

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MARCH 15, 2010 – 7:00 P.M.
TRAINING ROOM AT PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX**

This meeting was aired live on local cable television.

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

Also present for the first part of this meeting were Advisory Board members: Bill Johnson, Duncan Phye, Meredith Fagan, Belden Divito and Jamie Piedrafite.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Maggie Whitney. Vitone called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. PUBLIC INPUT

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

IV. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. Sheila Lumi, Community Coordinator for MOC North Central WIC Program

Sheila Lumi, Coordinator for the WIC Program gave a very informative presentation. She stated that this program benefited women, infants and children and was federal and state funded. She noted that the participants had to be residents of Ashburnham and fall within the income guidelines. She also noted that they offered personalized nutrition consultation and designed food programs as well as giving out checks for free healthy foods at \$75 per person. She stated that they now also addressed childhood obesity. Vitone stated that their main office was in Fitchburg and gave the phone number - 978-345-6272 press the number 1 or extension 225. The Board thanked Ms. Lumi for her presentation.

B. Review of ATM Warrant Articles

Vitone noted that this would be a joint discussion with the Advisory Board. He stated that a reduction of 4% in local aid was just announced and that this could change even more. Briggs noted that Article 2 changed since the last meeting. He stated that the 3% cost of living increase for non-union personnel had been deleted. He added that he officially had requested all other unions to forego their raise increases as well. He also noted a new assessment number from Monty Tech of \$333,715 and that the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District amount reflected the 2½ plus new growth at this time. He added that he took a 5% reduction in anticipation of the state cuts.

Briggs stated that he asked the major departments to reduce their budgets to get to the \$30,000 cut and they included the DPW, Police, Fire and Library.

A short discussion followed on reserve accounts such as stabilization and capital funds.

Briggs stated Articles 3 and 4, the Water and Sewer Enterprise Fund budgets were separated from the main budget in Article 2 and this was done to stipulate exactly where these funds come from.

Briggs touched on Article 5 noting that this was only a placeholder and they could pass over this article.

He noted that Article 6 was for overtime due to an employee which had been incorrectly calculated.

He stated that Article 7 was the PILOT for the Municipal Light Department and that Article 8 gave the Treasurer the approval to borrow. Vitone discussed how the School Assessments are paid.

Briggs stated that Article 9 was the compensating balance authority for the Treasurer and that Article 10 was the authority for the Board of Selectmen to contract with Mass Highway. He noted that Article 11 was the authority to expend Chapter 90 Road Repair Money.

Briggs stated Article 12 was for the purchase of the Fire Alarm System testing and maintenance equipment which would be funded by fees. He stated that this was the transition from hardwire to wireless and that the assessed fees revenue would go into the general fund. He also noted that this would not be an annual article and Vitone added that this would be an "as required" article.

He noted that Article 13, the Cushing Academy Trust transfer would be in the amount of \$3,000, which is the earned interest on this trust account.

Briggs stated that Articles 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 were capital budget items and included two one-ton trucks, five sets of turn-out gear, one cruiser and the school capital items. Vitone noted the total of these capital items was \$140,000.

Briggs stated that Article 19 was the potential lease of Town-owned land to the Bresnahan Scouting Center. Vitone gave a brief background on this article, noting that this could be Ashburnham's Dunn Park. Briggs stated that Article 20 was the Waterways fund article.

Briggs stated that Article 21 was for the trash bag receipts revolving fund. He noted that this would be an article for one more year and then they would look at this being funded in the operating budget.

Briggs noted that Article 22, the demolition of buildings, was really not needed and Johnson agreed stating that the Advisory Board would suggest removing this article as well. Both Selectmen agreed to remove this article.

Briggs stated that Article 23, the revolving fund for the Agricultural Commission, is only about \$250, and should be left as is on the warrant. Johnson stated that the limit should be reduced and Briggs suggested \$1,500 and that he would change the article accordingly.

On Article 24, the Right to Farm Bylaw, Briggs explained that this was basically a state item. The Board of Selectmen noted that they would take this article under advisement.

Briggs stated that Article 25, the water tank borrowing, was not finalized yet but that they had selected the engineering firm, Tighe & Bond and that he was working on the verbiage.

Briggs noted that Article 26 was to sell excess town vehicles, basically two vehicles one, the former Town Hall vehicle used by the Assessors and the other was the red fire department vehicle.

Briggs stated that Article 27 was to authorize selling excess property which included six parcels. Whitney read the list as follows:

Map 20 Parcel 96 Williams Road	22,216 SF
Map 38 Parcel 28 Gibson Road	235,111 SF
Map 44 Parcel 22 Holiday Road	15,014 SF
Map 49 Parcel 8 Dunn Road	43,560 SF
Map 21 Parcel 120 Reservoir	16,552 SF
Map 22 Parcel 7A 36 Cobb Road	21,780 SF

Whitney also requested that they add Map 56 Parcel 52 Lakeshore Drive to the list.

Briggs stated that Article 28 was a Citizens' Petition regarding eight Lakeshore Drive properties requesting to have them kept as conservation land. He explained that this list of properties was taken off of the auction list back in December due to the fact that they were mostly under water. Vitone gave a brief history noting that lot 52 was highly valuable to the Town while the others would be okay to turn over as conservation land.

Vitone noted that they should swap the order of the two above mentioned articles and that another option would be to combine parcel 52 with parcel 48 and that it would need to be discussed at Town Meeting.

Vitone stated that Briggs should meet with Gary Howland to see if the petitioners would be willing to amend the article to take out parcels 52 and 48.

Article 29, to amend the Town's Wetland Protection Bylaw, was next for discussion and Vitone stated that this article would fix language that was not worded appropriately.

Briggs stated that Article 30 was to accept Chapter 148 Section 26H, Lodging and Boarding Houses. He noted that this was the last section of the chapter. Vitone asked that Briggs check to see which facilities in Ashburnham would be impacted by this.

Briggs stated that Article 31 was the Capital Improvement Fund available funds transfer and he stated that the balance would not be used. He noted that Article 32 was to rescind the authorization to borrow in order to clear the books, as well as with DOR and that this would help our bond rating.

C. Discussion and vote on School Budget Override Ballot Question

Whitney read the School Budget Override Ballot Question as follows:

"Shall the Town of Ashburnham be allowed to assess an additional \$379,812 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of adding such sum to line 18 of Article 2 for the operating budget approved for the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District for the fiscal year beginning July first, two thousand ten?"

Advisory Board member Jamie Piedrafite noted that the line number was incorrect and should be changed to 19. Vitone explained the circumstances behind this ballot question noting that the school would lose \$419,832 in Chapter 70 Funds for FY11. He added that his personal view was to give the School District their share of the Town's 2½ plus growth. Johnson stated that the Advisory Board was prepared to vote to give the School District the 2½ plus growth and he also asked how the

override ballot question would be fixed if the amount changed. Vitone stated that the probability of the override passing with this economy is low. Johnson stated that it may be too early to vote on this question as it may change and Vitone added that they needed to present a certified school budget to the voters. There followed some discussion on the issue of the ballot question as well as the 2½ plus growth issue.

Vitone stated that it may be that we abandon the idea to place this on the warrant due to a lack of information and Whitney stated that she would rather wait.

Duncan Phye made the motion to provide the Prop 2½ plus growth in the amount of \$188,657 to the School District and was seconded by Belden Divito. Motion carried.

Whitney motioned to agree to pay the Town's pro-rated share to the School of Prop 2½ plus growth in the amount of \$188,657, with a net of \$140,000 and was seconded by Vitone. Motion carried.

Vitone stated that he would support the Advisory Board's suggestion to wait for the ballot election in June and to vote to have the ballot after Town Meeting. He also stated that a letter should be sent to the School District on this decision.

Vitone discussed the Ambulance Study results that were presented to the Board by Briggs. He noted that this study was requested by Charlie Packard. He stated that the total net cost to the Town for the ambulance was \$85,000 a year. He noted that the study done in 2001 recommended that we go from BLS to ALS Intermediate with no plans to go to Paramedic. He stated that the number of runs between 2001 and 2009 went up at a rate of 1% per year with revenues from \$62,000 to \$104,000 which were up at a rate of 13% per year. Unfortunately wages went up at a rate of 14% per year. He noted that although the revenues had gone up significantly, personnel cost was growing faster. He noted that we should look at a cost management base approach because if costs weren't managed, the ambulance would soon become unaffordable.

Briggs identified two significant factors – 1) the decline of nursing home calls and 2) the transition from EMT to Paramedic status. He added that he wasn't sure why the evolution from EMT to Paramedic took place. Vitone stated that it should be a continuing process to review this and Divito agreed stating that we have to be proactive. Vitone noted that we needed to look at what level of service we can provide. Vitone asked that this study be sent to the Advisory Board for their review.

V. UPDATE – STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE FROM OAKMONT

Whitney took this opportunity to express her congratulations to the Oakmont hockey team on their win against Holyoke. She stated that this was a great accomplishment.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of BOS Initiatives and Task List

Whitney noted that the task list was the same as the previous meeting, remaining at 94% complete.

Whitney gave an update on the Briggs Building Committee stating that at their last meeting, one of the issues was the easement which they were working with Stan Herriott to resolve. She stated that they also discussed the options that were available. She noted that their next meeting would be held on Wednesday, March 17th and that they were still on track for a vote in the fall.

C. Discussion on permanent home for Board of Selectmen meetings

Whitney stated that the Public Safety Building is also the disaster headquarters and the building is secure. She added that it is the community hub of the Town and would be the appropriate place to have the Selectmen's meetings.

Vitone agreed noting that the meetings held at Town Hall in the fall were very cold. Matt Bourgault, the Executive Director of AWCA-TV stated that they would need to look at equipment, with cameras in the walls and ceilings as a permanent install. He also stated that they would require a separate room for monitoring of sound, etc. Vitone stated that Bourgault should meet with Briggs to discuss this and that they would continue to meet at the PSB until this is decided.

D. Status of the MOU-ORHS Shelter

Briggs stated that the MOU was to designate Oakmont as the official shelter in case of disaster in the Town and he gave some background on the status. It was noted that the School Committee would be voting on this at their meeting on March 23rd.

E. Discussion on permanent IT Committee

Briggs reviewed his memo (attached) outlining the charge of the permanent IT Committee and he also noted that they would be looking at this committee as a consultant. Vitone stated that the Board of Selectmen would take this under advisement.

VII. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE (Report attached)

Briggs updated the Selectmen on a water leak on So. High Street where there was a loss of about 150 gallons of water which had to be repaired. He noted that this was a good job by the Water/Sewer and DPW crews. On this same topic he noted that the basement at the VMS building flooded just this morning and between Ed Schlott and the DPW crew, it was quickly taken care of.

He also noted that there was a leak at Town Hall in the auditorium which caused a crack in the center of the ceiling and that it had been reported to the insurance company and an adjuster was coming out to check the damage.

Briggs noted that he was working on the final touches on the Water/Sewer budgets and rates. He also stated that they chose the engineering firm of Tighe & Bond for the Water Tank project but noted that both engineering firms were great.

He stated that he had received insurance rate quotes from two companies and that it looked like the Town would see some savings. He took the quotes under advisement.

He noted that Town Counsel should have the RFP done this week for the Stevens Building Lease.

VIII NEW BUSINESS

A. Vote to nominate Inspector of Animals for the Town of Ashburnham

Whitney motioned to nominate Eula Bradley as the Inspector of Animals and was seconded by Vitone. Motion carried.

IX. CONSENT AGENDA

Whitney motioned to approve the appointment of Charlie Packard to the Water/Sewer Commission and was seconded by Vitone. Motion carried.

Whitney motioned to approve the remainder of the Consent Agenda items and was seconded by Vitone. Motion carried.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Whitney read the following announcements from the Town Clerk:

- April 7th – Final registration for the Town Election – Town Clerk’s office 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- April 20th – Final registration for the Annual Town Meeting – Town Clerk’s office 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- April 26th – Last day for filing applications for absentee ballots for voters who will be out of town for the town election.
- April 27th – Town Election – polls open at 9:00 a.m. and close at 8:00 p.m. at the J.R. Briggs Elementary School Gym, 96 Williams Road.
- May 8th – Annual Town Meeting – 10:00 a.m. at Oakmont Regional High School in the Auditorium, 9 Oakmont Drive.
- Dog Licenses are now available at the Town Clerk’s office. Please note the fees have changed to \$10.00 for spayed/neutered dogs and \$15.00 for unaltered dogs. If registered by mail, please send in current rabies certificate, spay/neuter certificate, and a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Town Clerk’s office.
- Census forms should be sent in as soon as possible to the Town Clerk’s office. Failure to respond may result in removal from the active voting list.
- Rabies Clinic will be held on Saturday, March 20, 2010, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Municipal Grounds Building on Williams Road. The cost is \$10 and the current rabies certificate should be brought by the owner.

The Friends of the Stevens Memorial Library presents Irish Night on Tuesday, March 16, 2010 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. with Seamus Pender performing.

The next meeting of the Board of Selectmen is on Monday, April 5th at 7:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Building in the Training Room.

XI. BOS CORRESPONDENCE

XII. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:04 p.m. Whitney motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Vitone. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator