

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
MAY 18, 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.

Pledge of Allegiance led by Maggie Whitney. Vitone called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked for any public input.

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Vitone read the agenda. A motion was made by Dennehy to approve the agenda as read and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

II. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. Discussion on cost to repair Town Hall roof leak and course of action: Vitone asked Thidemann for an update. Thidemann stated that they had received two quotes on the roof repair; one ranged from between \$10k to \$12k from a company out of Keene NH and the other was for \$3,500 from a local roof company. He added that this last quote was dependent on how many slates were missing and that his inclination was to go with the lower bid from Hubbardston and go to the Capital Planning Committee for the funds.

Vitone noted that when the Town Hall was renovated the only work done on the roof was to the cupola as the Committee thought that the roof was intact at the time. He added that this does need to get resolved. He noted that with money so tight this year they would be looking at putting a “band aid” for now as they shouldn’t let it get any worse. Thidemann noted that he would discuss funding this repair with the Advisory Board.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review of Strategic Initiatives: Vitone stated that this list was of tasks of significant effort and that the plan was to select four or six to work on for now. He added that this list would be posted on the website. After some discussion, the members chose the following order of tasks:

1. Special Act Study Committee
2. IT Study Committee
3. To identify candidate business/industries to Town with goal to lower tax levy on households by \$1M and to set up a committee for this purpose.
4. Research methods to provide coverage for town employees for short term illness including sick time roll-over alternatives, short term disability insurance, etc.
5. Bring cohesiveness to the Board of Selectmen – SWOT method: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
6. Analysis of BOS operating procedures to improve efficiency and effectiveness of board including (1) update of “Policy Regarding Selectmen’s Meeting Agendas” and (2) process or policy for guidelines for speaking to the press.

Dennehy noted that they should also engage more with the Focus Group on the DPW move and Vitone responded that they should do this but that right now funds for this are in short supply. Dennehy stated that they can leave this off the list for now but they need to see that it’s “on-deck”.

It was noted by Vitone that the Planning Board charter may overlap with the Focus charter. Dennehy stated that the basic Focus Committee charge is the DPW move. Whitney stated that right now the need is there but money is the issue. Vitone stated that they should have the Focus Committee and the Planning Board work as one on this study as there would be better coordination with both groups. Dennehy stated that the key obstacle is where to move it. He added that the Focus Committee did a good job on looking into this and they gave a great report. He noted that they need new ideas on this. Whitney stated that she liked Vitone's idea to have both committees work together on this. Vitone stated that they would have both committees come in at a meeting to discuss this.

Vitone stated that on Wednesday they would have the Board of Selectmen retreat with Norm Thidemann there to see that they follow the rules.

Vitone also noted that they should add one more task to their list; #7 – To explore methods to lower Water & Sewer rates. He stated that they should invite the Water/Sewer Commissioners to a meeting in the near future. Vitone stated that #5 would be off the list on the following Monday. He also noted that they would ask the public for their input on items 3 and 4 and that at their next meeting they would go over the action list.

Vitone stated that they would start to have one department head at each meeting for a 10 minute review of what is ongoing in their department.

Whitney inquired about the year-end transfer meeting and Thidemann stated that he was working on this and it would be done before he left the Town's employ.

Vitone stated that he would write the charge for item 3 on the list and that Whitney would do so for item 4.

B. Review of Special Act Committee charge: Vitone read the draft of the Special Act Committee charge (attached) and stated that he would be the liaison for the Board of Selectmen. Dennehy noted a change in item 1c – noting that new cases come up all the time and it should be changed to reflect that, as follows: "Solicit Special Acts and Town Charters written or modified *at least or not limited to* 10 years for similarly sized towns in the Commonwealth." Whitney motioned to amend the charge as noted and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried. Vitone noted that he would send the amended charge out to all members of the Committee.

C. Review of IT Study Committee charge: Dennehy reviewed his draft charge for the IT Study Committee. Vitone and Whitney made some comments and Dennehy stated that he would make the suggested changes.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

VI. CHAIR'S REPORT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vitone gave an overview for the voters of how the Safer Grant would be documented and memorialized. Whitney made the motion to place this information on the website and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried. Dennehy voiced his appreciation for Vitone's efforts on this very comprehensive overview.

Dennehy read the Town Clerk reminders as follows:

- Final voter registration for Special Election is Wednesday, May 27th from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Town Clerk's office at Town Hall.
- Last day to file applications for absentee ballots for voters who will be out of town for the election is on Monday, June 15th at noon.
- Special Election is Tuesday, June 16th at J.R. Briggs Elementary School 98 Williams Road from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Dog licenses are available at the Town Clerk's office. The 2008 licenses expired on March 31st. After June 1st a \$10.00 late fee will be added to each dog registration.

Whitney read the following announcements:

- Memorial Day services are on Sunday, May 24th at 9:30 a.m. at St. Anne's Church and Monday, May 25th beginning at 7:30 a.m. at Sweeney Playground.
- The Town Hall will be closed on Monday, May 25th for the Memorial Day Holiday.
- The Webmaster is on vacation from May 13th thru May 24th so no updates will be made to our website until after his return.
- Downtown Days is Saturday, June 27th.
- The next meeting of the BOS is on Monday, June 1st at 7:00 p.m.

VII. BOS REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Vitone stated that they had received a letter from the Planning Board with their input of needs. They also stated that a resignation was forthcoming and Vitone asked for volunteers to serve. He added that the Planning Board had also forwarded their goals and objectives.

Vitone stated that their "retreat" was to be held on Wednesday of this week.

Vitone noted a request from St. Denis Church for a one-day special liquor license for Saturday, May 30th from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. for a parish dinner. Dennehy motioned to approve their request and was seconded by Vitone. Motion carried.

Dennehy gave an update on what transpired at the J.R. Briggs Building Committee meeting. He gave some background noting that this project started five years ago and that it would be moving forward very quickly now and would succeed or fail within the next nine months. He noted that they also talked about possible community use of Briggs and that they needed feedback from the community, adding that the MSBA would give more points with the community use of the facility. Dennehy stated that the Board of Selectmen will sponsor an Open Forum to invite all interested parties to discuss the possible uses, noting the COA, Lions Club, Youth Library, etc. He noted that they need the input now before the architect is hired.

Vitone suggested that they write a summary of objectives and Dennehy stated it's a simple topic, some things the MSBA would not reimburse. He stated that they want to have the community come in and say what they want and then Mike Zapantis would ask MSBA. Dennehy noted that the message to convey here is "now it's serious".

Vitone stated that the entire Board of Selectmen was supportive of this Open Forum being held.

Whitney read the Election ballot questions just as a refresher and reminder to the public. Vitone stated that everyone should come out and vote.

Vitone gave an update on his meeting with the Bresnahan Committee. He noted that a letter was written by the Land Use office listing all the steps necessary in order to make it easier for the Committee.

VIII. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Thidemann stated that Doug Briggs attended the recent Department Head staff meeting where they were asked to come up with contingency budgets, reflecting 7% and 15% reductions, and that the alternatives could be furloughs, which Briggs agreed with.

He noted that the computers at Town Hall were running on old water damaged equipment and loaners right now and that the new equipment was still weeks away. He stated that we were managing things but changes would need to be made as a safer environment was needed. He added that they would use the Board of Selectmen's office as the new server room and would put in an AC unit to keep it at an acceptable temperature. He added that there are a lot of steps involved and the new Town Administrator Doug Briggs will be part of the solution.

Thidemann stated that he would work with Briggs on a work plan; and a part of that would be the FY09 Budget and getting it balanced. He noted that revenue is down and is out of our control and that department spending is okay. He stated that he would go to the Advisory Board for transfers to move money from one department to another and that this would be a busy three weeks.

Whitney inquired what his last day for the Town would be and he stated that Briggs would be starting on June 10th and his contract ended on June 9th. He stated that they may not need much overlap as they have already started. He added that Briggs would do a great job for the Town.

Johnson questioned whether Guardian was the only option to get this flood crisis work accomplished and Thidemann stated that they have been working night and day on this and that the Town does have a contract with them, with the permanent solution still about a month away. Thidemann stated that an RFP would have delayed things and would have been counter productive. He noted that the Town has hired an outside adjuster who has said how impressed he was with Guardian. He added that the most expensive part in this was the Munis system where we have no alternatives. Thidemann also stated that the adjuster has pointed us to items we wouldn't have thought of, such as wiring. Vitone stated that a good job is being done.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

AT 8:20 p.m. Dennehy 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. Whitney seconded and the motion carried.

X. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:00 p.m. Dennehy motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Vitone. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator