

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FEBRUARY 17, 2010 – 3:00 P.M.
TRAINING ROOM AT PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX**

This meeting was aired live on local cable television. It was noted by Vitone that this meeting was rescheduled from February 16th due to a snow emergency.

PRESENT: Ed Vitone, Chair, Maggie Whitney, Clerk, Doug Briggs, 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 3:00 p.m.

II. PUBLIC INPUT

Vitone asked for any public input and Gail Dumont stated that she knew someone that was interested in using the upstairs meeting room at Town Hall for an anniversary party on March 27th. Vitone and Whitney read parts of the policy for use of a Town building and he noted that the Board would have to review this further and would take this under advisement.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Whitney motioned to approve the agenda as presented and was seconded by Vitone. Motion carried.

IV. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

V. UPDATE – STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE FROM OAKMONT

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Whitney gave an update on the BOS Initiatives and Task List. She stated that at this time they had completed 94% with only 9 items remaining to complete.

Whitney also noted that the Briggs Building Committee meeting was changed to either Wednesday February 24th or Thursday February 25th due to the snow storm.

VII. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE (Report attached)

Briggs noted the openings on Boards and Committees and Whitney added the Affordable Housing Committee to his list. Vitone also noted that with Jonathan Dennehy's resignation, there was an opening on the Capital Planning Committee.

He touched on the water tank and the grant loan approval notice coming in probably this week. Vitone added that the grant for this was traced back to stimulus funds.

Bill Johnson, Chair of the Advisory Board was present and inquired about whether the Capital Planning Committee would be presenting an update and Vitone replied that they would do that on Monday, at the Advisory Board meeting.

Briggs noted that he was still working on the ambulance analysis and Vitone stated that the resident who was inquiring was looking for the net cost to the Town to have ambulance service.

He stated that the FY11 Budget had been sent to the Advisory Board and would be discussed at their meeting on Monday, February 22nd at 7:30 which would allow time for the members to attend the Town Caucus before.

The topic of where the Annual Town Meeting would be held came up because Oakmont was not available for May 1st and Whitney noted that having the ATM at Oakmont was preferable to the upstairs meeting room at Town Hall. She asked that Briggs look into pushing the meeting back one week. Vitone added that Briggs should inquire through Town Counsel and did also note that they would need to consider Westminster in this process.

Briggs stated that he had made his decision on which vendor to hire for the Town's IT services based on the cost of services. He noted that he had chosen Guardian over Baesis because of this and that he had already scheduled a meeting with Brad Warren to establish goals and objectives and that he would monitor them very closely.

Briggs stated that he recommended setting up a new permanent IT Committee. Vitone thought this was a good idea and that they should draft what the minimum qualifications should be to serve on this committee before they are appointed. Whitney asked if the current members would be allowed to serve on this permanent committee and Briggs stated that they would.

He also noted that he was working on the RFP for the lease of the Stevens Building and that it would be issued to the Fredericks for their consideration along with any other interested parties.

Briggs advised the Board that there were some establishments in Town that do not have the proper permits and that Rick Metcalf, our Board of Health Agent was working on this issue.. He stated that the Town has received the last payment of \$40,908.77 from the Ice Storm and that the Town Hall Flood Damage issue had been completed.

He noted that he was informed that we were approved for the EECBG Grant in the amount of \$150,000 for solar panels for the Public Safety Building and Oakmont. He added that these panels would save energy and that they could see between \$20 and \$25 thousand dollars a year in savings in total. He thanked Stan Herriott for his diligence in pursuing this grant and also for the work they will perform to install these panels.

Briggs touched on the budget for the radio and fire alarm system stating that the Selectmen needed to approve the rates. He stated that a \$300 annual monitoring fee was up from \$250 and a \$500 connection fee would remain the same. He stated that there were currently 45 users with 36 that were private businesses or residences and the remaining were municipal buildings. He added that there were 1 or 2 more that were interested in being connected.

Johnson discussed the concerns he had with this fire alarm issue noting that there needed to be some consideration for the boxes we gave away which needs to be addressed. Briggs stated that he would check into this and would take it under advisement.

Whitney motioned to accept the proposed fee schedule as presented and Vitone seconded. Motion carried.

Johnson also discussed his concerns regarding the IT Committee recommendation noting that it should have been given some consideration as they unanimously wanted Baesis, not Guardian. He noted that the Committee put 8 months into this study. He did add however, that he was sure that this wasn't an easy decision for Briggs and believed that Briggs felt he did what was best for the Town. Vitone stated that he hoped the Committee didn't feel their recommendation was ignored. He added that it is incumbent on Briggs to hold Guardian to better service and that the standard performance is set. Whitney stated that she hoped Briggs would hold them to the line.

VIII NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion and vote on district allocation methodology

Vitone gave a good background on how the assessment was calculated through the years since 1993 noting that the district formula used required a vote. He stated that from 1999 thru 2010, if the statutory formula had been used, Ashburnham would have paid more than they did. He stated that the question here was what formula to use for FY11.

Briggs stated that they had met with the School Committee as well as the Westminster Selectmen and Coordinator to discuss this. He noted that the Statutory Method was the financially best method for Ashburnham and that Westminster is concerned due to the timeframe with only six weeks left in the budget process. Vitone stated that the question before them was that the voters make the final decision and that they needed to ask the School about an override. He added that he would make their recommendation to the School.

Whitney inquired what would happen if one town votes differently in the district as both towns need to vote on the formula, whether it be statutory or district.

Vitone stated that when their budget is voted, the allocation is also voted. He stated that they want to make it more transparent to the voters. He reiterated that this is a town decision by the voters and Briggs added that they were just trying to give direction and a heads-up to the School. Johnson noted that the Advisory Board would need more time to review this issue after the meeting on Monday.

Vitone stated that the bigger impact would be on our partner community, Westminster. A discussion followed on how the assessments are calculated under both methods.

Vitone stated that he was okay with holding off on a vote at this meeting and Johnson stated that on Monday they would schedule their next meeting to give their input and that this meeting would probably be before the next Board of Selectmen meeting on March 1.

Vitone stated that the School may certify their budget without debt service at \$26.5m and if this happens, there would be an override either way, with the district method being the larger override amount. He added that an election would be needed in Ashburnham. He stated that he feels strongly that they should adopt the statutory method for FY12, noting that the district method for FY11 may be an option.

Whitney stated that Westminster is Ashburnham's partner and we want to keep a good relationship, as we are looking at more regionalization possibilities.

Vitone stated that they would hold off until the next meeting and would discuss this further with the Advisory Board before the vote. Briggs noted that they should keep in mind that six weeks would be needed to arrange an election for the override.

Whitney stated that the School budget needs to be certified on March 9th and that anything certified over \$26.1 million would need an override. Briggs noted that the drop dead date is the end of the first week in March.

Whitney noted that she has heard from many voters that they don't want any overrides. Vitone stated again that if the budget is lower they could avoid an override. Johnson stated that the Advisory Board would meet quickly to give their recommendation and that their next meeting could be set up as a Joint Meeting with the Selectmen.

Vitone stated that he appreciated the input.

B. Vote to designate Municipal Liaison to the Ethics Commission for the Town of Ashburnham

Briggs stated that he recommended Linda Ramsdell, Town Clerk as the obvious choice for appointment to this position. *Vitone motioned to appoint Linda Ramsdell as Municipal Liaison to the Ethics Commission for Ashburnham and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.*

C. Vote to approve the Annual Town Meeting Warrant Schedule

Briggs reviewed the potential schedule and noted that the Board needed to vote to close the warrant on March 4th. *Whitney motioned to accept the schedule as presented and to close the ATM Warrant on March 4th. Vitone seconded and the motion carried.*

IX. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. February 1, 2010 Minutes – Regular Meeting
- B. February 9, 2010 Minutes – Special Meeting

Whitney made the motion to approve the two items listed under the Consent Agenda and Vitone seconded. Motion carried.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Whitney read the following announcements from the Town Clerk:

- Open registration of voters at Town Hall in the Town Clerk's office from January 1st and on.

- February 22nd – Citizens Caucus – 7:00 p.m. Community Room at the Stevens Memorial Library.
- March 4th – 5:00 p.m. last day for filing or withdrawal of nomination papers for the Town Election with the Town Clerk.

Other announcements:

- The second budget hearing of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School Committee will be held on Tuesday February 23rd and their budget certification will be on Tuesday, March 9th.
- The Friends of the Stevens Memorial Library presents Irish Night on Tuesday, March 16th from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Seamus Pender, a local musician will perform.
- The next meeting of the Board of Selectmen is on Monday, March 1st at 7:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Building in the Training Room.

Whitney noted that it was time to discuss the permanent home for the Board of Selectmen meetings. Vitone stated that this would be on their agenda for discussion at their second meeting in March.

XI. BOS CORRESPONDENCE

Vitone stated that he would like to see about scheduling a structured brain-storming session with all Department Heads, Committees, Boards etc., to lay out a revenue forecast as a “town-wide grass roots discussion”. Briggs stated that this was a good idea but guidelines should be set and they would need to focus the discussion in order to not waste time. Vitone stated that they could do this after the budget on a Saturday. Johnson noted that the Advisory Board has wanted to work on a five-year plan and this could be a part of that process. Vitone added that it would be a revenue constrained solution and would build consensus. Whitney agreed and added that more regionalization was in the future.

XII. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 4:08 p.m., Whitney 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 collective bargaining (pending or ongoing) and to not reconvene into open session except to adjourn. Vitone seconded and the motion carried.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 4:30 p.m. Whitney motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Vitone. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator