Sue Brennan and Linda Ramsdell asked to be appointed to this committee. Dennehy stated that he heard from George Cornwall also. Whitney motioned to approve the three appointments as stated and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried. Vitone noted that Dave Uminski stated that they should remember the High School if they need any assistance with this celebration planning.

E. Status of NIMS Certification and Emergency Shelter Certification

Vitone stated that this would be covered in the Town Administrator's report.

F. Status of student participation on Town Boards

Vitone noted that the following Boards/Committees had responded positively to this program: Advisory Board, Board of Health, Planning Board and the Capital Planning Committee. He stated that a letter would be sent to Dave Uminski with this information, asking for a meeting to discuss this further.

G. Handicap status of Town Hall – Clarification
Briggs stated that he spoke with the Building Inspector, Mike Gallant on this as well as the Architect. Gallant stated that everything was up to code and met all the criteria for ADA compliance. He added that it was not set up for voting in the building however. Vitone stated that the Town Hall is ADA compliant.

H. Continued discussion on Historical Piano Museum lease that will expire June 30, 2010
Briggs stated that he sent a letter to the Fredericks regarding this and he did receive a response from them stating that they were interested in a 10-year lease.

Briggs noted that they should discuss this at a future meeting in Executive Session with the Library Trustees present. It was decided on the first meeting in September, Tuesday the 8th.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion on appointments to the newly formed Agricultural Commission
Dennehy read the following names of individuals who expressed interest to serve on this commission: Richard Wright of Timberlost Farm and Patricia Garland Stewart a farmer as full members; and Chris Picone and Gary Howland as Associate members. Dennehy motioned to approve this list and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

B. Discussion on abandoned property
Whitney stated that she had a call from a concerned resident regarding the abandoned buildings in Ashburnham, of which there are nine. She stated that she checked on line and printed out some information from Gardner on how this type of situation is dealt with there. Vitone stated that they should take this under advisement and look into it.

C. Discussion of Westminster Parade – September 27, 2009
Whitney and Dennehy both stated that they would march in the Westminster 250th Celebration parade. Vitone noted that he would be on vacation at that time.

D. Discussion on Packard Hill Land protection
Vitone stated that this was a 100 acre parcel of land that was now protected. He also noted that the Town would not lose any taxes because the land was under Chapter 61. He thanked Gary Howland for his efforts and added that this land was connected with the Winchendon water supply.

Dennehy stated that both Gary Howland and Lorraine DeSouza deserve a lot of credit for yet another parcel as protected land. He added that they are still working on an additional parcel and that the Town owes them a lot of gratitude for all their efforts.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

Dennehy motioned to approve the Consent Agenda and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dennehy read the following announcements:

- Dog licenses are available at the Town Clerk's office
- Farmer's Market – every Monday in Winchester Park
- Fireman's Muster – August 1, 2009 – Whitney stated that this was a great success.

Whitney announced that the Town Clerk would be on vacation August 17 and 18.

Dennehy read the One-Day Special Liquor License for the Turnpike Rod & Gun Club for their 2nd Annual Benefit Poker Run and Barbecue on August 22, 2009 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. with a rain date of Sunday, August 23rd. Whitney motioned to approve this Special Liquor License and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.

IX. BOS CORRESPONDENCE

Vitone stated that he had an anonymous call regarding the Police boat on patrol on a lake on July 21st. He stated that the Ashburnham Lake Coalition had suggested that this be done back in 2008 and they bought the boat for the Police and donated funds to pay for the overtime costs required for the boat patrols.

He stated that the Board of Selectmen affirmed the position that the patrol is good for the residents and the Town at large and the Police would patrol for the balance of the season.

Whitney stated that she attended the last MRPC meeting and that she learned a lot about the TIP projects and that they can change from month to month. She stated that Ashburnham is still on the TIP to do Main Street to Gardner Hill Road and Briggs added that the engineering for this is currently being done. Whitney also noted that Steve Nims is working on other projects as well and that he would be attending the next MRPC meeting.

X. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Briggs reviewed his report. A copy is attached to these minutes.

He stated that the Auditor is coming in next week as both the Treasurer and the Accountant have questions for him.

Briggs went over the status of the Town Hall Flood Damage and Vitone asked what impact this may have on the FY10 Budget. Briggs stated that it wasn't finalized yet so he couldn't tell. He noted that they would be going out to bid on the alternative HVAC installation of two air handlers, one for the computer room and the other for the vault. He also noted that he would be talking with the Fire Chief on the fire alarm system for the server room as right now there are sprinklers installed which wouldn't be a good thing for the servers if there was a fire.

He noted that in the next week or so he would be working with Anne Cervantes to reconcile FY09.

Briggs noted that the new Munis reporting and training would provide the opportunity to prevent borrowing by keeping a close monthly look at the budget. Vitone stated that Briggs needed to pick a date for the training and Briggs stated that he was looking at the end of September.

Briggs noted that the bids for the Phase I Dam Engineering were opened that morning and that both he and Mark Petersen would look at these closely. He stated that they were looking to get an RFP out on this and that they would bring in people to check them out further and that they would review the bids in the next week or so. He added that they all came in under budget.

Briggs stated that he was pleased with the Goals and Objectives of the Council on Aging and the Board of Assessors.

He also noted that he would be asking all the Department Heads to operate on a 10% decrease scenario. He noted that they would not be hiring for the open position at this time in the Fire Department and that the Fire Chief was working on other opportunities.

Vitone stated that if the School District does not get the \$7,500 Ice Storm reimbursement from the State that the Town should make them whole as they were extremely helpful during the storm.

Briggs stated that he had given the Selectmen a draft of the Public Safety Use Policy and that they should review it and then include it on the next agenda for discussion and vote.

XI. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:53 p.m. with no further business, Whitney motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte
Assistant to the Town Administrator