

JOINT MEETING
BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
MONDAY, JULY 15, 2013 – 6:30 P.M.
PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX – TRAINING ROOM

This meeting was aired live on local cable television.

PRESENT: Board of Selectmen - Leo Janssens II, Chair, Duncan Phyfe, Member, Nick Davis, Clerk.
Advisory Board Members: Bill Johnson, Chair, Bruce Whitney, Gail Dumont, Joe Oliveira, Jaime Piedrafite, and Belden DiVito.

Also in attendance: Doug Briggs, Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

I. SALUTE THE FLAG

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

II. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT (5 minute limit) None

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

IV. PRESENTATIONS & REPORT

A. Approval of Bond for School borrowing – Paul Pollastri, Town Treasurer

Paul Pollastri, Treasurer and Linda Ramsdell, Town Clerk were in attendance for this agenda item.

Mr. Pollastri stated that he needed the Board's signature on many documents for this 6-month short-term borrowing. He stated that a short term borrowing was still necessary until the school is complete and at that time they would take out the permanent borrowing. He noted that the bond amount was for \$13,708,000 at ¾% interest. The Board signed all the necessary paperwork and the Town Clerk certified their signatures.

Nick Davis motioned to approve the school borrowing as signed by the Board of Selectmen Clerk and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.

B. Advisory Board – FY13 Year-End Inter-Departmental Transfers

Doug Briggs presented both Boards with a list of transfers for year-end 2013. To balance the books, he explained that \$87,000 went to Snow & Ice Wages, to Legal which was over budget due to a few unforeseen issues, to the DPW for the Transfer Station budget which was short due to the death of the employee who worked there on Saturdays, the Inspection wages, and the Library budget. He stated that he was requesting the Board of Selectmen and the Advisory Board approve the list of transfers.

Duncan Phyfe motioned to approve the list of transfers as presented and was seconded by Nick Davis. Motion carried.

For the Advisory Board, Joe Oliveira motioned to approve the list of transfers as presented and was seconded by Bruce Whitney. Motion carried.

C. Discussion with Advisory Board – District-Wide Town Meeting

In attendance for this agenda item – Dave Christianson, School Committee Chair, Ralph Hicks, Superintendent of Schools, and Sherry Kersey, Business Manager.

Doug Briggs noted that he received the logistics for the District Wide Town Meeting from the Town Clerk which he distributed to all of them. He added that these notes were taken by a

Westminster Fire employee. He did also stated that they planned to have additional handicapped parking set aside and all this was well orchestrated at the meeting held this morning.

He began the discussion by noting that the AWRSD proposed deficit for just the Town of Ashburnham was \$90,944. He stated that his office was notified that the Governor signed the FY14 State budget but with a reduction in local aid and transportation. He added that Ashburnham's local aid would reduce our budget by 17.33%. He also noted that Senator Brewer's Aide believes that we will see the reduction be overridden by the legislature quickly, before the August 1st date when the Senate and House will go out on recess. He added that he wasn't sure where we would go from here.

Dave Christianson stated that they have been working on reductions. Supt. Hicks noted that he spoke with Anne Gobi who indicated that she fully expects the House will overturn the Governor's budget this week but that they don't know what will happen before the 23rd. He noted that they were down to \$90,000 now and his recommendation would be to cut the bus route by \$20,000 and cut the insurance by \$27,500. He stated that this would bring Ashburnham's assessment down to \$50,000. He noted that they have worked hard on these cuts but that there was only so much they can absorb and being prudent and taking into account the concerns.

Leo Janssens stated that it frustrates him that it's such a balancing act. He noted that at the special meeting held on April 20th the Town gave the School 2 ½ plus growth plus an additional \$82,613 for a total of \$113,694. He stated that the remaining new growth to the Town was \$104,366 and if we gave the School the \$90,000 that would leave us with \$14,366. He added that at this point, he does not support the \$90,944 override amount.

Dave Christianson noted that they found a savings of \$83,000 by reducing the bus route and the insurance savings which would bring Ashburnham's amount down to \$52,000. He stated that they were working towards no cuts and no tax increases.

Bill Johnson stated that they cannot ignore the possible \$120,000 cut by the State and we need to deal with this. He stated that in Ashburnham we got a clear response to not support any additional revenue, the taxpayers were against it.

There was a short discussion on the new assessment methodology that went into effect a few years ago. Leo Janssens stated that all monies were diverted to the Capital Plan and if any funds were taken out, what a negative affect it would have on the Town's budget.

Dave Christianson questioned whether the Town could use free cash as "anticipated" for the \$52,000 gap. Doug Briggs stated that he anticipated around \$150k to \$200k in free cash but that he would not recommend using free cash in this way.

Doug Briggs then brought a suggestion in the discussion. He noted the amounts budgeted for Health Insurance under 32b for the past years and the actuals spent. He pointed out that the amount budgeted during the past years always had an excess and noted in FY12 there was an excess of \$463,000, in FY13 \$300,000 and for FY14 an excess of \$471,000. He questioned how this line item was budgeted as every year there is a significant "buffer". Mr. Briggs stated that the FY14 budget includes a \$71,000 increase when in fact our rate for the first 6 months is -2.2% so even with a 10% increase in January the district would only need \$85,000. He suggested the District could reduce this line item by at least \$200,000 which would bring all budgets in balance. Sherry Kersey explained her method in calculating this line item. Dave Christianson noted that it is audacious of Mr. Briggs to state that they could balance the budget with health insurance costs as they are working to reduce the assessments. He stated that they are funding a capital plan and that the use of E&D is as important as the source of E&D. He added that the point is the assessment is down to \$50,000.

Nick Davis noted that he appreciates that the school has tried to balance their budget. Duncan Phyfe noted that everyone has “fat in their budget” and there should be room to work this out. He asked that everyone call their representatives to get this done and settled.

Bill Johnson stated that he “agrees to disagree”. He noted that the vast majority of new revenue is going to education, not the cities and towns and the towns have no other resources to go to. He stated that the reality is that Ashburnham has no revenue sources like Westminster and that more discussions were needed to be more informed. He added that there is a lot of frustration by the residents in Ashburnham. He also stated that the Town has to go to Town Meeting to spend funds while the School is different. Leo Janssens also noted that the Town’s cash reserves are extremely low.

Leo Janssens asked the other Board of Selectmen if they wanted to wait until the night of the meeting to make their recommendation and it was a unanimous yes.

Bill Johnson noted that the Advisory Board agreed that they would wait until the night of the meeting to make their recommendation.

Leo Janssens noted to Mr. Christianson and Ms. Kersey that they should look at the numbers Doug Briggs suggested. Mr. Christianson stated that the School Committee would meet at 6:30 p.m. the night of the meeting to certify the lower budget. He also stated that these discussions should start sooner with more control. Mr. Janssens asked if the School budget could be simplified so it was easier to understand and Mr. Christianson stated that 80% to 85% of their budget is people and unfunded mandates.

Bill Johnson noted that the 2 ½ plus growth would be given to the school in the fall. Dave Christianson made note that 5 out of the past 7 years the School has been working with reduced funding from the towns and the challenge is the internal rate of inflation. It was noted by Joe Oliveira that 60% of the Town’s budget goes to the schools and 2 ½ plus growth is what we will give.

D. Briggs School Update

Duncan Phyfe stated that the old school is almost gone and the project is 88% complete. He stated that going through the budget recap, it’s on track and that they have been issued a temporary occupancy permit. He stated that most of the furniture is on the second floor and the teachers are getting ready to set up their rooms. He also noted that there is a \$200,000 contingency balance and that an Open House would be scheduled before the school opening.

V. OLD BUSINESS None

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review of Downtown Day Event

Leo Janssens stated the Downtown Day which was held on Saturday, June 29th was a great success and the weather was perfect. Nick Davis stated that it was great and he and his family enjoyed it. He thanked everyone. Duncan Phyfe stated that it was a good time.

B. Review 1st Summer Concert at the Part event held on July 12th

Doug Briggs stated that he was informed there were at least 100 people who attended and he was told it was a great event.

C. Approval of Asphalt Products Award

Doug Briggs read the following recommendation by Steve Nims:

Bituminous Concrete in Place	MA Broken Stone	\$64.32 per ton
Reclaiming	Murray Paving	\$1.657 per sq. yd.
Pavement Milling	P.J. Keating	\$1.54 per sq. yd.

Mr. Briggs asked the Board of Selectmen to accept this recommendation. *Duncan Phyfe motioned to accept the recommendation and was seconded by Nick Davis. Motion carried.*

VII TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE

Mr. Briggs stated that there were still many openings on Town Boards and Committees which included – (1) Conservation Commission; (2) Council on Aging Board; (2) Agricultural Commission; (1) Board of Assessors; (1) Advisory Board and (4) Cable Advisory Board. He also noted that Westminster has shown an interest in getting the Cable Advisory Board set to go so we need interested persons to come forward. Leo Janssens stated that people should get involved.

Doug Briggs noted that the VMS Tag Sale during Downtown Day went very well and netted the Town \$229. He stated that all the articles sold were picked up and now he will reach out to non-profits for their interest in any of the unsold items. He stated that both Sylvia Turcotte and Doug Carlman stayed for the 6 hours and their service was greatly appreciated. He also noted that we satisfied the requirement by classifying these items as excess.

He stated that the fuel tank at the VMS will be removed by Moschetti from Templeton either Thursday or Friday of this week. Bill Johnson inquired if the Fire Department had to be there when this was removed and Mr. Briggs stated that they did as well as a DPW employee. Chief Zbikowski was present and stated that they have to visually inspect the soil and tank and then once it's out they clean it and then it goes to an approved disposal site.

Mr. Briggs stated that he has met with Chief Zbikowski to start Fire Union negotiations on Thursday, July 11th.

He stated that there would be one more small warrant for FY13 in order to avoid any encumbrances and then FY13 would be closed.

He stated that he met with Maureen Pollock, our conservation agent, Dick Reynolds, our building inspector and Kelly Brown from the office of Energy and Environmental Affairs on how to become a Green Community. He stated that there is a one-time \$140,000 grant that the Town could receive to do energy upgrades on any of our town buildings and although we have limited use for that, when the Town Hall was renovated, a heat exchanger was never put in so this could be done with this grant. Maureen Pollock has given notice that she will be leaving to go work full-time in Greenfield and her last day will be July 18th. We wish her well.

He stated that he will be on vacation July 28th thru August 2nd and that Sylvia Turcotte would be in charge during his absence and that he would also be available via email.

Mr. Briggs stated that on June 25th there was a telephone interview with our Bond Counsel and Moody's. He was joined by Paul Pollastri, Tanya Gaylord and Harald Scheid. He noted that the Town was given a temporary borrowing rating of MIG 1 which is the best you can get. He also added that last year's A1 rating is anticipated but we have not been notified yet.

Mr. Briggs stated that the Water Tank project is close to being done. He noted that Five Oaks replaced four dead pines trees at the Cushing Street tank and re-graded and seeded the High Street tank site. He did add that if the re-seeding doesn't take they would come back and re-do it. He stated that they were also scheduled to replace the adjustable frequency drives and the pressure transmitter at the water treatment plant by the end of July.

He stated that in August he would meet, along with the Water/Sewer Commissioners, with Wesson & Sampson and Tighe and Bond to discuss the water line replacements on Holden Street, Westminster Street, South Maple Avenue and Williams Road which have all been trouble areas for water breaks since the new water tank was put on line. He stated that at this meeting they would also discuss the USDA grant which would cover 45% of the cost to do this. He added that this is about a \$2m project and would need to go before a Town Meeting for approval.

Doug Briggs noted that with the installation of the Solar Project off Murray Road, there would be an excess piece of property that is mostly wetlands. The Town through the Conservation Commission has been approached to donate Parcel B on the map of approximately 44.4 acres under conservation control or to place a conservation restriction on the property. He also noted that the PILOT was about 95% there and that this would mean \$60,000 a year for 20 years to the Town.

Doug then asked Chief Zbikowski to introduce the new Paramedic, Hilary Towne. Chief Zbikowski stated that Ms. Towne started with the Town as a full-time Paramedic as of July 1st and she had been a Per Diem employee for the past two years. He stated that she fits in very well and also noted that the new program is working very well to date.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 17, 2013 Minutes – Regular Meeting

B. July 8, 2013 Minutes – Joint Meeting Ashburnham and Westminster Boards of Selectmen

Nick Davis motioned to approve the minutes from the May 20, 2013 Regular Meeting and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.

IX. BOS CORRESPONDENCE None

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

Tues.,	July 16 – 4:00 p.m.	Library Trustees – Executive Session	Meeting Room at Library
Tues.,	July 16 - 6:00 p.m.	Water/Sewer Commission	Lower Level Meeting Room – Town Hall
Tues.,	July 23 - 7:00 p.m.	DISTRICT WIDE MEETING	Oakmont Regional High School - Auditorium
Wed.,	July 24 – 7:30 p.m.	Zoning Board of Appeals	Lower Level Meeting Room – Town Hall

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nick Davis read the announcements as follows.

Town Clerk Reminders:

- Dog licenses are still available at the Town Clerk’s office. Effective June 1st fees are \$25.00 for unaltered dogs and \$20.00 for altered dogs, and this includes a \$10.00 late fee. Registrations may be made by mail or in person at the Town Clerk’s office. Payments can also be made online for RENEWALS ONLY. Please call the Town Clerk’s office at 978-827-4100 extension 114 to verify that the current rabies certificate is on file.

The Parks & Recreation Committee has worked hard to bring back the Summer Concerts at the Bandstand in Winchester Park.

The next two concerts are scheduled as follows:

- Sunday, July 28 – featuring New England Swing Orchestra
- Sunday, August 11 – featuring Brother Maynard

These events will be from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Bandstand in Winchester Park. Starting at 5:00 p.m. food will be available through the Bresnahan Scouting and Community Center group. Special thanks to the sponsors – Ashburnham Cultural Council, Ashburnham Wine & Spirits, Athol Savings Bank, the Peppermint Pig. Rick’s Automotive, and Dimacale & Gracie Real Estate.

The next regularly scheduled Board of Selectmen meeting under the summer schedule will be held on Monday, August 12, 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

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:01 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