

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES  
JUNE 1, 2009 – 7:00 P.M.  
FAIRBANKS MEMORIAL TOWN HALL – UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM**

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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.

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Dennehy motioned to approve the agenda as read and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

II. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT

III. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of strategic initiatives - status

Vitone stated that the Board's retreat was completed. Dennehy stated that it went well and that they are stronger and happier and Whitney agreed.

Vitone stated that he wanted to set up a Tax Base Study Committee which would bring in more business to the community and that so far there were two members, the Planning Board and himself and that he was looking for more interested parties.

B. Review of IT Study Committee charge

Dennehy reviewed his proposed charge for the IT Study Committee. (attached) Whitney motioned to accept the charge as written and was seconded by Vitone. Motion carried. Dennehy noted that he would send an email and call each member of this committee to set up their first meeting.

Whitney reviewed her report on the potential for short-term insurance for the Town employees. (attached) Vitone motioned to accept the draft report and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried. Vitone added that this study would be to provide the best benefits for the Town's employees.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Code of Conduct

Vitone stated that the Code of Conduct – Board of Selectmen was a result of their recent retreat. He stated that they would memorialize this by all signing and that Sylvia would set up a file.

B. Selectmen's Committee Assignments

Vitone stated that both he and Dennehy were on the Capital Planning Committee and that in the Bylaws it states that only one BOS member should be on this Committee and for that reason they should revisit this.

Dennehy stated that before Vitone was elected it was one Selectman and one citizen at large. He also noted that there was a concern regarding the open meeting law and the appearance of impropriety. He stated that he appreciated Vitone's leadership on this Committee but it would be more prudent for only one member to serve. Whitney stated that she checked the Bylaws on this. Gail Dumont stated that they could keep Dennehy on the Committee as a non-voting member. Vitone noted his concerns but added that they should advertise for someone else to serve but until then leave it as right now it's working well. Whitney stated that she would like to get some input from the public on this issue. Vitone stated that they would leave this as is with Dennehy as a non-voting member. It was noted by Dennehy that the Capital Planning Committee was a good group.

Vitone stated that Whitney should serve as the Board's representative on the MJTC for now, Dennehy to serve as liaison for the IT Study Committee and Vitone to serve on the Tax Base Study Committee. Whitney motioned to approve and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried. Vitone also stated that he would serve on the Special Act Study Committee.

C. FY10 Appointments

Vitone stated that they would place a hold on the Focus Committee appointments until the next meeting after they presented their report to the Board.

Whitney read the list of appointments, attached. Dennehy motioned to accept the appointment list as read and Whitney seconded. Motion carried.

D. Anticipatory work for Road Program

Vitone stated that they wanted to start now to get the paperwork in order in anticipation of the vote for the Road Program passing. Thidemann stated that Ouellette was working on this paperwork before he leaves the Town's employ.

E. Process improvements

The Board discussed the list of process disciplines to improve their operating efficiency. They also discussed their goals and objectives. Vitone stated that the idea was to plan, measure and track their progress, to be status reviewers and to aim high but not unrealistic with a list of action items. Dennehy stated that this was a very good idea in order to keep them organized and that they should ask the new Town Administrator to do the same.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

VII. REPORT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dennehy stated that he wanted to recognize the Municipal Grounds Department for the great job they did preparing the cemeteries for Memorial Day. He added that the

ceremonies all went very well which is a benefit of living in a small town. He stated KUDOS all around. Whitney added that the ceremonies would be televised and that it was a great day with more people than ever in attendance. Vitone agreed stating that it was a worthwhile effort.

Whitney read the Town Clerk's reminders as follows:

- Absentee ballots are now available in the Town Clerk's office for the June 16<sup>th</sup> Special Election.
- Last day to file applications for absentee ballots for voters who will be out of town for the election is on Monday, June 15<sup>th</sup> at noon.
- Special Election is Tuesday, June 16<sup>th</sup> at J.R. Briggs Elementary School Gym, 96 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 31<sup>st</sup>. After June 1<sup>st</sup>, a \$10.00 late fee will be added to each dog registration.

Whitney also noted that on June 6<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. there would be an open house at the Ashburnham-Westminster Animal Rescue Shelter.

Dennehy made the following announcements:

- Downtown Day – Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup>
- Next Meeting of the Selectmen is on Monday, June 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.
- Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District Override Forum dates:
  - Tuesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at Stevens Public Library
  - Monday, June 8<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. Spaghetti Dinner put on by Oakmont Peer Leaders - \$5 per person, proceeds to benefit Relay for Life
  - Monday, June 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at Oakmont Regional High School
  - Thursday, June 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at Forbush Memorial Library, Westminster

Dennehy noted that they should recognize that this would be Norm Thidemann's last meeting and he wanted to thank him for coming when the Town needed him the most. He noted his calming effect and how his presence was a real service to the Town adding that FEMA's loss was the Town's gain. Whitney agreed stating that he definitely had a calming effect and that she couldn't thank him enough. She added that he would be missed. Thidemann stated that he would miss this adding that "WE" made a lot of progress.

Whitney then stated that she had attended the Fitchburg DPW Day where residents visited and had a chance to see what they do and how things are done. She noted that it would be a great thing for Ashburnham and she'd like to see it done if possible. She stated that she spoke with Steve Nims about this possibility and that it could be done either on Downtown Day or on another date and that she would look into it further. Vitone agreed stating that the DPW employees are "unsung heroes". He noted that he liked the idea of coupling it with Downtown Day but Whitney did note that there might not be enough time to do so. Whitney stated she would check on how Fitchburg did it and report back.

## VIII. BOS REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Vitone noted that the DCR would be in Ashburnham the following day at 10:00 a.m. to inspect the dam located near 100 Main Street and that he would participate along with Thidemann and Ouellette.

Whitney noted that she wanted to attend the Municipal Financial Seminar on Thursday, June 25<sup>th</sup> and noted that perhaps Dennehy would attend as well.

Vitone noted that he signed the letter composed by MRPC on the Tip Project for Route 1. He also asked Thidemann to see about getting a key for the Public Safety Building conference room.

There was some discussion on a notice received from the Rod & Gun Club for a Special One-Day Liquor License for a number of Thursdays for the next few months for cruise night events. Thidemann stated that normally they would approve one event at a time and he suggested they approve the June 11<sup>th</sup> event for now and then get input from Town Counsel on whether a blanket license would be proper. He also noted that they would need a copy of the Club's insurance binder.

Whitney motioned to approve the June 11<sup>th</sup> Special One Day Liquor License conditionally with a copy of their insurance binder, the Police Chief's okay, a completed application and Town Counsel's approval. Dennehy seconded and the motion carried. They noted that the remaining dates would be under advisement.

## IX. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Thidemann stated that he would be meeting with the Advisory Board on Wednesday noting that the main areas for discussion would be the Town Administrator's budget and the Non-Departmental budget, which included legal and computer expenses. He also noted that the Unemployment account deficit was another issue but that the insurance premium line would cover that.

He noted that the income from interest income and fees from permits were way under expectations and that the tax collections were at or above target, as well as ambulance fees. He added that State aid was still \$100k behind and that right now it looks like there won't be much free cash.

Thidemann noted that his final draft of the Vehicle Use Policy would be on the next agenda for the Board's approval.

He noted that the Town Hall roof was repaired today.

Thidemann stated that he was planning the DPW transition and with Ouellette leaving, there was a list of things to be done.

He thanked the Board and added that it had been fun coming back to Ashburnham.

Dennehy noted a letter received from the Auditor of the Commonwealth Division of Local mandates. He stated that due to the persistence of Paicos and Thidemann, maybe they are finally admitting that the dams are an "unfunded mandate". Thidemann stated

that this was percolating upward. Vitone stated that they should also give credit to Dennehy for his perseverance as well. Dennehy added that both Senator Brewer and Rep. Rice are due credit as well.

X. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:10 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 to reconvene into Open Session. Whitney seconded and the motion carried.

At 8:15 p.m. the Board reconvened into Open Session. Vitone then spoke about the contracts that the Board approved for the new Town Administrator, Douglas Briggs.

Dennehy motioned to approve the 6 month contract for Doug Briggs and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

Dennehy read the following motion:

“WHEREAS, the Town desires to employ the services of said Douglas Briggs (Mr. Briggs) as Town Administrator of the Town of Ashburnham.

WHEREAS, the Town, under Chapter 41, Section 108N of the General Laws may contract with the Town Administrator for such services:

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the Town to obtain the services of the Town Administrator, and to provide inducement for him to remain in such employment; and

WHEREAS, Douglas Briggs, agrees to accept employment as Town Administrator of said Town.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it voted by the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Ashburnham, as follows:

1. That the Board of Selectmen authorizes the employment agreement between the Town and Doug Briggs for the period of June 10, 2009 through December 31, 2009.
2. That the Board of Selectmen authorizes the employment agreement between the Town and Douglas Briggs for the period of January 1, 2010 through June 30, 2012, subject to the condition that Mr. Briggs is reappointed as Town Administrator on or about December 31, 2009.
3. That the Board of Selectmen authorizes the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen to execute and take other necessary action to implement the employment agreement between the Town and Mr. Briggs.”

Whitney seconded and the motioned carried.

Dennehy motioned to authorize the Chair, Ed Vitone, to execute the contracts as presented and Whitney seconded. Motion carried.

At this time, Doug Briggs accepted and signed both contracts. It was noted by Vitone that the Town Clerk would need to place the seal on the contract and then it would be mailed to Labor Counsel.

Vitone noted that they went through a very professional process to bring an affordable leader to the Town and that he was very excited for the Town. He noted that Briggs would be brought in early on a per diem basis to train with Norm Thidemann.

Briggs stated that he was ecstatic noting that he would attend the Advisory Board meeting on the upcoming Wednesday and would be meeting with Don Ouellette on Thursday. He added that he would be at Town Hall on Monday ready to go. He noted that he would be resigning on June 23<sup>rd</sup> from his Board of Selectmen position in Rutland.

Dennehy stated that he was very enthusiastic and optimistic. Whitney thanked the Committee and stated that she was thrilled and was looking forward to working with Briggs. Dennehy thanked Vitone for handling the contract. Vitone stated that they were committed to work together.

At 8:25 p.m. with no further business to discuss, Whitney motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Dennehy. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte  
Assistant to the Town Administrator