

TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
MONDAY – OCTOBER 4, 2010 – 6:30 p.m.
TRAINING ROOM – PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX

This meeting was aired live on local cable television.

PRESENT: Ed Vitone, Chair, Maggie Whitney, Clerk, Ron Reed, Member, Doug Briggs, Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

I. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Maggie Whitney. Vitone called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

II. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

IV. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. Recognition – Dillon Handy – Eagle Scout (6:35 p.m.)

Present was Mary Anne Handy and her son Dillon Handy, the Eagle Scout to be honored. Whitney stated that Dillon scraped and painted the railings at the Athol Memorial School which was a 90 hour project and that it was a great accomplishment. She also noted that Dillon was honored at a ceremony the day before for his great achievement as Eagle Scout and she wanted to publicly acknowledge him at a meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

Dillon Handy stated that he was thankful for this event noting that he had basically planned the project at the Athol School and had countless others helping to complete it. He stated that he earned 53 merit badges in all and that only 21 badges were required for Eagle Scout status.

Reed, who also earned Eagle Scout status noted that he was very impressed with Dillon Handy. Both Whitney and Vitone expressed their congratulations on Handy's achievement and thanked him for attending the meeting.

B. Anne Cervantes – Goals & Objectives (6:45 p.m.)

Cervantes began by reviewing the FY10 Goals & Objectives that she had set. (See the attached FY10 Goals & Objectives)

Item 1 – Implement Auditor's banking structure recommendations re: Town's current banking services and costs and request for quotes from other banks. Issued the RFP in June and received responses from 8 or 9 banks. She gave recommendations and is now notifying them.

Item 2 – Continue action on tax title collections as the budget permits. Working with property owners and looking toward another auction. Last auction brought back \$91,000 plus properties back on the tax roll.

Item 3 – Continue to work with open enrollment for health, dental, life and supplemental insurance as well as flexible spending plan, and whether it will be taken before or after taxes. She noted that the last step was to ask the employees.

Item 4 – Work with Doug and Nancy on re: a more precise and timely billing of indirect costs. She stated that this also included employee insurance, which is now billed monthly in the year incurred.

Item 5 – Develop a written procedure for the Treasurer’s office responsibilities for new hires. She noted that there is now a good checklist to ensure that all new hires have submitted the proper paperwork.

Bill Johnson inquired why multiple banks were recommended for banking services and Cervantes responded that it was more cost effective for the Town.

Cervantes then proceeded to review her FY11 Goals & Objectives, also attached.

Item 1 – Improve efficiency of banking services and reduce costs. She noted that she is working on the transition.

Item 2 – Process tax title collections. She stated that she was continuing to work on the tax amnesty as well as the land of low value.

Item 3 – Auction town-owned properties. She stated that the list of properties was presently in the hands of the tax title attorney and that the next step would be to mail the list to the DOR and then hopefully hold another auction.

Item 4 – Review payroll system to improve efficiency and become more cost effective. She noted that she wanted to learn more about the payroll system and how to use Munis more and in turn do less by hand. Vitone commented that the goal should be to be 100% computer based by the end of this fiscal year and Cervantes agreed. The Board thanked her for her report.

C. Carla Clifford – Goals & Objectives (6:55 p.m.)

Clifford began her report to the Board of Selectmen by reviewing her FY10 Goals & Objectives (attached).

Item 1 – To obtain certification as Massachusetts Certified Collector. She stated that she took the test in August and was just notified that she passed. Vitone stated that the Board of Selectmen received the letter from the Massachusetts Collectors and Treasurers Association announcing that she passed the test and was now a Certified Massachusetts Municipal Collector. The Board congratulated her for this achievement.

Item 2 – To utilize Munis software more fully. She stated that she attended training.

Item 3 – Improve collections. She stated that they were a little ahead of last year in collections right now.

Item 4 – Increase fees subject to review and approval of Board of Selectmen. She stated that last year’s Annual Town Meeting voted their approval.

Clifford then went over her FY11 Goals & Objectives (copy attached)

Item 1 – Identify educational opportunities. She stated that she was included in the group of employees who went to Leominster to train on Water/Sewer Billing thru Munis and she noted that it was very helpful and she learned a lot.

Item 2 – Improve utilization of Munis software. She noted that she would be updating the Munis software in March 2011 to version 8.2.

Item 3 – Review department operations for cost and process improvements. She stated that she was working on finding the most efficient and cost effective method for processing the Water and Sewer bills.

Item 4 – Identify and process obsolete records. She stated that she plans on looking through all the old records and identifying those that are ready for disposal and then petitioning the Secretary of State for permission to dispose. Vitone thanked Clifford.

Reed inquired if all the Water meters were installed and Briggs stated they were not.

D. Nancy Haines – Goals & Objectives (7:05 p.m.)

Haines started with her FY10 Goals & Objectives. (Copy attached)

Item 1 – Close out FY09 Schedule A, Free Cash Certification filed, reconcile deficits, etc. She noted that the FY09 Free Cash was certified on November 6, 2009 and that the process went fairly smoothly.

Item 2 – Set up FY10 Budget-review and update revenues and complete the recap. She stated that the recap was approved on 12/11/09 and that she had managed to place the budgets in Munis now in detail.

Item 3 – Utilize Munis Software re: FY11 Budget, indirect charges, tracking expense/revenue, review grants and special accounts. She stated that she has closed out many grants from FY09 and FY10 and has worked with Carla Clifford to alleviate journal entries.

Haines then gave the Board her FY11 Goals & Objectives (Copy attached)

Item 1 – Implement access to wage information. She noted that she based most of her Goals and Objectives on the FY09 DOR Audit Review points for the Town and this was one of those items. She stated that she was working with both Anne Cervantes and Sylvia Turcotte to establish access to wage information and to centralize sick leave and vacation accruals.

Item 2 – Administrative and Finance Policy and Procedures. She stated that she proposed establishing monthly meetings of the financial team to discuss ongoing issues and they already had their first meeting. She also stated that she would like to get all policies, such as cell phones, in one place.

Item 3 – Cost Center Review – DOR Audit. She stated that she wanted to determine if IT costs should remain centralized or in each department as well as facilities and maintenance costs.

Item 4 – Fixed Assets. She stated that she was trying to find a simpler format and policy.

Item 5 – Review Cost Savings. She noted that she was looking to streamline the cash receipts process also to identify possible software solutions for asset tracking. She also noted that she would like to see invoices come in electronic format as well as paper and that Munis does have this software available. Both Vitone and Whitney thought this was a good idea. The Board thanked Haines for her report.

Vitone stated that he thought Haines should be looking to place the entire budget process in Munis and that payroll should be linked. Briggs noted that they were still in the learning curve. Vitone stated that this was a good job by the financial team and noted that they had free cash certified two weeks ago which was three months sooner than last year. Briggs stated that all their goals and objectives were tied together and that it was a team concept. He noted that they have done a great job.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of BOS Initiatives and Task List

Whitney stated that they had the one task which was regionalization. Regarding the regionalizing efforts between Westminster and Ashburnham Board of Selectmen, Reed stated that they should submit minutes and results of each team's research. Vitone noted that they should wait until their next joint meeting with Westminster and Reed stated that they should really keep pushing on this. Vitone stated that the DPW's were working together on sand and salt bids.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review of Special Town Meeting Warrant with Advisory Board

Advisory Board members present were Bill Johnson, Leo Janssens, Jamie Piedrafite, Meredith Fagan and Belden Divito. (Duncan Phyfe was absent.)

Briggs read and explained each article. (The Briefing Book and the Warrant is attached.)

Article 1 – Transfer of insurance funds to cover Town Hall flood

BOS recommend and Advisory Bd. recommend.

Article 2 – Transfer free cash to cover Town Hall flood

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 3 – Vote to rescind Article 18 of the May 2, 2009 ATM for borrowing for dam inspections

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 4 – Transfer free cash to cover dam inspections

Bill Johnson inquired as to how frequently inspections had to be done and Briggs stated every 20 years. Briggs also noted that the Town didn't pay for the inspection of Upper Naukeag Dam and that it was paid by the Joint Water Authority.

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 5 – Transfer free cash to Tax Title

Briggs stated that with the funds voted in FY09 and FY10 the Town collected \$233,000 with some directly linked to these funds but not all. He added that whatever we get we'll use. Johnson stated that we would need to find a way to get this funded in the budget framework and Briggs agreed. There was a question raised by Meredith Fagan regarding if there was a reserve fund transfer last year for this purpose and Briggs stated that he would check into that for her.

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 6 – Transfer free cash to cover Snow and Ice deficit

Johnson noted a concern that this is a yearly article and Briggs stated that he was looking to increase the snow and ice budget each year in order to avoid this. Johnson stated that they needed to fund this and it should not be a way of life. Reed stated that it was encouraged by the State to deficit spend and Johnson stated it wasn't a good idea. Vitone stated that Briggs will incrementally bump-up this line item and Reed added or they could bump-up the Reserve Fund to cover the deficit.

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 7 – Transfer free cash to the Police escrow account

Briggs explained that the Town of Rutland won their arbitration case and as a result doesn't have to pay while other towns had to pay. He added that no stand was taken by Martha Coakley's office so it would have to go to court as it doesn't look like a resolution is forthcoming. A discussion followed on how to proceed.

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 8 – Transfer free cash to pave roads

Briggs stated that they went over the plan for the CDBG Grant thru MRPC and they would couple and tie in with Corey Hill Road, Hasting Road and High Street.

He also noted that Route 101 north was going out to bid in December for spring paving and that it would be a \$1.8m project. He described how the bonus points in the CDBG grant process were earned and added that the Town was looking at a total of 102 points right now which should be enough to get this grant. He also gave a brief history as to how the VMS Building came back on this grant application. Vitone stated that this was the strongest hand to play so the Senior Center came back in. There was some discussion on what the \$125,000 would cover if the Town was approved for the grant.

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 9 – Transfer free cash to pay a prior year bill

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 10 – Raise and appropriate to pay Briggs borrowing cost

Briggs explained that the Town borrowed money for Briggs and when the BAN was due we had to short-term borrow for \$2,500 of interest costs. He stated that we were waiting to be reimbursed from the School, not the State, as they received some funds and would give it to us in February.

Article 11 – Transfer free cash to fund a town-wide household hazardous waste day

Vitone stated that the last time the Town held one of these it was great and Briggs added that the cost to the Town was \$4,200.

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 12 – Vote on new Briggs School Project

Briggs stated that he had just received verbiage for this article from Dr. Zapantis. Vitone noted that this was based on a 53% reimbursement and Briggs stated that it could even be more. Briggs noted that Zapantis informed him they should have the numbers for the first of November and that it was needed 35 days before an election which is tentatively scheduled for December 16th. He also stated that the voters would be voting on the total cost of the project not less the reimbursable amount. Vitone stated that in round numbers they were looking at \$30m for the cost of this project.

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 13 – Vote to amend Article 2, of the May 8, 2010 ATM to raise and appropriate additional funds for the Town Clerk's compensation

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 14 – Implement Tax Amnesty Program

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 15 – Vote to accept Chapter 41 Section 41B Direct Deposit

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 16 – Vote to amend the Personnel Bylaw, Section 9.14 under Vacation Earning Schedule

Briggs stated that the verbiage addresses the issues on this article. It was noted by Johnson that the vacation schedule seems excessive and Vitone stated that this article only pertains to how it is accrued. He suggested that they take a hard look at the

magnitude of vacation and how it is earned thru the year. He added that they should look at this for the next town meeting and give a report. Piedrafite suggested that they look at the whole compensation package. Fagan suggested that the earning schedule not be listed on this article and there was some discussion that followed. Vitone stated that they should review but not list as they need to do a study. Briggs stated that they should just go after the purpose of this article for this warrant.

The BOS voted in favor of recommendation with 2 aye votes and 1 nay. (The nay vote was due to the fact that it would not be transparent if all the information was not listed.) Advisory Board recommend.

Article 17 – General Bylaws changes

No votes were taken. Waiting for results of the Public Input Session on Tuesday, October 5th and the meeting of the Special Act Study Committee on Thursday, October 7th.

Article 18 – Town Charter/Special Act changes

No votes were taken. Waiting for results of the Public Input Session on Tuesday, October 5th and the meeting of the Special Act Study Committee on Thursday, October 7th.

Article 19 – Transfer free cash to stabilization fund

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Article 20 – Transfer free cash to Capital Fund

BOS recommend and Advisory Board recommend.

Briggs stated that they should look at the sequence of the articles as the Town Clerk had concerns regarding the quorum if we kept the School Project article where it stands right now. Vitone suggested that maybe they put the School article last or another option would be to move articles 17 and 18 to the beginning. Reed stated that they should leave the sequence as is. Whitney, Johnson and Fagan all were in favor of moving the School article to the end. Vitone suggested that they could postpone the vote on the bylaws and only place an article on the quorum requirement and place the other bylaw changes on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. Whitney noted that she felt bad for the Committee who worked so hard on these changes if this was postponed.

Both Fagan and Johnson stated that it should be moved to the end of the warrant. It was noted by Vitone that they should ask Jeff Lawrence, the Moderator, to outline the implications of the placement of the school article at the end of the warrant, right at the beginning of the meeting so that they understood the reasoning behind it. He also stated that Lawrence should come up with a schedule for the presentations so that they don't get out of hand time wise. Briggs stated that he would send a memo to Lawrence.

B. Signing of November 2, 2010 State Election Warrant posting

The Board of Selectmen signed the State Election Warrant to be posted.

C. DCR possible acquisition of an interest in approximately 43 acres in Ashburnham

The correspondence from the DCR stating their possible intent of acquisition of an interest of approximately 43 acres of land in Ashburnham is attached to these minutes.

Briggs explained that this was only an action to acknowledge that the Town received this notice. ***Reed motioned to authorize the Clerk to sign the announcement and was seconded by Vitone. Motion carried.***

VII. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (His report is attached to these minutes.)

Briggs went over his report quickly for the Board and gave a short version of the results of the meeting both he and Vitone had with Superintendent Zapantis, Sherry Kersey and Dave Christianson. He also commented on the solar projects at Oakmont and the Public Safety Complex along with the potential savings.

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

A. September 20, 2010 Minutes – Regular Meeting

Reed motioned to approve the minutes of the September 20, 2010 Regular Meeting. Whitney seconded and the motion carried.

B. Appointments to the 250th Celebration Committee

Briggs stated that he sent a memo to Bettyna Donelson of the Committee on who they wanted to appoint from the list and she stated that after checking with the other members, they all agreed to appoint everyone interested in serving. Reed stated that they should be residents in order to be appointed to this Committee. Vitone and Whitney agreed residents only for the main committee and the others could serve on a sub-committee. All were in favor.

IX. BOS CORRESPONDENCE

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Whitney read the announcements as follows:

Town Clerk Reminders:

- Absentee ballots are now available in the Town Clerk's office at Town Hall
- Wednesday, October 13th – Final registration for the State Election 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Monday, November 1st – 12:00 noon – last day for filing applications for absentee ballots for voters who will be out of town for the State Election.
- Tuesday, November 2nd – State Election – Polls open 7:00 a.m. and close at 8:00 p.m. – J.R. Briggs Elementary School Gym, 96 Williams Road.
- Wednesday, November 17th – Special Town Meeting – Oakmont Auditorium at 7:00 p.m.

On Thursday, October 5th, at 7:00 p.m. there will be a Public Input Session upstairs at the Town Hall to get the input from residents on the proposed Special Act and General Bylaw changes which will be voted on at the Special Town Meeting on November 17th.

Thursday, October 7th, at 7:00 p.m. the Special Act Study Committee will be meeting to go over the input received on October 5th and to make their final recommendations.

Flu shots were scheduled at the Senior Center on Tuesday, October 12th from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Town Hall will be closed on Monday, October 11th for the Columbus Day Holiday. Will open on Tuesday at 7:30 a.m. and close at 7:00 p.m.

The next meeting of the Board of Selectmen will be held on Tuesday, October 12th at 6:30 p.m. upstairs in the auditorium at Town Hall.

XI. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:01 p.m. Whitney motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte
Assistant to the Town Administrator