

TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
TUESDAY – FEBRUARY 22, 2011 – 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. SALUTE THE FLAG

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. Vitone noted that they would discuss the meeting with Ashby under the BOS Initiatives as it did pertain to regionalization.

IV. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. Proposed Explorer Program

Present: Paul Zbikowski, Fire Chief, Paul Rekos and Hillary Towne.

Chief Zbikowski stated that the Explorer Program would be run in conjunction with the Boy Scouts for youths ages 14 to 21.

Rekos stated that the Fire officers met and determined that they needed to bring youth into the Fire program and they looked at other towns with similar programs in which this program was working really well. He added that they anticipate that this would prove to be a successful program and that it would be good for Ashburnham.

Vitone inquired as to the cost of the program and what would be asked of the participants in this program. Rekos responded that the cost would be for equipment but that they have applied for a grant to cover some of this equipment and that there were many gear manufacturers that would be willing to donate some equipment as well. The equipment would include helmets and gloves which are interchangeable.

Rekos also noted that they have the training schedule set for the first year. He added that this builds them up to succeed. Chief Zbikowski added that this first year would hopefully spur their interest.

Hillary Towne stated that the Fire Department is the sponsor of the program and the advisors will have to do online training before as well as cori checks. The Chief stated that there would be a whole interview process for the participants and Towne added that the program would be a good tool to see if they really want to go into the Fire Program.

Whitney inquired if this would be open to only Ashburnham applicants and the Chief stated that they would take Ashburnham applicants first and then look elsewhere.

Briggs asked what commitment would be involved and Rekos responded that they would go through the interviewing process, application with a letter of intent showing their interest and why they want to be in the Fire program.

Whitney inquired about a probation period and the Chief stated that they would be treated like any employee.

Reed made the motion to accept the grant and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried. Reed then made the motion to approve the Explorer Program pending Boy Scout approval. Whitney seconded and the motion carried.

Briggs stated that last year a list of equipment for the Fire Department was set up as a capital item in the amount of \$68,000. The Chief noted that airbags were purchased through the Fire Rescue Fund and that this brought the amount down to \$64,000. Briggs stated that the Fire Department wants to get the Board's approval to apply for a Fire Act Grant which would cover the \$64,000 worth of equipment with a match in the funding by the Fire Rescue Fund. He added that this would then be taken off the capital plan.

Whitney made the motion to apply for the Fire Act Grant and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.

Briggs also noted that the Fire Department was looking for the Board's approval to accept a Masimo Rad 57 Pulse Co-Oximeter unit, valued at \$3,700, from the Central Region Homeland Security Council. Rekos explained that these are being donated by the Homeland Security Council and they sample carbon dioxide by clamping on the finger of the patient to measure the degree. He also noted that next year this device would be needed on the ambulance.

Whitney motioned to accept the grant gift and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.

Briggs complimented the Fire Department, DPW and Police Department personnel for the great job they did with the fire at the Cushing property recently

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of BOS Initiatives and Task List

Vitone stated that the Board's main initiative was regionalization and on this subject he noted his meeting with the Ashby Board of Selectmen. He stated that they discussed the possibility of having Doug Briggs act as their Interim Town Administrator and that the meeting went well. He stated that they asked for a list of savings that Briggs has successfully brought about for Ashburnham. Vitone stated that a letter was also sent to the Ashby Selectmen and he asked Whitney to read this letter.

Whitney read as follows: to the "Ashby Board of Selectmen, Peter McMurray, Joseph Casey, and Dan Meunier

Subject: Shared Town Administrator

Honorable Board of Selectmen:

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you at your Board meeting of February 16, 2011.

As we discussed, we believe that towns such as Ashby and Ashburnham will continue to face significant economic pressure in the foreseeable future and that regionalization is one of a few untapped opportunities to help us meet such challenges.

Recognizing that Ashby is considering engaging an interim Town Administrator (TA), we believe that this presents an ideal opportunity for the two towns to “test drive” a shared position for a three month period. If agreeable to your Board, Ashburnham would make its Town Administrator, Doug Briggs, available to serve as Ashby’s Interim TA on a part-time basis. Just as is the case with the Town Accountant and Assessors positions that both Ashby and Ashburnham share, from a management perspective, each Board would supervise the activities of the TA for its town only. The two towns would enter into a three-month inter-municipal agreement to reimburse Ashburnham for Doug’s services. The specific details to be defined pending a decision to move forward.

As stated in the meeting, Ashburnham’s interest in a shared TA position is contingent upon the potential for a broader co-operation between the two towns where costs can be lowered and services to our citizens improved. In this regard, we suggest that we jointly task Mr. Briggs to quantify the regionalization opportunities that may exist. This assessment would be completed within the three-month interim assignment. In recognition of this study, both towns would agree to postpone regionalization discussion with other communities until a joint evaluation of the recommendations has been completed.

We are excited with the potential to work more closely with Ashby and look forward to your decision later this week.

Sincerely,

Edward T. Vitone, Jr.	Margaret Whitney	Ronald W. Reed
Chair	Clerk	Member
Ashburnham Board of Selectmen”		

Vitone asked that the letter be scanned and sent via email to the Ashby Board of Selectmen as well as by regular mail. All three Selectmen signed the letter.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion and vote on closing date for Annual Town Meeting article submission

Briggs stated that the Board of Selectmen needed to set a closing date for articles to be submitted for the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. He noted that at this time there were 34 articles, which included capital plan expenditure items. He also stated that there was still a question on the school. He stated he was recommending Thursday, March 17th as the closing date. ***Whitney motioned to close the ATM warrant on March 17th and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.***

Vitone noted that he had a number of annual reports to write up and asked if Whitney would be willing to write the report for the Board of Selectmen. She stated that she would be happy to do so again this year.

Vitone also reminded Briggs that the approval of the Bylaw changes had to be received before town meeting and Briggs stated that it should not be an issue.

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

Briggs began his report by stating that there were two individuals interested in serving on the Council on Aging Board and that he would be appointing them once the COA Board has met with them. He also noted that there were still openings on the Conservation Commission (2), the Historical Commission (1), the Advisory Board (1), and the Capital Planning Committee (1) and that these are all listed on the Town's website under Volunteer Opportunities.

He gave an update on the new Water Tank project stating that it was moving very well adding that the bid opening for phase 1 and 2 were today and that they came in lower than estimated. He noted that phase #3 bid opening was scheduled for Thursday, February 24th.

Briggs also stated that the water and sewer bills went out this week and that both Elaine Cormier and Carla Clifford did a great job putting them together and that the process really improved with this quarter.

He noted that he had an opportunity to speak before Dana Altobelli's Government Class at Oakmont and he really enjoyed the experience. He added that it was a good class.

Briggs stated that he was looking at the meeting on March 7th to review the FY12 Budget with the Board of Selectmen and the Advisory Board. In response to Reed's question, Briggs noted that he has an article in the ATM warrant for each capital item. Reed inquired as to how much was set aside for roads and Briggs noted that it was \$400,000, which included approximately \$275,000 Chapter 90 money and \$125,000 from Capital which would be an article on the ATM warrant. Reed also asked about a list of the roads to be done and Briggs stated that he would have the list ready for the ATM. He also noted that the IT Advisory Board has been very active working on a plan for the Town.

Briggs asked the Board to review and vote to accept Mutual Aid Laws to give him the authority to share services. They include:

Statewide Public Safety Mutual Aid (MGL c.40 sec.4j)

Statewide Public Works Municipal Aid (MGL c. 40 sec. 4k)

Fire Mutual Aid (MGL c. 48 sec. 59A)

When Briggs was asked if there was any downside to this he responded that it can be earmarked at the sender's discretion, so no downside. ***Whitney made the motion to accept and to give Briggs the authority to go forward. Reed seconded and the motion carried.***

There was a short discussion on the upcoming land auction and the Bingham parcel.

Briggs also spoke briefly on health insurance where he compared our current Blue Cross coverage to GIC and found GIC would be more costly for the Town.

Briggs stated that he met recently with Anne Cervantes, Nancy Haines and Ed Vitone to review and discuss the request of the Light Department to keep the financial model currently in place. Vitone noted that they would be working on a flow chart to review the process to see if we would be saving money or not.

He noted that the Briggs Building Committee had scheduled a field trip to look at wood pellets for heating currently used in other schools and that Charlie Packard stated that we should go. It would take place on Thursday, March 3rd, leaving at 7:00 a.m. and back around 6:00 p.m. Vitone stated that Briggs should go on this trip. Vitone stated that the new Advisory Board member Joe Oliveira, suggested a different way to go for heating could be geo-thermal. Vitone stated that they should look at both as well as maintenance costs for both and schedule two tours. Reed noted that solar is another possibility.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 7, 2011 Minutes – Joint Meeting with Advisory Board

Reed motioned to approve the minutes of February 7, 2011 and Vitone seconded. Motion carried. Whitney was not present at this meeting and abstained from voting.

IX. BOS CORRESPONDENCE

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Whitney read the 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 thru Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Town Hall is closed on Friday)
- Thursday, February 17th – Final voter registration for Citizens Caucus 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Town Clerk’s Office.
- Monday, February 28th – Citizens Caucus 7:00 p.m. Community Room at Stevens Memorial Library, 20 Memorial Drive.
- Thursday, March 10th – Until 5:00 p.m. – last day for filing or withdrawal of nomination papers for the Town Election.
- Town Election – Tuesday, April 26th
- Please return your Census forms to the Town Clerk’s office. Failure to respond may result in removal from the active voting list.

The next meeting of the Board of Selectmen will be held on Monday, March 7, 2011 at 6:30 p.m. in the Training Room at the Public Safety Complex.

XI. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:30 p.m. Whitney stated that the Board would meet in Executive Session to deliberate upon matters which, if done in open meeting, could detrimentally affect the position of the Town regarding strategy of pending litigation and to not reconvene in open session except to adjourn. Whitney motioned to enter into Executive Session and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried and roll call was taken.

At 8:15 p.m. Reed motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator