
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES

MONDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2014 – 6:30 P.M.
TRAINING ROOM AT PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

This meeting is aired live and taped for local television.

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 6:30 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Leo Janssens took a moment to announce that former Police Chief Ronald LaPlante passed away on Friday, October 3rd. He noted that Ron LaPlante was the Town's Police Chief for 24 years and added that he was a good man.

II. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT (5 minutes limit)

Pixie Brennan noted her concern regarding the cameras that were installed at Winchester Park and the fact that they weren't working. Doug Briggs noted that the camera that was installed there never worked right and that it would be replaced. Ms. Brennan noted that kids were at the park smoking, etc. and it is a concern. She also noted that one of the cameras wasn't working up at the Water Tank. Mr. Briggs stated that he was aware of this and that both cameras would be repaired. Leo Janssens noted that Mr. Briggs would follow up on this.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

IV. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. Anne Gobi – Candidate for State Senate

Anne Gobi, candidate for State Senate, began by expressing how sorry she was about the fire in Ashburnham that took place on Friday, September 26th on Wilker Road. She expressed her gratitude to the first responders.

She stated that she has been a State Representative since 2001 and is now running for Brewer's seat as State Senator. She noted that the Pipeline is a major issue and that she is against it. She stated that we should give the public information as to what are the needs for this pipeline. She stated that Secretary Mauve Bartlett has sent a letter regarding this issue and the State will follow up and is waiting and watching. She added that there is a lot of State land in Conservation which is a critical concern.

She noted that the numbers in local aid are starting to go up and the 90% reimbursement for the regional schools is something that she will continue to fight for if elected. She added that she has worked closely with a lot of the regional, agricultural schools.

Leo Janssens inquired about her stand on gas taxes. She stated that she voted for it because there's a need for infrastructure in Massachusetts. She noted that there's a \$20M deficit for roads and bridges and this is tied in with the gas tax.

Leo Janssens inquired about money for roads, noting state cuts where towns have to raise their taxes in order to get things done. Ms. Gobi stated that the government has cut back in personnel and there is an extremely short road construction period in Massachusetts. Mr. Janssens asked if they do comparisons with other states and Ms. Gobi stated that they do and mentioned the Development Center in Templeton, noting that Massachusetts is the only state with one of these facilities still open. She added that it would be closing next year. She also noted that Massachusetts is a model as we have for example, a lot of land with conservation restrictions.

Bill Johnson noted that the cost to do the roads is high due to prevailing wages. He also noted that the people who lost jobs in Templeton were transferred somewhere else so there was no savings.

Ms. Gobi stated that in the paper the other day they noted that the National Grid rates were going up by 33% and she has reached out to them as there was no public input on this. She noted that she is still working on this.

Bill Johnson asked where she stood on the Common Core issue and she responded that she was opposed.

Leo Janssens stated that it would be nice to see Ms. Gobi in Town if she's elected and she stated that she feels it's important to be involved and that Steve Brewer has been a wonderful mentor. Mr. Janssens thanked Ms. Gobi for attending.

V. OLD BUSINESS

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Citizen Concern - Pipeline – Kinder Morgan

Lindsey Sundberg was present and asked how the Town would comment on the Northeast Energy Direct Project Overview process that she handed out to them. She suggested that we send everything that we have generated from the Town to them, at ferk.org. She also asked that the vote from the Special Town Meeting be sent as well. Ms. Sundberg noted that the Board of Health was discussing this tonight at their meeting and that she would like to see this all posted on our website. She asked if Doug Briggs had attended any meetings and he stated that he had not. She suggested that he go to the meetings.

B. Review and Vote – October 28, 2014 Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles

Leo Janssens stated that the warrant articles are all contingent on Free Cash being certified. Mr. Briggs stated that notice was sent out and the warrant closed on September 25th and that we received eleven articles. He proceeded to review each article.

Article 1 – Prior year bills for Sewer Assessment charges

Article 2 – Pay sick leave buyback cost associated with employment retirement (he noted that long-time employees are starting to retire.)

Article 3 – Pay unused vacation leave benefits for former Fire Chief

Article 4 – Road improvements (we have done a fantastic job on the roads)

Article 5 – Post employment medical costs

Article 6 – Transfer balance of funds from Art. 2 of the STM on 10/29/13 to Capital Fund

Article 7 – Transfer funds to 250th Celebration

Article 8 – AWRSD Pellet Burner (for Overlook, they may use their Stabilization Fund for this)

Article 9 – Citizen Petition – Gas Pipeline

Article 10 – Transfer money to Capital Fund

Article 11 – Transfer money to Stabilization Fund

← Only if over-abundance
← in Free Cash.

Mr. Briggs stated that as of today the Free Cash amount looks like \$270K.

There followed some discussion as to which articles should be kept on the warrant.

Duncan Phyfe asked Doug Briggs to talk with Ralph Hicks about Article 8 just to be sure that it will not be needed and in the meantime to keep it on the warrant. After some discussion, Mr. Briggs stated that there would be nine articles total. Leo Janssens noted that Mr. Briggs would have to work the figures on the remaining 9 articles.

Steve Coswell and George Cornwall of the 250th Celebration Committee were present and gave the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator a brief report on the funds that they presently had available for the events. They stated that they were only looking for \$16,400 for this article and noted that this is an expensive endeavor. Leo Janssens suggested \$18,000 that would come out of the \$35,000 under Article 6 of the warrant and that they would then allocate the remaining \$17,000 for the roads.

Nick Davis made the motion to recommend articles 1 through 9 and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.

Bill Johnson inquired as to when the Free Cash would be certified and Mr. Briggs replied either tomorrow or the day after and then to the DOR in 10 days.

C. Vote to approve posting of Warrant for November 4, 2014 State Election

Doug Briggs stated that the Board of Selectmen needed to vote to approve the posting and then to sign the warrant. Leo Janssens read as follows:

“To the Constable of the Town of Ashburnham

Greetings:

In the name of the Commonwealth, you are hereby required to notify and warn the inhabitants of said town who are qualified to vote in the State Election to vote at

Precinct 1

John R. Briggs Elementary School
96 Williams Road

on TUESDAY, THE FOURTH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2014, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. for the following purpose:

To cast their votes in the State Election for the candidates for the following offices and questions:

SENATOR IN CONGRESS FOR THIS COMMONWEALTH
GOVERNOR AND LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR FOR THIS COMMONWEALTH
ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR THIS COMMONWEALTH
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THIS COMMONWEALTH
TREASURER..... FOR THIS COMMONWEALTH
AUDITOR..... FOR THIS COMMONWEALTH
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS..... THIRD DISTRICT
COUNCILLOR SEVENTH DISTRICT
SENATOR IN GENERAL COURT WORCESTER, HAMPDEN, HAMPSHIRE & MIDDLESEX DISTRICT
REPRESENTATIVE IN GENERAL COURT SECOND WORCESTER DISTRICT
DISTRICT ATTORNEY..... MIDDLE DISTRICT
REGISTER OF PROBATE..... WORCESTER COUNTY

QUESTION 1: LAW PROPOSED BY INITIATIVE PETITION

QUESTION 2: LAW PROPOSED BY INITIATIVE PETITION

QUESTION 3: LAW PROPOSED BY INITIATIVE PETITION

QUESTION 4: LAW PROPOSED BY INITIATIVE PETITION”

Duncan Phyfe motioned to approve the warrant for the State Election and was seconded by Nick Davis. Motion carried.

VII. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Mr. Briggs began by stating that he received a request from the Fire Department for the Gordon Erickson Fund to purchase a stakes basket for the ATV that was approved at the last Annual Town Meeting at a cost of \$670.00. He stated that this was requested by Captain Rekos and Lieutenant Plant. ***Nick Davis motioned to approve this request and was seconded by Duncan Phyfe. Motion carried.***

Mr. Briggs also announced that the Nashoba Boards of Health would be offering flu shots to all residents on Tuesday, October 14th from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. upstairs at Town Hall.

He noted that the water main replacement was complete on Williams Road and that they were doing Holden Street. He stated that the good news is that they didn’t have to move the asbestos pipe and that once they are done there, then they move on to 800 feet of Turnpike Road which will be done with the extra funds. He noted that they have patched Williams Road for the winter also with the extra funds and in the spring would reclaim and pave Holden Street, Williams Road, Westminster Street and Turnpike Road.

He stated that E. Rindge Road would be overlaid next week from Cross to Young Road.

Mr. Briggs stated that he and Steve Nims met with Mayor Mark Hawke and his team to discuss the extension of our sewer agreement that expires on June 30, 2015 and the proposed sewer plant upgrades. It was agreed that both entities are seeking to extend the agreement.

He stated that Cushing Academy was requesting that we look at making Pleasant Street one-way and that they would be meeting with the Selectmen on October 20th to discuss this. Leo Janssens stated that this type of action would need a town meeting vote.

He stated that he was still waiting to hear about the \$12,500 state grant application that was submitted to do a level 2 audit of town buildings. He noted that the audit of the library should be done in the next few weeks. The ultimate grant is for \$150,000 and the Town would need to use less energy by 20% for the next five years. With the grant the Town would make some upgrades in the Town Hall, Library and even Overlook.

Mr. Briggs noted that both he and Sylvia have been working on the warrant for the Special Town Meeting to be held on October 28th. He also noted that he has been working with the Department Heads and Committees on FY16 capital needs.

He stated that Comcast was the only respondent to the RFP that was issued for the Cable Contract with both Ashburnham and Westminster. He stated that Attorney Bill Solomon is working on negotiations with Comcast.

He noted that the screening committee for the Fire Chief met on September 30th to interview three candidates and will be meeting the following day with the final three candidates and once they are completed the Committee will choose their final three for him to interview.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 15, 2014 Minutes – Regular Meeting

Leo Janssens motioned to approve the minutes from the September 15, 2014 Regular Meeting and was seconded by Duncan Phye. Motion carried. Nick Davis was not in attendance at this meeting.

IX. BOS CORRESPONDENCE

X. OCTOBER MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- Wednesday, October 8th @5:00 p.m. – Board of Assessors – Assessors office at Town Hall
- Monday, October 13th – COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY
- Tuesday, October 14th @6:00 p.m. – Water/Sewer Comm. – Lower Level Town Hall

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.
- October 15, Wednesday – Final registration for the State Election. Registration of voters at Town Hall, Town Clerk’s office 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- October 17, Friday – Final registration for the Special Town Meeting. Registration of voters at the “Public Safety Building, Dispatch Center, 99 Central Street”, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Please note location is different.)

- October 28, Tuesday – Special Town Meeting 7:00 p.m. at Oakmont Regional High School Auditorium, 9 Oakmont Drive.
- November 3, Monday – 12:00 noon, last day for filing applications for absentee ballots for voters who will be out of town for the State Election.
- November 4, Tuesday – State Election – Polls open at 7:00 a.m. and close at 8:00 p.m. at J.R. Briggs Elementary School Gym, 96 Williams Road.
- Dog fines of \$25.00 per dog will be mailed soon to all those who have not yet licensed their dogs. This fine is in addition to the licensing fee with late fee. Please call the Town Clerk's office at 978-827-4100 Ext. 3 if you have any questions.

The next scheduled Board of Selectmen meeting will be held on Monday, October 20, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. in the Training Room at the Public Safety Building.

Trick or Treat will be on Friday, October 31st from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Chapel and Lawrence Street will be closed to through traffic. Donated candy can be dropped off at the Public Safety Building and will be distributed to those homes on Chapel and Lawrence.

XII. SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT (5 minute limit)

Leo Janssens stated that he wanted to comment on the fatal fire that occurred a week ago Friday. He stated that he was amazed at all the public emergency employees and their response. He noted in particular Captain Bresnahan who was calm and professional as well as the dispatcher. He noted that he could not commend them enough and that the citizens of Ashburnham should be proud. Duncan Phyfe stated that everyone was very professional. He noted that contributions for the Rhodes family have been coming in and that this is why living in a small community is a great thing.

Pixie Brennan noted her loss some years ago and how everyone donated to help them out after they lost everything in a fire. She noted that it would be good to contribute clothes, gift cards and checks.

George Cornwall announced that on October 18th at 6:00 p.m. there would be a spaghetti supper at the Ashburnham Community Church and that Senator Brewer would be in attendance.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:55 p.m. Leo Janssens made the motion to enter into Executive Session to deliberate upon matters which, if done in open meeting could detrimentally affect the position of the Town regarding collective bargaining (both pending and ongoing) and strategy with respect to contract negotiations for non-union employees and to reconvene in open session only to adjourn. Nick Davis seconded.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:31 p.m. Duncan Phyfe motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Nick Davis. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Turcotte, Assistant to the Town Administrator