

Minutes: Selectmen's Meeting – Monday, February 13, 2012

Present: Chairman Walter F. Alterisio and Daniel F. Devlin, Clerk;
Procurement Officer and Member Kenneth J. Leva absent

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00PM with quorum present. Representative Sheila Harrington visited the board and provided update on the state budget projections – she advised that last year she provided update after house ways & means as so much can happen until that point. She advised they're closing a couple of homeless veteran's shelters and looking at reducing meals & wheels. Chairman Alterisio advised that for us in town have taken tact at championing situation – above 70% of households in Dunstable don't have kids in the school system – have a transportation program which is self-funded as the service available LRTA didn't work for Dunstable's seniors \$34K from LRTA to \$9K with independent service. He noted there's issue with RMV retesting @age 75 which will mean more individuals needing transportation. He indicated he hopes that the evaluation is community based to make sure that it works for the particular community.

Representative Harrington advised that the funding for the Meals on Wheels is being cut or proposed for cuts in the present version of the budget. Chairman Alterisio indicated that Dunstable needs some form of a program but on smaller version than most community programs. Chairman Alterisio noted needs in other communities as they compare to Dunstable's needs – our programs are modest. 3rd rail – regionalization of emergency 911 – 3rd rail was with the Chiefs – NMCOG was one of the 1st to engage in the research into program – resistance is from the professional groups of the individual towns who don't want to give up control. Program would include Tewksbury, Lowell, Chelmsford, Westford, Tyngsboro, Billerica, Dracut, and Dunstable. Chairman Alterisio noted that group should be made up of like type communities who have the same type of issues – like Dunstable, Pepperell, Groton, Ayer & Littleton. He reported on the model used – Maryland and how successful it worked there. Discussion continued on the regional arrangement that Dunstable has operated in over the years – Board tends to be for the project whereas the emergency departments don't want to consider – seem to think they'll be giving up the control. Chairman Alterisio noted they've tried to convey upon the chiefs that it's their responsibility to make sure it works. Chairman Alterisio noted some of the bonuses of consistency for training, etc. Representative Harrington indicated she'd talk with Eileen Donahue to make her aware of that project so she can update. Representative Harrington advised on the facilities in some of the area towns.

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Discussion continued on how the budget affects all areas of the operations – school, public safety, etc. They noted the accomplishments GDRSD Superintendent Joe Mastrocolla made with the budget and school operations.

Chairman Alterisio addressed the issue with utilities responses during October snowstorm – can appreciate that must address need with nursing homes, hospitals, etc. Representative Harrington advised on a meeting with representatives of National Grid and issues with the time they were reportedly putting in which included their travel time to and from their housing in Rhode Island. She noted that there were as many out in Dunstable as Lowell – and her argument that it is much more detrimental to residents of Dunstable than Lowell. In Dunstable don't even have water if the power is out. Discussion continued on the possibilities for local electric with Groton. She reported on some of the discussions she's had with National Grid – and her argument and efforts will continue to push them to respond. Chairman Alterisio advised that National Grid has been asked to do an evaluation of the town depicting where we're at risk and how it can be corrected to avoid same type of the destruction as have encountered in past two years.

Sheila advised that additionally part of the crews they had weren't trained or authorized to address the problem and National Grid's position that it won't happen again. Selectman Devlin asked whether there was any movement to put something into place to make sure that utilities are made to address. Representative Harrington advised on Rule 28 – if can get it to pass, can't bury in committee- Fitchburg wants to get a punishment in place for the utilities. She indicated she might try to form a central Massachusetts caucus – if have caucus all supporting Rule 28 can create a much more effective movement. Chairman Alterisio – this particular issue is a community issue, population at risk and approaches that can create savings across the board for communities with regional approaches. Chairman Alterisio advised that Dunstable is going to implement a lot of the recommendations made by DOR in their financial management review conducted this summer. Chairman Alterisio reported on the Governance Committee's work and plans for presentation to the Boards & Committees and implementation process. Chairman Alterisio indicated the group is working toward scheduling their presentation for Saturday, 24th of March.

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Representative Harrington advised that financially Massachusetts is doing better than the majority of the states – but need to look at how to run it better. She advised that she said when she campaigned, and everyone on the floor would take her head off, she opted out of the state pension because she feels it's a huge conflict of interest to participate in the state pension because how can you . Selectman Devlin reflected on another state rep's comment that until they're ready to bite their own heads off, we won't see pension reform.

Chairman Alterisio reported that the governance committee has approached him relative to a proposed meeting with the Selectmen for the 27th to meet with the Selectmen and then the 3rd for presentation to the town. Chairman Alterisio advised he'd like to see some dialogue with the committee – board could meet with them during the week. Spoke with Ken as to his availability and Chairman Alterisio's gone back to the committee and suggested like the 7th or 9th of March. He worried that waiting too late would limit Advisory Board's ability to review and fit within the budget. He's concerned with any attempt to jam things through especially with budgets being proposed. Maybe if make presentation on the 24th. Selectman Devlin agreed there's no urgency want to take baby steps and make sure that everything's worked out and Chairman Alterisio felt trying to implement these things this year is putting too much pressure. Chairman Alterisio advised that basically everyone on the committee is available during the day. Selectman Devlin agreed and should be available.

Chairman Alterisio referenced e-mail message from Andy Gould relative to training he needs in Vadar – 1 day @\$790 and time adjustment for training, Board approved and secretary was asked to research where funding might come from. The Board questioned what kind of time and skillset he's going to be looking for to fill the accountant's assistant position. He also reported that he'd like to put the audit out for bid and board concurred that it made sense, as DOR financial management review had recommended.

Chairman Alterisio referenced request for signature on letter of agreement with NMCOG thru DRLT grant for 50 hours (from February 14th thru December 1st of technical assistance for investigating and following up on municipal energy options. Chairman Alterisio advised on possibilities including solar farm within town – Dunstable could bring something to the table in the form of property which could accommodate a solar farm. Selectman Devlin provided motion to approve and sign agreement for study. Chairman Alterisio will take it with him.

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Selectman Devlin reported he's agreed to represent the Selectmen at the Swallow Union reading day. Minutes of 2/6 will be held for approval by full board.

Chairman Alterisio reported he'd had a conversation with the Fire Chief – fire over by McLoon's – appears we've dodged bullet – incident last night that required assistance from Pepperell, Tyngsboro as well as all Dunstable firefighters. Circumstances under investigation – raised issue that there are a number of situations in town caused by storm with debris that is causing havoc – Chief is concerned about areas along 113 that have debris piled which could be a major safety issue if someone were to throw a match. Chairman Alterisio has asked Chief to take a look at and recommendations on how to best address all the paperwork has been submitted for reimbursement but no check received yet.

Schedule Dana for next Tuesday about damages at Town Hall that need to be addressed or if he's not available that evening, have him get together with Chairman Alterisio via telephone.

Treasurer's warrants were reviewed and signed, members were reminded to stop in for payroll warrants on Wednesday and the meeting adjourned at 8:20PM after appropriate motion and vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Danice N. Palumbo,
Board Secretary