

TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
MONDAY – DECEMBER 19, 2011 – 6:30 p.m.
TRAINING ROOM – PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX

This meeting was aired live on local cable television.

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

I. SALUTE THE FLAG

Vitone called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT No input.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vitone stated that under New Business, the discussion on the J.R. Briggs School Project fees would be postponed until more data was available.

Fagan motioned to approve the agenda as amended and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.

IV. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. Tax Classification Hearing

Present: Harald Scheid and Linda Couture from RRG, from the Board of Assessors, Donna Burton, Chair and Walter Harrington.

Reed made the motion to resume the Tax Classification Hearing and was seconded by Fagan. Motion carried.

Harald Scheid, of RRG made the introductions. He stated that the purpose of this hearing is to determine and adopt either a single or split tax rate, residential and commercial/industrial. He noted that commercial is a small percent in Ashburnham so the single rate makes sense. He gave a brief explanation on how this works. Vitone noted that in Ashburnham the commercial/industrial is about 3% and that most of the Town's revenue comes from residential. ***Reed made the motion to close the Tax Classification Hearing and was seconded by Fagan. Motion carried. Reed then made the motion for the Town of Ashburnham to adopt the single tax rate for 2012 and was seconded by Fagan. Motion carried.***

Scheid noted that FY12 was a full certification/revaluation year for RRG in Ashburnham and that the values did go down but because of this the taxes increased on some properties. He noted that the DOR had issues in the past with how the properties were valued and now properties must be valued on a schedule approved by the DOR. He added that some residents, a small group, will be affected and their assessment will go up. Vitone noted that there is an abatement process available to residents and Scheid noted that the period to file is from the end of December through February 1st.

Briggs stated that he would be asking the Assessors to release some of the excess overlay which he explained was money put aside to cover abatements. Scheid noted that he would meet with him to get this done before the Annual Town Meeting.

V. OLD BUSINESS

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion – J.R. Briggs School Project fees

This item was postponed and deleted from the agenda.

B. Vote on 2012 License Renewals

Briggs stated that each year licenses need to be renewed. Fagan proceeded to read the list of licenses for renewal as follows:

Liquor licenses – Tweedo’s Variety and Pizza, Inc.; Ashburnham Wine & Spirits Co., Inc.; Mr. Mike’s; Ashburnham Marketplace; Turnpike Rod & Gun Club; American Legion; and the Firehouse Pub of Ashburnham. Briggs noted that the Ashburnham Marketplace license was for the sale of Wines and Malt beverages only. He also explained that the Firehouse Pub license needed to be renewed in order for the transfer to take place to Café 57.

Fagan read the Common Victuallers as follows: Tweedo’s Variety & Pizza, Inc.; Mr. Mike’s Market; Cumberland Farms; The Daily Grind & Bagel; American Legion; Turnpike Rod & Gun Club; Café 57; Main St. Pizzeria & Grill in Ashburnham; Dunkin Donuts; Lucky Dragon II Chinese Restaurant; Village Pizza and Ashburnham Marketplace.

Fagan read the Class IV Repairman as follows: Ashburnham Marine & Power Equipment; Roy’s Auto Repair; Precision Automotive; Ashburnham Collision Center and Rick’s Auto Repair & Service, Inc. The Class II Used Cars as follows: Ashburnham Marine & Power Equipment; DJ’s Classic Cars and John P. Spuria & Sons, Inc. The Coin Operated Machines as follows: American Legion, Turnpike Rod & Gun Club and Café 57.

Reed motioned to approve the list of license renewals as read for 2012 and was seconded by Fagan. Motion carried.

C. Discussion and vote by the Board of Selectmen on update to Open Meeting Law

Briggs explained about the recent legislative action which would authorize remote participation in meetings under certain circumstances. He stated that they would need a physical location and a quorum. All members were in favor of looking into implementing this procedure. Vitone stated that they would ask Briggs to develop a process for their review. ***Fagan motioned to adopt this meeting process and to have the Town Administrator develop this process for their review. Reed seconded and the motion carried.***

D. Discussion on Board of Selectmen meeting schedule

Vitone noted that in the summer months the Board operates well with one meeting a month and he wanted input from the other members on possibly doing this year round. Both Fagan and Reed stated that they wanted to keep monthly multiple meetings.

VII. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE (Report is attached to these minutes and also posted on the Town's website.)

He gave an update on the Water Tank Project stating that the High Street Tank would be on line by December 27th. He noted that the DEP inspection was done on Wednesday, December 5th and they are awaiting the acceptance letter. He stated that the foundation is scheduled to be poured by January 9th and the tower to be installed soon after.

He gave an update on the unemployment hearing, stating that the next hearing was scheduled for Friday, January 6th.

He stated that the CDBG grant application was filed. The total of the grant was \$912,610 for both towns Ashburnham and Ashby and that it would be for roads and housing rehab.

He stated that Tim Kelly our rep from Comcast would be attending the Board of Selectmen meeting on January 17th to answer any questions residents may have regarding the Comcast service area.

Briggs touched on the Pilot document from Investar stating that Town Counsel reviewed it and it has been returned to Investar for their review. Stan Herriott stated they were all set with the PPA and that this would allow Investar to be eligible for a tax credit if it's finalized this year. He also noted that he would check to be sure that the solar panels promised in the agreement to be installed on the Bresnahan building would still happen no matter what site was chosen by Investar.

Briggs noted that the Town received the 12.5% Ice Storm reimbursement from the State totaling \$139,396 which would roll into free cash for next year. He also noted that the Town received all the Chapter 90 reimbursement funds from FY11 and FY12 because it was filed early.

He stated that he had received most of the FY13 budgets from the Department Heads and the remaining three outstanding would be received this week some time.

Briggs stated that Town Hall storage is limited and we have asked for permission from the Secretary of State's office to destroy all unnecessary files. This file clean up will include the VMS Building where we have files that need to be organized and weeded out. He stated that we sent out for permission to destroy certain files on December 12th and received the permission today. Vitone stated that discretion has to be exercised, go through the files page by page and set an archive process.

Briggs noted that he had set a task list for himself which would help drive him to resolution.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. December 5, 2011 Minutes – Regular Meeting

Reed motioned to approve the minutes for the December 5, 2011 Board of Selectmen meeting and was seconded by Fagan. Motion carried.

IX. BOS CORRESPONDENCE

Vitone stated that the Board was in receipt of a letter from the Historical Commission with their "wish list" for the downtown area. He gave some background on what prompted this

letter noting the possible changes to structures in the downtown area and the fact that we don't have any set requirements. He stated that they met with members of the Planning Board and the Historical Commission on Thursday to discuss this scenario.

Reed stated that there is a definite potential to change the look of downtown. He cited the GFA Building which was the most recent structure built in the downtown area. Vitone added that it was originally planned as a one-story building and that it took six months to get it done the way it stands today. Reed stated that he doesn't want to lose businesses in Town because of this and it is a good idea to look into this further and pay attention. Fagan stated that it is the Board of Selectmen's responsibility. Vitone noted that they should research further and meet again with the Boards and Committees involved. Reed stated that they should get a synopsis of what restrictions are presently and make up a list of a chosen few for consideration.

Reed then stated that they also received a letter from the Town of Erving Board of Selectmen regarding House Bill No. 00200 filed by Representative Koczera of New Bedford which proposes having one Presidential elector chosen from each Congressional district and two Presidential electors chosen at large. Fagan read the letter as follows:

"Honorable Select Board Members:

As you know, the U.S. Constitution gives each state legislature the right to decide how to appoint its own electors for Presidential elections. We are contacting you in the hopes that you share our opinion that all Massachusetts voters would be provided a stronger voice in Presidential elections if our current Electoral College Votes system (winner takes all) were replaced with a system of Congressional district apportionment of Presidential electors.

The Town of Erving is supporting House Bill No. 00200 filed by Representative Koczera of New Bedford. This proposed legislation would have one Presidential elector be chosen from each Congressional district and two Presidential electors chosen at large. We feel that this system of awarding the votes would elevate the meaning of each vote in our state. It is a system that is currently being used by Maine and Nebraska. While not negatively impacting the influence of large population towns (which have multiple Congressional districts), a Congressional district system of awarding Presidential electors would provide a stronger voice for smaller towns. This change in how our votes are distributed would recognize the diversity of Congressional districts and bring the entire Presidential election process closer to the ground.

Please do your own research and give consideration to asking your legislators to support House Bill No. 00200."

Reed stated that he would look up the bill on the Mass.gov website and would bring it back before the Board at the next meeting.

X. DECEMBER MEETINGS

Fagan read the list of meetings for December as follows:

Committee/Board	Day/Date/Time	Location
Friends of the COA	Tuesday, December 20 - 6:00 p.m.	Lower Level – Town Hall
Planning Board	Thursday, December 22 – 6:30 p.m.	Lower Level – Town Hall
Parks & Rec Committee	Thursday, December 22 – 7:00 p.m.	Fire Conf. Rm. – Public Safety Building

XI ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fagan read the announcements as follows:

Town Clerk Reminders:

- January 1st and throughout the year – Open registration of voters in the Town Clerk’s office at Town Hall – Monday from 7:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Tuesday through Thursday – 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Town Hall is closed on Fridays.)

Representative Rich Bastien will be holding monthly Ashburnham Office Hours at 6:00 p.m. in the Training Room at the Public Safety Building just before the Board of Selectmen meeting on the third Monday of every month. To schedule time, call 978-630-1776 or email Richard.Bastien@MAHouse.gov. (This information has been posted on the Town’s website.)

The Town Hall and the Senior Center will be closed on Monday, December 26, 2011 for the Christmas Day Holiday. The Town Hall hours on Tuesday, December 17, 2011 will be from 7:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Also, the Town Hall and the Senior Center will be closed on Monday, January 2, 2012 for the New Year Day Holiday. Town Hall hours on Tuesday, January 3, 2012 will be from 7:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Fagan stated “We wish you all a safe and wonderful holiday season!”

Briggs stated that the next Board of Selectmen meeting will be on Tuesday, January 3, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.

XII. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT

Gail Dumont noted a correction in the meeting schedule for the Parks & Rec Committee stating that they were not scheduled to meet on Thursday, December 22nd but that their next meeting would be on Thursday, January 5th at 7:00 p.m.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:25 p.m. Reed motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Fagan. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator