

TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
JOINT MEETING – BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND ADVISORY BOARD
MONDAY – MARCH 21, 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. Advisory Board members – Bill Johnson, Meredith Fagan, Belden Divito, Jamie Piedrafite and Duncan Phyfe. Joseph Oliveira was absent.

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

Vitone noted that they would amend the agenda by adding a Road Race application request under BOS Correspondence. ***Reed motioned to approve the agenda as amended and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.***

IV. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. Approval for temporary borrowing for Briggs requested by Anne Cervantes, Town Treasurer

Anne Cervantes was present and stated that she was asking the Board of Selectmen to vote to renew funds in the amount of \$400,000 for the Briggs Feasibility Study. She added that this would be the last renewal and then it would rollover into the construction borrowing. Vitone gave a brief background.

Whitney read the vote of the Board of Selectmen as follows:

“I, the Clerk of the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Ashburnham, Massachusetts, certify that at a meeting of the Board held March 21, 2011, of which meeting all members of the Board were duly notified and at which a quorum was present, the following votes were unanimously passed, all of which appear upon the official record of the Board in my custody:

Voted: to approve the sale of a \$400,000 1.25 percent General Obligation Bond Anticipation Note (the “Note”) of the Town dated March 24, 2011, and payable July 22, 2011, to Eastern Bank at par and accrued interest, if any.

Further Voted: that each member of the Board of Selectmen, the Town Clerk and the Town Treasurer be and hereby are, authorized to take any and all such actions, and execute and deliver such certificates, receipts or other documents as may be determined by them, or any of them, to be necessary or convenient to carry into effect the provisions of the foregoing votes.

I further certify that the votes were taken at a meeting open to the public, that no vote was taken by secret ballot, that a notice stating the place, date, time and agenda for the meeting (which agenda included the adoption of the above notes) was filed with the Town Clerk and a copy thereof posted in a manner conspicuously visible to the public at all hours in or on the municipal building that the office of the Town Clerk is located, at least 48 hours, not including Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays, prior to the time of the meeting and remained so posted at the time of the meeting, that no deliberations or decision in connection with the sale of the Note were taken in executive session, all in accordance with G.L. c.30A, §§ 18-25 as amended.

Dated: March 21, 2011

Maggie Whitney, Clerk of the Board of Selectmen”

Reed made the motion to approve the borrowing and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

B. Kevin Blanchette – CEO Worcester Regional Retirement System

Vitone introduced Kevin Blanchette, Worcester Regional Retirement System, CEO. Blanchette gave a brief overview of the System stating that this was formerly known as Worcester County Retirement and that this system dates back to 1911 when they provided relief for the widows and children of retired municipal employees. He stated that the present system has been in place since 1937 and noted that public employees were not allowed to go into the Social Security System until that year but that one out of 13 states chose not to.

Blanchette stated that any changes to the system needed to be approved through the legislature. He went on to state that there are 105 different systems, all under G.L. Chapter 32 and are based on population with 95 units in the Worcester contributory plan.

He stated that the system is governed by a five member board and that he serves as the Chair. He added that the Board meets monthly and these meetings are open to the public. He explained how during the first 40 years of the contributory fund employers did not contribute and that this was the reason for the unfunded pension liability. He noted that since 1988, employers contribute to the fund but that they would only meet their goal by the year 2040.

He noted that the normal cost was 3.5% of payroll but in order to meet the unfunded liability it should be 9.5%. He also stated that the benefits weren't driving the cost, it was the unfunded liability. He stated that 48% was funded and the drop was attributable to the market loss in 2008.

Blanchette noted that they had almost 2,700 retirees with 2,300 inactive and that the average age of active employees was 47 with a little more than 9 years of service. He noted that the average salary was \$35,398 and that the average age for retirees was 57. He added that the average retirement allowance was \$14,100 which requires 10 years of service at age 55. He noted that there were four requirements: 1) years of creditable service; 2) age; 3) average of the 3 highest years of salary; and 4) or 20 years of service at any age.

He noted that they also had disability retirement. He stated that the first would be accidental related to duties (72% of salary) and the second would be ordinary disability due to disease or injury (50% of salary). He also noted that they have accidental death benefits. He went into some detail on the options available.

He stated that they had a modest increase in assessments due to managing payroll. He stated that \$33.1M was needed to be funded and then they determine each town's or city's increase. He added that funding works with a socialized plan and that they would be doing individual evaluations for each town and city.

Vitone inquired if they hired a new employee tomorrow would he or she have no unfunded liability. Blanchette responded that yes they would but by the year 2020 it should be okay. He also noted an average of 8% average on assessments.

Vitone asked what the percent was of overhead, and Blanchette responded that it was low and that everything comes out of the fund. Vitone also asked if they plan to change from defined benefit to defined contributions and Blanchette responded that they did not.

There was some discussion on early retirement. Blanchette stated that this was very costly and that they wouldn't see many more. There was also a short discussion on annuity and funding as well as earning benefits. Blanchette noted that the Quinn Bill, clothing allowance and the use of leased vehicles all count as part of the regional compensation.

Blanchette stated that this is a good system which is well run and PERAC oversees things. He also added that the City of Worcester has their own unit.

Vitone thanked Blanchette for his presentation and added that “he told it like it is”. He asked Blanchette to let them know how the towns could help by bringing things to our legislatures. Blanchette stated that he would come to Ashburnham again to speak with employees.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of BOS Initiatives and Task List

Vitone stated that regionalization is still the Board’s goal and added that they were still talking with Ashby regarding sharing Doug’s services and a decision could be coming either this week or next.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review and discussion on draft warrant for Annual Town Meeting of May 7, 2011

Briggs reviewed each article beginning with Article 1 which he noted was a customary article. He stated that Article 2 was to rescind the Quinn Bill and Vitone gave a brief background. He stated that this article doesn’t have to be on this warrant and that they would wait to see what transpires with the Evergreen provision and to see how Boston plays out. Briggs stated that he recommends removing this article. Vitone added that they should postpone this for one year.

Reed motioned to remove Article 2 from the warrant and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.

Briggs went on to Article 3 which would accept the State mandated Statutory Assessment methodology. He stated that this would inform the voters of the difference in methods. Vitone stated that they had proposed the Statutory Method to Westminster a year ago and that Ashburnham put forth a gesture to pay an additional \$63,000 for FY12 if they would agree to the Statutory Method from this day forward. He noted that there was a tri-board meeting the following night and that they would hear what Westminster’s position was and if they accepted our proposal then Article 3 would change the District Regional Agreement. He added that at this point they had not heard from Westminster or the School District.

Bill Johnson, Advisory Board Chairman expressed his disappointment with the Superintendent and the School Committee on the way they have handled this. A short discussion followed on this topic after which Briggs stated that they would leave this article on the warrant as a placeholder.

Briggs went on to Article 4, the FY12 budget which included the Statutory Method for the School budget line. Vitone also noted that he wanted to increase the Town Administrator salary line to include the Ashby position compensation for Briggs.

Briggs briefly reviewed the following: Article 5 – FY12 Water Budget; Article 6 – FY12 Sewer Budget; Article 7 – the AWRSD override in the amount of \$365,833; Article 8 – PILOT Light Dept. \$40,000; Article 9 – Tax Anticipation for Treasurer; Article 10 - \$20,000 to cover delinquent taxes; Article 11 – Chapter 90 to authorize Briggs to enter into contract; Article 12 – to expend Chapter 90 funds; Article 13 – Cushing Trust \$3,000; Article 14 – Title Five Receipts; Article 15 – payment of prior year bills (3 bills); Article 16 – Funds for Quinn bill for FY10 and FY11; Article 17 – VMS boiler inspection (Briggs noted that they should hold off on this until the fall at which time they would know about the grant to renovate the building); Article 18 – binding of Town Clerk’s permanent records (Reed stated that this should be included in the Town Clerk’s budget and it was noted to remove this article from the warrant).

Briggs noted that Article 19 included articles 20 to 30 and that he recommended just the one article in a format similar to article 4, the FY12 Budget. Reed noted that they should check to

see if any funds were available in the cable fiber franchise account to cover some of the cost to install fiber optics to Town Hall. Nancy Haines, the Town Accountant, noted that she would check on this. Reed stated that road repairs should take precedence over some of the items listed in this article, in particular items 3, 6 and 10. Vitone stated that the Capital Planning Committee worked hard on this plan and they placed the DPW as their first priority. Reed stated that it would mean a \$77,000 savings towards more road repairs. Meredith Fagan, Advisory Board member, agreed with Reed that roads were vital and that residents wouldn't be happy if we purchased equipment. Johnson stated that with the \$125,000 in this article, the Town would have \$600,000 total for road repairs for FY12 which was more than previous years and that he strongly recommended that they should look at the whole Capital plan. Jamie Piedrafite, an Advisory Board member and a member of the Capital Planning Committee, stated that the Committee made the commitment of \$125,000 a year for roads and this would supplement what the State gives the Town under Chapter 90. There was more discussion on the roads slated for repair. Briggs stated that he would have the list of roads for Town Meeting.

Vitone suggested that they adopt Article 19 excluding items 3 and 10 until after the IT Advisory Board public forum on Monday night. Whitney asked about the importance of the IMC software and Briggs responded that this would be an opportunity to give information on services, framework of information to EMT's and Paramedics which would be more efficient and would identify safety issues. Duncan Phyfe, IT Advisory Board Chairman and Advisory Board member, stated that IMC software would provide the ability to relay information and protect the privacy of the residents, as well as, help dispatch the right crews for specific hazards. Johnson added that it provides operational efficiency to enter data once which would mean less paper clutter and is the next logical step. Phyfe added that it would run with the police server. Vitone stated that they should leave the IMC software on hold for now and that they would approve all items but #10. Briggs also noted that they could combine lines 3 and 4. ***Whitney motioned to accept Article 19 with item 12 as a separate article. Vitone seconded and the motion carried. Reed abstained.***

Briggs stated that he recommended Article 32 be removed and placed on the fall town meeting warrant and the Board agreed with his recommendation.

Briggs noted Article 33, which was to establish a Briggs School Facility Maintenance Trust Fund, for the purpose of placing money aside for future maintenance at the new Briggs School. He noted that this could be established any time during the building process and that he suggests not to do this right now. He stated that they should check to see if we can put money in more than once. Vitone stated that he wanted to see some language to set a minimum draw and that they should find out more about any rules.

Briggs stated that Articles 34 and 35 were submitted by the Planning Board and Vitone stated that the only change was that dates certain are already on the books.

Briggs stated that Article 36 was for the Waterways Improvement Fund and that this article should be taken off as they currently have \$5,000 available in this account. Steve Coswell, who is a member of the group involved with Waterways Improvements, was present and stated that these funds have been used for police and fire safety and that they want to use some funds to control the flow at Little Watatic. He stated that they would be meeting on March 31st and that someone would come in to see Briggs on what was determined at their meeting.

Briggs noted that Article 38 was a placeholder re: solar panels at the landfill and if this was under the Light Department it would run smoother. Vitone added that this would be one of the big revenue makers for the Town. Briggs noted that Article 37 was to authorize the sale of any excess town vehicles or assets.

Briggs stated that they should hold off on Article 39, the alarm bylaw for fining on false alarms, until they get more information. The Board agreed to take this article off the warrant for now.

Some discussion followed on Article 40, which was to raise funds for planning the 250th Celebration. Steve Coswell, one of the co-chairs of the 250th Celebration Committee was present and noted that the Committee was asking for \$5,000 to set up fundraising events. Briggs stated that it was the Trust Fund Committee's call regarding the Hoffman Fund monies and the need to identify the use of these funds. Reed stated that they would have to fund something from the Town. Coswell stated that their first event would be at Downtown Day and then a Blueberry Event in August.

Johnson noted that they had only one shot to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Town and \$5,000 was not a huge investment. Coswell noted that they would ask for \$5,000 each year until the actual anniversary event. Vitone suggested that maybe they could ask for \$3,000 from the Town and \$3,000 from the Hoffman Fund. There followed some discussion on the Hoffman Fund use. It was unanimously agreed to leave this article on the warrant.

At this time Vitone reviewed his spreadsheet on School Assessment Methodology with the Board of Selectmen and the Advisory Board members in attendance. Discussion followed on both methods. It was noted that after tomorrow night's Tri-Board meeting they would know how to proceed.

B. Vote on nomination of Inspector of Animals

Briggs stated that Eula Bradley has served as our Inspector of Animals for the past year and that she has done a great job for the Town and recommended her nomination. **Reed motioned to go with the Town Administrator's recommendation and was seconded by Whitney. Motion carried.**

C. Vote to sign posting for the April 26, 2011 Election Warrant

Whitney read the Warrant as follows:

"To any of the Constables of the Town of Ashburnham

GREETINGS:

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts you are hereby directed to notify and warn the inhabitants of said Town who are qualified to vote in elections and in Town affairs to meet in the J.R. Briggs Elementary School Gym, 96 Williams Road, Ashburnham.

WARRANT 2011-2012

Tuesday the 26th day of April 2011

At 9:00 o'clock in the morning

To bring in their ballots for:

Moderator – For one year term

One Board of Selectmen – For three year term

One Board of Health – For three year term

One Planning Board – For five year term

Two Library Trustees – For three year term

One Library Trustee – For two year term

One Municipal Light Board – For three year term

Two Ashburnham School Committee – For three year term

Two Westminster School Committee – For three year term

Hereof fail not and make return of this warrant with your doings thereon at the time and place of said meeting."

Reed motioned to approve the April 26, 2011 Election Warrant for posting and Whitney seconded. Motion carried.

It was noted by Vitone that the open position for the Planning Board is in process and if a suitable candidate is found a meeting would be held with the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board to nominate this candidate. He also noted that a write-in candidate is also possible.

D. Vote on two separate Special One-Day Liquor Licenses

Briggs stated that the Historical Society is planning two events, one on May 18th and the other on October 1st of 2011. He noted that they are asking for a special liquor license for both events. ***Whitney motioned to approve both Special Liquor Licenses and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.*** It was noted by Whitney that the Board appreciated their timely requests.

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

Briggs noted the openings on Town Boards, Committees and Commissions and welcomed the new Council on Aging Board member, Natalie Hollowell.

He gave a quick update on the water tank project stating that it was progressing right on schedule. He also noted that on March 11th he attended an MMA FY12 briefing session in Barre and was basically told that there would likely be negative changes to the Governor's budget due to the fact that it was put out so early.

He also noted that we would be receiving \$368,000 in Chapter 90 monies this year and he has met with Steve Nims on developing a priority on how these funds would be spent.

He noted that he met with his finance team and had a good exchange of information.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 7, 2011 – Joint Meeting with Advisory Board

Reed motioned to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2011 Joint Meeting with Advisory Board. Whitney seconded and the motion carried.

B. March 14, 2011 – Special Meeting

Whitney motioned to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2011 Special Meeting and was seconded by Vitone. Motion carried.

IX. BOS CORRESPONDENCE

Vitone stated that the Board received a request to approve a Road Race on April 9th which is a part of the Ashburnham/Westminster Community Benefit being held at Cushing Academy. It was noted that they had also checked with the Police and Fire Chief for approval on this event. ***Whitney motioned to approve the Road Race and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.***

Briggs noted that the Town was just notified by the Attorney General's office that our Bylaw changes were approved.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Whitney 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 thru Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Town Hall is closed on Friday)
- Town Election – Tuesday, April 26th
- Dog licenses are now available at the Town Clerk's office during regular business hours of Town Hall. The fees are \$10.00 for spayed/neutered dogs and \$15.00 for unsprayed/unneutered dogs. Please bring the dog's current rabies certificate. You may

register by mail by sending in the paperwork along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Town Clerk's office, 32 Main Street.

With the burning season fast approaching, please note that you will require a burning permit. The permits are purchased at the Public Safety Building from the Fire Department. The cost is \$25.00 paid by check or money order. Cash cannot be accepted.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, April 4, 2011.

The Planning Board has a meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 24, 2011 at 6:30 p.m. in the Lower Level Meeting Room at Town Hall. Discussion will be on PUD Building and the two articles that will be on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

XI. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 9:20 p.m. Whitney stated that the Board of Selectmen will enter into 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 into open session only to adjourn. *Whitney motioned to enter into Executive Session and was seconded by Vitone. Roll call was taken.*

XII. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:25 p.m. Whitney motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Reed. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Turcotte,
Assistant to the Town Administrator