

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2013 – 6:34 P.M.
PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX – TRAINING ROOM

This meeting was taped for local cable television. There were some technical issues and they were not able to bring this meeting live for the viewers.

PRESENT: Leo Janssens II, Chair, Duncan Phyfe, Member, Nick Davis, Clerk, Doug Briggs, Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

I. SALUTE THE FLAG

Leo Janssens called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT (5 minute limit)

Lois Somers made a request to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting regarding the VMS Building. Leo Janssens stated that they would allow 15 minutes for this discussion and it would be listed under “New Business”. Ms. Somers also noted that the Town should initiate a Town-wide phone message to advise the residents about Town Meetings and to also place it on the website. It was noted by Mr. Janssens that if a resident wasn’t registered with Code Red they would not get the call. He did add that he thought this was a good idea.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Duncan Phyfe motioned to approve the agenda as and was seconded by Nick Davis. Motion carried.

IV. PRESENTATIONS & REPORT

V. OLD BUSINESS

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review of October 21, 2013 Special Town Meeting

Doug Briggs stated that the meeting went very well. He noted that 10 out of the 11 articles passed. He added that he has gone out for quotes on the camera system and they have also met with Tighe & Bond regarding the water main replacement project.

Duncan Phyfe stated that he thought the meeting went really well but that he would like to see more people in attendance.

VII TOWN ADMINISTRATOR’S UPDATE

Doug Briggs began by stating that Steve Nims went out to bid for sand and Pitcherville Sand & Gravel was the only bidder at \$9.04 a yard, which was the same as last year. He stated he was requesting the Board’s approval on this recommendation. *Nick Davis made the motion to approve and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.*

Mr. Briggs stated that with the funding in place for the water line replacement, he met with Tighe & Bond to begin to formalize the USDA application process. He noted that in order to qualify for USDA Grant funding our Town’s median income must not exceed the States non-metropolitan medium income and based on the 1999 statistics, Ashburnham is at 80%. He added that the USDA has been a great source of revenue and he would not want to lose out on this opportunity.

Mr. Briggs stated that he was requesting that the Board authorize him to sign the “Agreement of Consent Election” under Section 4 of Chapter 150E of the General Laws, as amended between the International Association of Firefighters and the Town of Ashburnham. He noted that this would waive the process and he needed the authorization of the Board to sign. *Nick Davis motioned to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the document and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.*

He stated that we have posted and advertised for a full-time Firefighter/Paramedic to replace our retired Battalion Chief Bob Salo. He added that they are looking to reorganize the Fire Department and the position of Battalion Chief would not be filled. He noted that they are beginning to look at the Fire Department organization.

Doug Briggs stated that a tax classification hearing will be held on Monday, November 18th at the Board of Selectmen meeting.

He noted that letters were sent out to the eligible retirees to inform them of their health care options and sign up will continue through January with benefits starting in February 2014.

He also stated that due to the increase of health cost of 8% to 9% we have asked Edd Byrnes to look at alternatives such as “look-alike” programs to GIC. He stated that in actuality it would be a 4% increase for January through June and then we could start looking at a GIC type program. Mr. Briggs stated that he would like to see us working with the School and Westminster on this as there would be a lot less contention with the budget.

Mr. Briggs stated that he attended a grantee training seminar for Distressed Properties Identification and Revitalization program which is in connection with the \$125,000 grant that we received. He stated that it was different than what he thought it would be as it would involve only foreclosed properties taken by a bank in the bank’s name and that grant money would be used to pay State and MRPC employees who would be working on this for the Town.

He stated that Claude Daigle has returned as van driver for the COA long-medical and recreation trips which is due to one of the van drivers resigning.

He also noted that he was informed by Tom Campbell, who is the lawyer for our insurance company regarding the flood at Town Hall, that we are settling the litigation against Worcester County Refrigeration and M. O’Connor Contracting. He stated that the Town isn’t getting anything from this settlement as the monies will be paid to the insurance company. He stated that he needs the Board of Selectmen’s authorization to sign the paperwork. ***Leo Janssens made to motion to authorize the Town Administrator to sign and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.***

Mr. Briggs stated that the solar project on Murray Road is moving at a rapid pace. He noted that both Dick Reynolds, our Building Commissioner, and Dick Cannavino, our Electrical Inspector, have stated that they are doing a great job at the site. Mr. Briggs noted that there was a small problem with the trucks driving down the road to the site and that he would address this. He also noted the great job that Dick Reynolds and Dick Cannavino are doing in regards to this project.

Doug Briggs noted that some residents have filled out an application for use of Town property on Chapel Street to hold a dog show. He stated that according to what is stated on the application it needs to be a Board, Committee or Commission or a non-profit organization and he was told that they are not involved with any of these. He stated that he would send this to the Board of Selectmen for discussion at the next meeting.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 21, 2013 Minutes – Regular Meeting

Duncan Phyfe made the motion to approve the minutes of October 21, 2013 and was seconded by Nick Davis. Motion carried.

IX. BOS CORRESPONDENCE

Leo Janssens stated that he received a phone call regarding rumors that have been circulating around Town that are negative against the Town Administrator. He stated that the Board of Selectmen has no issues with the Town Administrator and if anyone has a problem they should contact the Town Administrator directly to get it resolved.

X. NOVEMBER MEETINGS and EVENTS – Nick Davis read the meetings and events as follows:

Monday, November 11 – VETERANS DAY HOLIDAY

Tuesday, November 12 – 6:00 p.m. – Water/Sewer Commission – Lower Level Town Hall

Wednesday, November 13 – 5:00 p.m. – Board of Assessors – Assessors Office

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nick Davis read the announcements as follows.

Town Clerk Reminders:

- January 1st and on – Open registration of voters at the Town Hall, Town Clerk’s Office, 32 Main Street, from 7:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Mondays and 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday thru Thursday.
- Dog registration is ongoing with the additional late fee of \$10.00 added to each license. The \$50.00 fines along with a letter from Police Chief Barrett have been sent to those who still have not registered their dog(s). This is in addition to the \$25.00 fine previously sent. If you have any questions, please call the Town Clerk’s office at 978-827-4100 extension 114.

The next scheduled Board of Selectmen meeting will be held on Monday, November 18, 2013 at 6:30 p.m. in the Training Room at the Public Safety Building.

XII. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT (5 minute limit)

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At this time Leo Janssens stated that the Board of Selectmen wanted to show their appreciation for a long time employee, Bob Salo, who is retiring after 35 years of service with the Town. He read the following:

“Tonight we have an official announcement and we want to take the time to recognize a long-standing employee. Robert “Bob” Salo has retired from the Fire Department after thirty years of service.

In June of 1978, Bob joined the Fire Department as a Call Member. He went on to complete the necessary training and became an EMT. By July of 1988 Bob became the Department’s second full-time firefighter. He wasn’t on that long when the Town had some financial hard times and he was laid off. He remained on the Call Department and went on to be a full-time firefighter at Devens. When his job in Ashburnham opened back up he gave up his State job where one would think the pay and benefits were better only to come back to the Department, where his loyalty was.

Bob once told me his goal was to become a lieutenant like his father before him. He got carried away and not only became a lieutenant but went on to become a captain affectionately known as “Capt. Bob”. Then he went on to become a Battalion Chief the position he retired from.

A full-time firefighter in a town isn’t always easy, it goes beyond eight to four because one is on call during the off-hours. This means meals were missed and functions with the children are often missed. Bob and his family overcame this in a unique way. His wife became an EMT and his daughter and son became firefighters making it a family affair.

After thirty-five years serving a small community you see the worst of things. People don’t call 911 to say come over for coffee, they call when they need help. Seeing people whom you’ve known all your life lose their homes and possessions and on the ambulance seeing them often at the end of their lives can weigh heavily on a person. At a certain point you begin to see people your own age suffering. Through all this Bob has always kept his sense of humor and his smile.

Bob, on behalf of the Town of Ashburnham we want to thank you for your service.

At this time I would like to call my two colleagues, Mr. Briggs, and Chief Zbikowski to the front.”

Mr. Janssens presented a certificate of appreciation to Bob Salo for his years of service to the Town from the Board of Selectmen, the Town Administrator and the Fire Chief. Mr. Salo thanked everyone for this special honor. Cookies and coffee were available for the small gathering.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:03 p. m. Nick Davis motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Turcotte
Assistant to the Town Administrator