

Minutes of January 18, 2006  
Meeting of the Ashburnham Municipal Light Plant  
Present Commissioners: George Ainsleigh, Kevin Lashua,  
Stan Herriott, Manager  
Absent Richard Ahlin  
The Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Chairman Ainsleigh opened the meeting and called for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Lashua moved the agenda and Commissioner Ainsleigh seconded it. The vote was unanimous.

Chairman Ainsleigh asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2005 and December 12, 2005 meeting. Commissioner Lashua made the motion and it was seconded by Commissioner Ainsleigh. The vote was unanimous.

A discussion was held on the 2006 budget, which had been reviewed in November but no official vote was taken. The Commissioners present felt that it was prudent to wait on the final vote on the budget until Commissioner Ahlin was present. Manager Herriott agreed, however, said that he needed some authorization to begin spending funds. The Commissioners agreed to allow the Manager to expend one twelfth of the proposed budget, and would hold the remainder for discussion for the meeting scheduled for February 15, 2006.

Manager Herriott gave a final report on the 2005 budget. The higher than expected energy costs caused our power budget to finish out at nine percent over budget. Due to reduced spending in other areas the over all budget finished out at four percent over. The receipts finished out at one percent under what was projected. The overall budget deficit was two hundred and forty seven thousand two hundred and two dollars (\$247,202.00). Manager Herriott said that even though we raised the PPA charge by two and three tenths cents beginning in September we could still not catch up with the rising cost.

Manager Herriott gave the Commissioners a draft report that will appear in the 2005 Annual Town Report. He mentioned that the accounting figures were listed as 2003 and 2004, because 2005 figures will not be available until March and the Town insists on having the final report no later than the end of the month.

Manager Herriott gave the Commissioners the proposed Board meeting schedule for 2006. He kept it to the third Wednesday of the month and left the two summer meetings in the schedule, but they may be suspended.

Manager Herriott gave the Commissioners a chart representing the total sales in dollars and Kwh's for the years 2002-2005. Kilowatt hour sales tracked above the 2004 usage which the largest differences being reflected in June and July which represent increased usage of air conditioning. Manager Herriott said that if all the proposed projects got built Ashburnham will probably transition from a winter to a summer peaking system in the next couple of years.

Cash tracked as expected until July when prices began to rise dramatically. As we begin to increase the rates through the remainder of the year we saw an increase in the cash receipts as well. The average rate for all rate classes for the year was 12.8 cents however, the average rate rose to 14.8 for the last couple of months of the year.

The Commissioners reviewed the load growth chart produced by MMWEC for Ashburnham, while over all sales were up, the month of December showed a lower than expected usage.

Manager Herriott brought to the Commissioners a request to do bill inserts. He said we are going to do a February bill insert with the Good Neighbor Energy Fund. We have requests from the Planning Board, Rails to Trails, and the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission for the Ashburnham Septic program. The Commissioners approved all three bill inserts.

Manager Herriott mentioned that he had the NEPPA dues bill which was \$2,500.00. He asked the Commissioners if they would like to continue our membership to NEPPA. The Commissioners said that they did not feel that we were getting the type of value for the money. They voted to discontinue Ashburnham's membership.

Manager Herriott said that he was finally able to get the State Fire Marshall's report on the Stowell Road fire. The report indicated that the cause of the fire was undetermined. This finding allowed the Manager to send a notice to close the claim outstanding with the insurance trust. It is expected that there will be no further action on this issue.

Manager Herriott said the Town has requested the Light Department to install lighting on Oakmont Drive, which the Town has agreed to pay for. Manager Herriott talked with the Superintendent as to how it will be done. The school would like it to be underground, however overhead would be cheaper. Also the Town is planning to cut the trees on the south side of the road to allow for more sun light to get to the road surface, probably not too much will happen until spring.

Manager Herriott said that the Town Administrator is now doing a monthly report and he had included it in the Board package. The Commissioners agreed that they would like to have it included.

Manager Herriott offered a copy of the Town Meeting Warrant for the meeting on January 19, 2006. He mentioned that there were no articles on the warrant that affected the Light Department.

Manager Herriott reviewed with the Commissioners the proposed rate study from BHLeymaster Inc. He felt that since we are in a time of increasing electric costs and we had not done a study since 1995 it would be prudent to complete the study this year. The cost is in the area of \$9,000.00 to \$12,000.00. The Commissioners agreed this would be a good idea, and felt that we should go forward with this. Manager Herriott said that he would move the study forward.

An update was given on the MASSPOWER law suit. There has been some progress in this suit but we still have not reached a settlement to date. Recently there has been some change of ownership, so it appears the new owners seem to be willing to at least begin to talk. As of right now the trial is still scheduled for September.

The Manager said that Dave Goodall is still interested in the lineman's job. He has come in on his own time to meet the lineworkers and has recently brought me his second class review for Groton which was very favorable. Manager Herriott said that he had spoken to Commissioner Ahlin about going ahead and offering the job to Dave and he felt ok with that. It was agreed to go ahead and make the offer. Manager Herriott said that he would prepare a letter.

Manager Herriott also reported on Matt Wilson's finishing line workers school at the National Grid School. The report from the instructors on Matt was very favorable. Matt also said that he thought the school was worth while and he had learned a lot through hands on training. Manager Herriott said that going forward with the plan to move Matt into the Line Department as of July 1, 2006. He felt that he should begin to raise his pay to reflect his increased training and responsibility. Manager Herriott said the plan would be to move Matt to \$22.00 per hour on July 1, 2006 contingent on his getting his CDL license by then.

Manager Herriott gave a report on the Automated Meter Reading System. The purchase order has been issued and we are waiting for the meters to arrive. We have started taking some on line training and will soon begin to formulate a plan to begin work. He still expects the process to take most of the summer to complete.

The radio system order has been placed and we are waiting for the radios to come in so we can begin to install them. We have been told by Smith this should happen soon.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Lashua, and seconded by Commissioner Ainsleigh. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

George Ainsleigh,  
Chairman