

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM**  
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING – MINUTES**  
**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2009**  
**VON DECK LECTURE HALL – OAKMONT REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**  
***AS AMENDED***

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This meeting was aired live on local cable television Channel 8.

PRESENT: Chris Gagnon, Chair, Jonathan Dennehy, Member, Maggie Whitney, Clerk, Kevin Paicos, Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

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

II. PRESENTATIONS, REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

**A. Briefing on Town Administrator Search – John Petran, MMMA Representative:** Gagnon stated that Mr. Petran was not in attendance yet so they would put this off until he arrives.

**B. Correspondence:** Gagnon stated that the Board had received correspondence from MRPC on the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan from 2006-2008. He read about how the Town needs to adopt this plan in order to receive FEMA and MEMA funds. He noted that the Board needed to vote to adopt this plan. Paicos stated that the Board needs to act on this as soon as possible in order to get these funds.

Gagnon stated that they would have a public meeting at their next Board of Selectmen meeting and at that time they would vote to adopt this plan.

**C. Town Administrator's Update:** Paicos stated that the FY10 budget was close to being balanced and that he would have it to the Board by the end of the next week.

**D. Public Safety Building Committee Update:** Gagnon stated that he met with Chief Barrett, the Treasurer and the Town Accountant to get the final balance which is approximately \$71,000. He also stated that the Committee was meeting the following day and that it looked like things are in good shape.

**E. Chairman's Report:** Gagnon noted that he met with the Town Accountant to go over the FY09 Budget.

III. OLD BUSINESS

**A. Discussion on FY09 Local Aid Cuts and Town budget impact:** Paicos stated that the Town has lost \$84,847 in local aid which was just out of the lottery funds. He did add that the cuts for FY10 would be 10% in the other categories of local aid. He stated that right now the Town gets \$847k in lottery funds and \$130k in other funds through local aid.

Paicos stated that Nancy Haines couldn't run the end of January report yet but that he would analyze it in detail for the Board once it was generated. He stated that the Town has lost \$84k in local aid on the revenue side as well as \$100k in motor vehicle excise and building fees. He noted that with the four positions not being filled the Town is not in terrible shape right now. He did say that he still may have to do some cutting but that he was hoping for no lay-offs. He noted that Haines would be compiling the end of January report with the balances and that he has advised the Department Heads to not spend the money in their accounts generated from the employees who have left town employment.

Gagnon inquired about scheduling the next meeting and Dennehy stated that they were waiting for the Advisory Board's schedule on budgets.

Some discussion followed on the use of remaining balances in special warrant article accounts.

Gagnon noted that at the February 17<sup>th</sup> meeting the agenda would include discussion on the FY09 Budget review and the FY10 Budget.

**B. Discussion – Interim Town Administrator position:** Dennehy gave an overview of his discussions with Norm Thidemann on the terms of his agreement. He noted that Thidemann was very gracious in working out a doable proposal and he sent a very brief memorandum of understanding and is looking for a vote on this tonight. Gagnon stated that he passed this by Town Counsel and there were no problems.

Dennehy read the terms of the agreement, attached, which basically stated that he would start on or about March 1, 2009 subject to his availability and that his compensation would be \$1,500 a week for a 4-day work-week and \$500 a month for living expenses and car allowance. It was also noted that he would get credit for any time that he worked above the 4 day work week and this would be considered comp time to compensate for his trips back to South Carolina once a month to see his family.

It was also noted that he would be available to consult with the Board of Selectmen as well as attending their meetings, which would be considered part of the work day. It was noted that this agreement would be for three months and if needed, they would negotiate for any time beyond that. Dennehy stated that there was a provision in the agreement that this was a policy-making position and that he would not collect unemployment compensation.

Dennehy stated that the Town Accountant has confirmed that we have the funds to pay Thidemann. He noted that Norm is a highly regarded professional and has done well in Ashburnham in the past. He stated that he "highly endorses Norm Thidemann as Interim Town Administrator".

Dennehy motioned to appoint Norm Thidemann as Interim Town Administrator effective March 1, 2009 subject to closure of memorandum of understanding and was seconded by Whitney. Unanimous in favor.

Dennehy stated that he would check with Thidemann to see if he might be available sooner than March 1<sup>st</sup> and that he would work with Paicos to see about a schedule.

Gagnon noted that Paicos' ~~would be in Ashburnham until March 15<sup>th</sup>~~ *last possible date to be in Ashburnham would not go beyond March 15th.*

## II. PRESENTATIONS, REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE (continued)

### A. **Briefing on Town Administrator Search – John Petran, MMMA Representative:**

John Petran, the Town Administrator in Ashland offered his guidance in the search for a new Town Administrator. He stated that hiring a Town Administrator is a very important decision and that they need to be sure the fit is right. He noted that the Town is dealing with the low-end of the pay range and that they would probably get someone ready to go into this position but not a current TA. He recommended that they put the ad in the ICMA and MMPA programs and that they should also use a basic headhunter. He recommended getting a consultant right away as the consultant can talk to people behind the scenes and make phone calls.

Petran stated that the key is to find someone who understands local government. He also stated that background checks are tough to do and a consultant could help with this. He added that using a consultant would be money well spent. He also stated that the Board should set parameters for the search committee and prepare an outline/statement of the community and be prepared to discuss issues in Town and make plans to move forward.

Petran also noted that the Selectmen should check the resumes as well as the committee as this is the most important decision the Board of Selectmen will have to make.

Dennehy stated that he had attended a seminar at the MMA Annual meeting which discussed strategic plans and goals of a Town Administrator and how to develop better relationships between the TA and the BOS, as well as between the BOS members themselves.

Dennehy thanked Petran noting his appreciation for the good advice and information. Petran stated again that the key is to get the right fit and to step back and analyze in order to make the right decision.

## IV. NEW BUSINESS

**A. Discussion and review of draft FY10 Budget:** This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

**B. Annual Town Meeting warrant article submission deadline:** There was some discussion as to what timeframe was needed. Dennehy suggested Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup> at close of business as the deadline for ATM warrant article submission.

Dennehy made the motion that any and all warrant articles be submitted before Thursday, March 12, 2009 for the ATM of May 2, 2009. Whitney seconded and the motion carried.

## V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No minutes for approval.

## VI. SCHEDULE OF COMING EVENTS

Whitney asked that the regularly scheduled meeting for March 2<sup>nd</sup> be moved to the following Monday, March 9<sup>th</sup> as she had a commitment on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. ***Dennehy also asked for this change.*** Gagnon noted that they could change the March meetings to March 9<sup>th</sup> and March 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Board all agreed to this change.

He also announced that their next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, February 17<sup>th</sup> due to the President's Day Holiday on Monday, February 16<sup>th</sup>.

Gagnon reminded residents of the Town Caucus to be held on Monday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at the Library.

## VII. OTHER MATTERS

## VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

IX. ADJOURNMENT: At 8:14 p.m. Dennehy motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted, (*as amended*)  
Sylvia Turcotte  
Executive Assistant to the Town Administrator