

**TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
THURSDAY MARCH 15, 2012
LOWER LEVEL MEETING ROOM – TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Ed Vitone, Chair, Ron Reed, Member, Gregory Fagan, Clerk, Doug Briggs, Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator. Advisory Board members in attendance were Bill Johnson and Jamie Piedrafite. Also in attendance: Leo Janssens II, Joe Daigle, Police Chief Larry Barrett and Fire Chief Paul Zbikowski.

Vitone stated that they would be reviewing the remaining open items on the FY13 Budget and asked Briggs to begin the discussion.

Briggs stated that the first item was the following:

1. Quantify payment schedule from Cushing Academy for the police officer?

He stated that Chief Barrett will be meeting with the Headmaster on this and noted that it would probably not be a lump sum but most likely set in quarterly payments.

2. Should item for project management be added to the budget? If so, where?

Briggs stated that he personally did not want to do this as he felt it was too soon, adding that Tammy Collier's position and talent would be more valuable by utilizing the Munis system to its full advantage. He stated that he felt comfortable and enjoyed working for the two towns as Town Administrator. Vitone stated that continuing to share the services of Briggs between the two towns would ultimately be determined by both Boards of Selectmen and Briggs and asked the members where they stood. Both Reed and Fagan stated they would vote to continue sharing the Town Administrator due to Briggs' confidence level. Vitone stated that he felt there were gaps that needed to be filled and that Tammy Collier would be ideal to take on these projects as he felt Briggs needed some assistance in this regard. Briggs noted that he wanted to better understand what was happening and to fill these gaps himself. Vitone stated that he had a list of "gaps" and would send this out to the other Board members and noted one example was the PILOT solar project which he felt was taking too long to solidify. He also noted that Briggs should discuss the workload with his assistant.

Vitone stated that they would delete item 2 from the list of open items at this time and all were in favor although Fagan did state that perhaps they could review this on a quarterly basis. Briggs noted that the Accountant's budget was left level funded with the salary line for the assistant left in for FY13 even though Collier would not have a need for an assistant.

3. Advisory Board prefers Reserve Fund at current level to cover unanticipated expenses.

Briggs stated that he left this line item at the current level.

4. Develop an understanding of how Fire Department IMC software investment is justified through productivity and service.

Briggs stated that they would see improvements in terms of productivity. Chief Zbikowski stated that they figured it at 18.9 man hours saved so it was "time saved". He noted that by April

1st the Ambulance data would be all set and by May 1st they would see all the fire reporting data entered.

5. Get better understanding of Lieutenant's position and how we will cover changes in shift schedule to maintain two employees per shift.

Chief Barrett explained that the biggest strong point to justify this was to have someone there to cover when he was out especially long-term. He stated that they would gain better organization as well as better coverage. He noted that their calls have increased 30% to 40% in the past five years.

Fagan stated that he saw this as needed with things becoming more complex and that he was very supportive. Reed stated that he still had an issue with two managers on at the same time as he felt it wasn't practical. Barrett stated that the police structure is set up so that the majority of administrative work was done during the weekdays, which is why the Lieutenant would be scheduled for this time slot but that the schedule for the Lieutenant would be flexible and he may go to other shifts if the occasion warrants.

Vitone noted the contrast between the Police and Fire Departments stating that Chief Zbikowski did a good job of getting his people promoted. He stated that he would like to see the Town cultivate candidates and that he was in favor of this.

Leo Janssens noted that as a citizen he saw this as no guarantee that they would fund a third shift position which has always been needed and he would rather see the funds used to fill the vacant position on third shift.

Vitone asked the members of the Board if they were in favor of the Lieutenant position being added and it was unanimous.

6. Get schedule for shift coverage from Larry.

Briggs stated that this was covered under item 5.

7. Greg wants more creative solutions for Animal Control to lower budget.

Chief Barrett gave a brief history of how this situation transpired. He stated that right now they were getting 24-hour/7 day service with Wachusett Animal Hospital staff and the response was good. He stated that we were in a good position right now, getting a "good bang for our buck". Fagan stated that they should probably go out to bid for these services to see if we could get the same service for less. Chief Barrett stated that they could consider this but he wanted it noted that this past year they had collected over \$8,000 in fees and fines and that it seemed to be working well.

8. Advisory Board asked if there were alternatives to Nashoba Board of Health. Advisory Board may ask our Board of Health if they would be willing to explore alternatives.

Briggs stated that he had reached out to Glenn Hathaway who had stated that they would be willing to look at alternatives. Briggs also stated he contacted the Westminster Health Agent who would consider working for Ashburnham as well. He stated that he has forwarded her contact information to Hathaway and is waiting for his response.

9. Review pros and cons of changing the decentralized budget line item of Professional Development and Travel accounts.

Briggs stated that this was all set.

10. Contact Historical Commission for details and supporting information on request for an increase in their FY13 budget.

Briggs stated that the Commission would like the funds for signs and plaques to place at Meeting House Hill and other historical points in Ashburnham.

11. Better understanding of the supplies accounts for some departments and the thousands of dollars budgeted and what drives these costs.

Briggs noted that all these supply lines were legitimate expenses, such as copy paper under the Non-Departmental account and he stated that he didn't see any issues.

12. If ambulance billing rates are increased, quantify who pays the differential and how it's done.

Briggs stated that currently the Medicare billing is 50% and they are looking to increase it to 250%. Chief Zbikowski stated that their plan included revenue and the cost to run the service and that there was legislation pending right where the insurance companies would pay the provider not the patient. He also noted that 50% of their calls were Medicare calls and that he was confident we would realize this plan. He also noted that all area towns have increased their billing and that Ashburnham was one of the lowest right now. He again noted that he was confident the legislation would pass and he also stated that this only covers emergency services. Briggs stated that the Town should go forward with this and Vitone added that the Board would vote on this at their meeting on Monday.

13. Board decision on 3% COLA increase for non-union employees.

Briggs stated that he is requesting 3% which is warranted. All Board members stated that they support this request.

Vitone stated that the Advisory Board should set up a time for their meeting on the FY13 Budget and Bill Johnson noted that he would do so.

Fagan inquired about the Parks & Rec Committee and if they had submitted a budget for FY13 and Briggs stated that they had and he would share that with the Board on Monday. He noted that the Town of Framingham offered the Committee some excess playground equipment and that they had taken a trip there to check it out.

Vitone gave a quick update to those present on the progress of the Dispatch Regionalization efforts with Ashby.

At 8:36 p.m. Reed motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Fagan. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator