

TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
MONDAY – NOVEMBER 15, 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 6:30 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. Public Hearing Continuance – Shelly Hatch re: CDBG Grant (6:30 p.m.)

Hatch began by distributing handouts to all present and stating that this year's application was due on Friday, December 10th. She noted that she was working on getting all the information together by November 29th. She stated that the announcement of the awards would be on April 1st and that they would release the funds the first part of June.

She also noted that there were seven units selected for the Housing Rehab portion for a total of \$225,000 and that Corey Hill Road was another possible project, but that they still needed some responses from residents in that area, as they needed 90 out of 110 households for this project to qualify

Hatch stated that they had two good support projects for listing on the application, the water tank and the solar panels.

Hatch noted that she was asking the Board of Selectmen to vote to adopt the strategy. *Whitney motioned to sign the required three forms outside of the meeting and Reed seconded. All were in favor.*

There was some discussion on the forms required for signature and completion by the Board of Selectmen. Hatch noted that most of the forms would require only the Chairman's signature.

Hatch asked who the Board of Selectmen would designate as the Environmental Review Officer noting that they had designated Doug Briggs previously. *Whitney motioned to continue with Doug Briggs as the Environmental Review Officer and was seconded by Reed. All were in favor.*

After some discussion on the Corey Hill Road project portion of the grant application, Reed stated that they should announce at the Special Town Meeting that the surveys needed to be submitted as well as letters of support for this project. Briggs suggested that a letter of support should be available to sign at the Special Town Meeting for these residents.

At 6:53 p.m. Whitney motioned to close the Public Hearing and Reed seconded. Motion carried.

B. Newly Elected State Representative Rich Bastien

Whitney noted that Rich Bastien apologized but would be unable to attend the meeting this evening. He did express his thanks to the voters for their consideration and would plan to attend another meeting in the near future.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of BOS Initiatives and Task List

Vitone stated that the Board's only task at this time was regionalization and he asked Briggs to contact Karen Murphy in Westminster to get meetings scheduled to continue this discussion.

B. Signing of Special Ballot Warrant for December 16, 2010

Whitney made the motion to sign the Special Ballot Warrant for December 16, 2010, with the assumption that Article 18 passes at the Special Town Meeting. Reed seconded and the motion carried.

Whitney stated that she would like to see a handout on the Special Act and the Bylaws proposed changes. She also noted that in this handout they should keep the Ombudsman wording in along with why it was taken out. Vitone stated that he would have the handout for Sylvia Turcotte to make copies of for the meeting and that he would keep the Ombudsman information in with an explanation.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

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

Briggs stated that they were all set with the Special Town Meeting and that he met with Dr. Zapantis on the Briggs project and that the reimbursement rate would be 58.46% after the points were reviewed with the MSBA. He stated that the cost for the Briggs project would be \$30,061,597 which came out at \$1.89 per thousand for the tax rate impact. He noted that we would change the tax rate impact on the warrant to reflect this. Vitone noted that they would need financial charts for a presentation at Town Meeting.

Whitney asked how secure the State would be on these funds and Reed noted that the MSBA had to pay this upfront and Vitone added that they couldn't fund this if they didn't already have the funds.

Briggs noted the timeline for the Water Tank Project and added that everything was on schedule.

Briggs stated that there would be a 3% increase in the tax rate and the overall value of the Town went down by \$20M which comes out to a 3% increase making it a 6% differential.

Briggs reported on the CDBG Grant application process, reiterating that they still needed income surveys for Hillandale, Juniper, Valerie Circle, Lillian Drive and Corey Road as soon as possible. He stated that MRPC was looking for more support letters for the paving of Corey Hill Road which is part of the project to be submitted with the application and they needed at least 90% response.

Briggs also reported on the EMS Coverage noting that he was continually reviewing the operations and that he would have a report for the Board at their December 6th meeting. Vitone stated that he should have all the facts found and what is and isn't working and what to do about it. Briggs noted that there were three components: 1) communication, EMS and Dispatch working together; 2) commitment and 3) scheduling and how to best use the funds available working to fill slots.

He noted that the FY12 Budget worksheets had been distributed to all Department Heads to start the budget cycle. He noted that he was extremely committed to regionalization and that it would be an interesting budget year.

Whitney asked about the RFP on health insurance and if he had received any responses and Briggs stated that not all had responded to date.

Whitney also inquired about whether the DPW could use So. Station to house their equipment this winter and Briggs noted that he was working on this.

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

A. November 1, 2010 Minutes – Regular Meeting

It was noted by Vitone, that Whitney had taken very good minutes in the absence of Turcotte at the last meeting. ***Reed motioned to approve the minutes of the November 1, 2010 Regular Meeting. Whitney seconded and the motion carried.***

IX. BOS CORRESPONDENCE

Vitone inquired about the Ferin Road culvert issue and the status and Briggs stated that he would look into it and report back to the Board.

Reed submitted some letters from residents regarding possible uses for So. Station.

Whitney noted that a resident, Dick Bickford, told her how pleased he was to see the water trough finally placed in the back of Town Hall. She expressed her appreciation and noted that the plaque donated by the Saconne's looked great. Briggs stated that they should thank and acknowledge them with a ceremony and include the new Animal Pound sign as well. Whitney stated that the DPW did a great job on these.

Whitney inquired about illuminating the flags, in particular the flags at Sweeney Playground and the Bresnahan pool. Briggs stated that he would look into it.

Whitney also noted that she would like Briggs to look into planning a Town bonfire event after Trick or Treat similar to what was held in Westminster last month. Vitone stated that Briggs should contact Westminster on how to do this.

Vitone noted that Whitney gave a phenomenal speech as the Board of Selectmen representative at the Veterans Day services.

Vitone also announced that Maggie Whitney had decided not to run for Selectmen at the end of her term in April. He stated that anyone interested should show their interest now and that the Caucus would be held in February which wasn't that far away.

Vitone acknowledged Jeff Lawrence, the Town Moderator, and asked if he had any questions or concerns regarding the upcoming Special Town Meeting. Vitone noted that there were only a few changes such as swapping articles 14 and 15 and the handout on the Bylaws and Special Act proposed changes. Lawrence was given the most updated briefing book and thanked the Board.

Whitney reminded residents that a quorum was needed and that they should plan on being at the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and Vitone reiterated noting that they should come for all the Town's business.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Whitney read the announcements as follows:

Town Clerk Reminders:

- Wednesday, November 17th – Special Town Meeting – Oakmont Auditorium at 7:00 p.m.
- Special Election Date – December 16th at Briggs Elementary School

There would be a joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Advisory Board on Wednesday, November 17th at 6:00 p.m. in the Auditorium at Oakmont Regional High School.

The next meeting of the Board of Selectmen would be held on Monday, December 6, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. in the Training Room at the Public Safety Building.

XI. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:30 p.m. Vitone 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 the approval of Executive Session minutes and to reconvene into open meeting and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried. Roll call was taken.

IV. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

C. Tax Classification Hearing (8:00 p.m.)

In attendance for the hearing was Harald Scheid of RRG, Linda Couture of RRG and Donna Burton, Administrative Assessor.

At 8:00 p.m. Vitone opened the Tax Rate Classification hearing and asked Whitney to read the posting for the Tax Classification Hearing. Whitney read the notice as follows:

“The Ashburnham Board of Selectmen will hold a tax classification hearing on Monday, November 15, 2010 at 8:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Building, Training Room, 99 Central Street. The purpose of the hearing is to hear from taxpayers and other interested people about the Selectmen's choices to either pick a single tax rate for all real estate and personal property, or to decide to set two tax rates, one for

residential and open space and one for commercial, industrial and personal property. People may submit oral or written material at the hearing.”

Briggs gave an overview stating that the Board of Selectmen had to either set one tax rate or adjust the rates for business and residential. He added that there really wasn't enough business in Ashburnham and that he recommended the single tax rate.

Harald Scheid stated that this hearing is required once a year to adopt a single tax rate. He stated that the Board of Assessors also recommends the single rate. He noted that the tax rate of \$17.14 would be the new rate in order to stay under the Prop. 2½ set threshold.

Scheid stated that commercial properties in Ashburnham represent under 5% of the assessment base. He stated that the assessed value represents the estimated market value, two years prior. He noted that they were looking at reducing values by 3 or 4 percent which will result in a higher tax rate. He also noted that residential valuations were decreased on average about 4.5% for single and multi-family homes and he stated that there were 2,386 single family homes in Ashburnham.

Scheid stated that we would not see any radical changes/reductions this year. Whitney acknowledged RRG for the great job they are doing for the Town.

Vitone motioned to set a single tax rate for the Town and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.

At 8:17 Reed motioned to close the Tax Rate Classification Hearing and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:18 p.m. Whitney motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte
Assistant to the Town Administrator