

TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MONDAY – MARCH 18, 2013 – 6:30 p.m.  
TRAINING ROOM – PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX

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This meeting was aired live on local cable television.

PRESENT – Board of Selectmen: Ed Vitone, Chair, Leo Janssens, Clerk, and Duncan Phyfe, Member.  
Also in attendance: Doug Briggs, Town Administrator and Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

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I. SALUTE THE FLAG

Ed Vitone 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

Mr. Vitone stated that they would make the following changes to the agenda:

- Under Presentations & Reports – reverse items B and C
- Under Old Business – Add (A) Letter from Historical Commission re: VMS Bldg.; Change Final Discussion on FY14 Budget to (B); Add (C) Letter to School District.
- Under New Business - Add (D) Warrant Articles.

***Duncan Phyfe motioned to approve the agenda as amended and was seconded by Leo Janssens. Motion carried.***

IV. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. Caucus Committee – Library Trustee

Mr. Vitone asked Linda Ramsdell, the Town Clerk to step up to the podium as the Caucus Committee representative. She stated that they had one candidate that has asked to be on the ballot for the Library Trustee position, Paula St. Laurent-Kuehl. She noted that the Library Trustees support placing Ms. St. Laurent-Kuehl on the ballot. ***Duncan Phyfe motioned to add Ms. St. Laurent-Kuehl to the ballot and was seconded by Leo Janssens. Motion carried.*** Mr. Vitone also noted that there was still an opening for a four-year Planning Board member and that anyone interested should please come forward.

B. Input from Gordon E. Erickson Memorial Fire Rescue Fund Committee – Joe Olivari

At this time Mr. Vitone asked Joe Olivari to the podium as a representative of the Gordon E. Erickson Memorial Fire Rescue Fund Committee. Mr. Vitone gave a brief overview and added that the Board would probably not make a decision on this tonight at this meeting. Mr. Olivari read his statement as follows:

*“It has come to the attention of the GEEMFRF that a committee has been formed to review the current status of the ambulance service provided to the citizens of Ashburnham. We applaud the effort and feel it is imperative that the citizens receive the best, most economical service possible.*

*The GEEMFRF committee insists that strong consideration is given to the service levels provided to the town. Any alternative option from private companies used during this evaluation must be competitively obtained and have service level agreements. Companies submitting proposals must provide references and financial information so it can be determined if they are a viable option that can be used in comparison to our current services.*

*The GEEMFRF was formed in 1970 for the sole purpose of supporting and improving the life safety services offered to the town. Our mission remains the same today. With that in mind, we offer our services to assist you in any way possible during this evaluation process.*

*Any findings from this evaluation must be shared with town citizens so they can decide what level of service they wish to receive when faced with a life safety issue.*

*Thank you. Joseph Olivari, James Roger, Ellen Holmes, Robert McGowan, Raymond Page, Jan Tracy.”*

C. Ambulance Study Report – Joe Oliveira

Joe Oliveira, a member of the Ambulance Study Committee, was asked to the podium to present their report to the Board. Mr. Oliveira began by stating that the Study's basic premise was to maintain the ALS coverage, keep the full-time paramedics, and maintain the current status and ambulance service. He stated that the Committee looked at all the options and did an analysis of 10 other towns, analyzed all the data and made a decision based on demographics, quality of response, considered all options on staffing and looked to the future. He added that they used the number of calls in 2012, 360, and noted that this number was steady year over year with no rise seen in the near future.

Mr. Oliveira stated that their "peak" time for calls was between 6:00 a.m. and midnight, Monday through Friday while the lack of response was during the "off-peak" hours from midnight to 6:00 a.m. Monday through Friday and on weekends. He added that there weren't many on-calls available with an overall decline in volunteerism as the trend. He stated that the Committee's key findings were that the openings were getting harder and harder to fill, with 34% not filled and the other 66% nearly half filled by one person who now has a full-time position in another town and probably won't be available for many shifts.

He stated that the Committee developed a number of options. He stated that Option 1 was what we have today, with not enough staff. He stated Option 2 would add (2) paramedics but would significantly increase our cost. He noted Option 3 added (1) paramedic and 24 hour shifts but would still rely on per-diem personnel. He stated that Option 4 was leaning towards relying on outside service and would still rely on per-diem plus a loss of some revenue. He did note that Woods was being used for reference purposes only in this analysis. He noted that Option 5 was basically the same as Option 4 but exchanges per-diem with Woods and would keep a full-time person during the peak hours. He stated that Option 5 maximizes flexibility although we do forfeit a portion of our revenue and the response time goes up to 12 to 15 minutes versus the current time of around 8 minutes.

Mr. Oliveira went on to Option 6 stating that they would use Woods 24/7 and maintain our current staff but would forfeit too much revenue. He noted that Option 7 was not financially sound and Option 8 was regionalization, which has had some support and could work down the road.

He noted that ultimately Options 3 and 5 were the most sound. He stated that Option 3 would add one full-time paramedic and would allow for quicker response time. He added that Chief Zbikowski says shifts would be filled and it would increase morale. He stated there would be 24 hour shifts and with per-diem and staff there would be more training. He did note that the "cons" with this option were that we would be paying for staff to sleep and it would be more costly to hire a person, around \$36,000 a year with a loss of revenue around \$10,000 and we would still be relying on per-diem and on-call paramedics.

Mr. Oliveira stated that with Option 5 we would maintain the current staff, with the full-time staff covering the 6:00 a.m. to midnight peak time. He added that this is financially more attractive with off-peak hours covered by the other company and ultimately could maximize regionalization. He did note the "con" which is an increase in response time. He added that with the full-time staff there was a greater degree of experience.

Mr. Oliveira stated that the final recommendation was not a unanimous one, with two out of the three members of the Committee recommending Option 5.

Mr. Vitone stated that Joe Oliveira did a great job with the presentation. Chief Zbikowski wanted to note that they have always responded to every call but just not always with a paramedic.

Leo Janssens noted that with the 24-hour shifts sleep is an important factor and he questioned whether the 18-hour shifts were legal. Mr. Briggs stated that it was legal in the Fire Departments.

Duncan Phyfe inquired if Option 3 was also approved by the State and Joe Oliveira stated that it was. Mr. Phyfe also questioned how the hiring process works and Chief Zbikowski stated that they have a screening process and that they would probably hire from inside.

Mr. Vitone stated that he felt the report was done professionally but that he was uncomfortable with the survey. He noted that the population of the towns in the survey were around 8,000 and he would like a survey done with a similar population as our Town, 3,000 below and 3,000 above. He noted he would also look at the economic factors. He stated that they should do the survey over with these towns and give the data to the Board of Selectmen as it comes in.

Mr. Vitone also mentioned that perhaps we should offer a higher rate of pay to the per-diem paramedics as the per-diem and on-call staff currently get paid less than the full-time staff. He questioned if they were paid more if it would change the response.

Mr. Vitone stated that he liked Option 4, paying the appropriate wage to the per-diem for peak days and contract out nights. He also noted that the report should be placed on the website which Mr. Briggs stated would be done.

Duncan Phyfe questioned the data on number of calls and Chief Zbikowski noted that the data was from January 2012 thru February 2013.

Ed Vitone stated that the Board has three options at this time. He stated that the first would be to accept the report with the exception of the survey; the second to make a decision on the option; and the third would be to take the report under advisement.

Mr. Phyfe stated that he wasn't ready to make a determination and wanted more analysis results. Mr. Vitone noted that they would not make a call on this until each member was comfortable in making a decision.

Leo Janssens had a written comment that he read at this time which included his thoughts on this issue. A copy is attached to these minutes. His report gave a history behind the ALS service and the Fire Department and what had transpired through the years. He ended his statement by stating that "outsourcing would take us back to 1970 service". He noted that he recommends that an outside service comes in to evaluate the entire department as he feels it deserves an intense study.

Mr. Vitone suggested that they do not accept the report tonight and also to wait on the budget as they need to explore everything and try to get as many statistics as possible. He added that they should look at west of Harvard, east of Petersham with a population of 3,000 below/3,000 above ours.

He then opened the floor for five minutes for questions. Marie Zbikowski stated that patient care should be considered. James Roger asked if this would go to Town Meeting for a vote and Mr. Vitone explained that it would through the budget process. Rick Sicard questioned if the survey was done with the same towns that were involved in the salary survey for the Chief and Mr. Vitone stated that they could go further east for the survey if needed but that issue was a totally different matter.

D. Briggs School Project Update

Mr. Vitone stated that he was not able to attend the last meeting so he had no update at this time.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. VMS Bldg. – Historical Commission Letter

Doug Briggs read the letter from Christina Sargent who is the Chair of this Commission. It read as follows:

*"On behalf of the Ashburnham Historical Commission, I am writing to you concerning the Veterans Memorial School.*

*The Commission was approached to determine if the Veterans Memorial School has historical and/or architectural significance, recognizing that the building was built as an addition to the*

*Dolly Whitney Adams School and was constructed in a short four month period in 1949-50 to help accommodate the growing student population.*

*We did discuss the building at our last meeting, and it was determined that the building does not have architectural significance. It may have been designed to have an additional story added to it but that was never done. It was modified a great deal over time so any significance is not there.*

*We were most concerned with the significance of the school with its association as a veteran's memorial, and the fact that many school children did attend school there, with emotional ties to it.*

*However, since the building is not in active use and seems to have outlived its usefulness, having become a financial burden for the Town, we are also in favor of the demolition of the building – with the stipulation that the land be returned to **green open space and not become a parking lot with paving**. We would also support another type of veteran's memorial in its place so as to honor the men and women who sacrificed their lives in service to our country.”*

Mr. Vitone stated that the Capital Planning Committee was in favor of demolishing the VMS Building and now the Historical Commission is also in favor. He asked the Board if they were ready to make a decision on this issue. **Leo Janssens made the motion to accept the option to demolish the VMS Building and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.** Mr. Janssens asked if they would need an article for Town Meeting to do this and Mr. Vitone stated that they would.

**B. Final discussion on FY14 Budget**

Doug Briggs stated that they had three outstanding issues; the Fire Department – Option 5; the indirect charges – direct billing departments for benefits, which after discussion with the Treasurer and the Auditor, they would leave it as is; and then the capital plan with a few changes. He stated that they want to keep it under the \$450,000 mark by taking out the DPW truck at \$15,000. He also noted that they would have a capital item for the AWRSD in the amount of \$13,956 and then in June of last year the Fire Dept. applied for a tanker grant which would be at a cost \$18,000 for the Town if we get the grant so we may want to add this to the Capital Plan. He also noted that he met with the IT Advisory Board and they supported the Capital items. Ed Vitone stated that they needed to go before the Capital Planning Committee again so they need one more meeting.

Duncan Phyfe inquired about replacing the ambulance and Doug Briggs stated that there was \$15,000 in the Capital Plan to repair the present ambulance and they would carry over the replacement out two years. Mr. Vitone stated the changes as follows: place the balance in the Capital Fund if we don't get the grant for the tanker truck, take out the truck for the DPW and repair the ambulance.

***Leo Janssens made the motion to accept the changes to the budget and capital plan as presented and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.***

Leo Janssens stated that Mr. Briggs should put in Option 3 from the Ambulance Study Report in the Fire Department budget as a place holder.

**C. Letter to School District re: Budget**

Mr. Briggs stated that this letter outlines Ashburnham's intent for a level net school spending budget, which would include minimum net school spending (state mandated) and contribution over the MNSS. He stated that he passed this by Sherry Kersey and that she had some concerns regarding the affect it would have on educating the children and the debt service. He reviewed the numbers stating that he added \$19,542 to our over net minimum amount. He stated that he would like the Board's approval to send this letter to the AWRSD and to Westminster. Mr. Vitone stated that he should send the letter as a “draft” to both Sherry Kersey and Karen Murphy for their comments.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Ashburnham Agricultural Commission appointment

Doug Briggs stated that they received a letter of interest from Gretchen Lafferty to serve on the Agricultural Commission and that he was asking the Board to approve her appointment. He also noted that the other members of this Commission were in favor of her appointment. ***Leo Janssens motioned to approve her appointment and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.***

B. Request by William J. Bresnahan Scouting & Community Center Board of Directors

Mr. Briggs stated that he spoke with Chief Barrett, Chief Zbikowski and Steve Nims and they were fine with this request. He stated that he also spoke with Dennis Driscoll who stated that the veterans were in favor of this relocation. ***Mr. Janssens motioned to approve the relocation of the Memorial Stone to the Bresnahan Center grounds and was seconded by Mr. Phyfe. Motion carried.***

C. Request for Special One-Day All Alcohol Liquor License

Doug Briggs stated that St. Denis Parish has requested a Special One-Day All Alcohol Liquor License for their St. Patrick Dinner to be held on Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. in the Father Lacey Hall and that both Chiefs had no issues with this event. ***Leo Janssens motioned to approve the Special Liquor License and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.***

D. Warrant Articles

Doug Briggs stated that there were 24 articles at this time and that today was the deadline for submission of articles for the May 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Town Meeting. He noted that Articles 1 thru 8 were listed as the Consent Calendar and are standard and usual articles. He noted the articles as follows:

- Article 9 – FY14 Budget
- Article 10 – School override
- Article 11 – FY14 Water Budget
- Article 12 – FY14 Sewer Budget
- Article 13 – Prior year bill (place holder)
- Article 14 – Capital Budget Items
- Article 15 – Capital Item for School
- Article 16 – Police Department weapons
- Article 17 – F150 Truck for Sewer Department
- Article 18 – Verizon – tax re-payment
- Article 19 – Stabilization Fund for Monty Tech
- Article 20 – Memorial in back of Town Hall
- Article 21 – Change in Wetlands Bylaws
- Article 22 – PILOT – TenK Energy
- Article 23 – Donation of property for conservation
- Article 24 – Fire Act Grant for tanker truck

Mr. Vitone stated that Article 24 could be placed in the Capital Plan. Mr. Briggs stated that he was expecting two citizen's petitions which are currently with the Town Clerk being certified. Mr. Vitone asked if an article should be placed on the warrant to demolish/raze the VMS Building and Mr. Briggs stated that he would add this to the warrant.

Mr. Vitone stated that they should ask the Light Board for a letter taking out Investar and the PILOT that was set up for them.

VII. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Doug Briggs stated that there are currently a number of openings on Boards and Committees in Town. He stated that there was (1) on Conservation Commission; (2) on Council on Aging; (1) Capital Planning Committee; (2) Agricultural Commission; and (1) on the Board of Assessors. He also noted that we are still looking for interested parties to serve on the Cable Advisory Board and that he wanted to thank Kyle Johnson for stepping up and volunteering to serve on this Board. Mr.

Vitone asked that Mr. Briggs reach out to residents on Route 119 to serve on this Board as they could benefit.

Mr. Briggs stated that the Capital Planning Committee has met and reviewed his proposed FY14 Capital Plan and there is general support.

He stated that Mike Salem is now the owner of So. Station.

He also noted that he was asking the Board of Selectmen to support his appointment of Linda Ramsdell as Town Clerk effective April 30, 2013. *Ed Vitone motioned to support the appointment of Linda Ramsdell as Town Clerk and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.*

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 4, 2013 – Regular Meeting

*Leo Janssens motioned to approve the minutes, as presented, from the March 4, 2013 Regular Meeting and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.*

XI. BOS CORRESPONDENCE      None

X. APRIL MEETINGS and EVENTS

Mr. Janssens read the list of meetings and events as follows:

Mon., April 8	10:00 a.m.	Council on Aging	Lower Level – Town Hall
	6:30 p.m.	Conservation Commission	Lower Level – Town Hall
Tues., April 9	6:00 p.m.	Water/Sewer Commission	Lower Level – Town Hall
Wed., April 10	5:00 p.m.	Board of Assessors	Assessor’s Office– Town Hall

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Janssens read the announcements as follows:

Town Clerk Reminders:

- **Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup>** – at 5:00 p.m. – Last day to file objections or withdrawals of nomination papers to the Town Clerk.
- **Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup>** – Final Registration for the Town Election and Special State Primary – Town Clerk’s office – 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- **Dog Licenses** are now available at the Town Clerk’s office. Fees are \$10 for altered dogs and \$15 for unaltered dogs. Please bring in current rabies certificate. If licensing by mail, please include check, rabies certificate, and a self-addressed envelope and mail to Town Clerk’s Office, 32 Main Street, Ashburnham, 01430. **NEW THIS YEAR-** online payments can be made for dog licenses **RENEWALS ONLY**. Please call Town Clerk’s office first at 978-827-4100 ext. 114 to verify that a current rabies certificate is on file. Complete the information online and the dog license will be mailed.
- On Tuesday, March 26<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 p.m. in the Senior Center, the Lamoureux-Fletcher Funeral Home will give a presentation for seniors on funeral pre-planning and a check list on what needs to be done (if possible) ahead of time to make things easier for family members.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Selectmen will be held on Monday, April 1, 2013, at 6:30 p.m. in the Training Room at the Public Safety Building.

XII. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT (5 minute limit)      None

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

*At 8:19 p.m. Mr. Janssens motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Mr. Phyfe. Motion carried.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator