

Town of *Dunstable*
Joint Meeting of the Selectboard & Advisory Board
March 23, 2015
Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827

Convened: 7:03 pm

Present: Walter F. Alterisio, Chair, Kenneth J. Leva, Daniel F. Devlin, members; Madonna McKenzie, Town Administrator; Dana Metzler, Chair, Harold Simmons, Kevin Welch, Pamela Crocker, Christine Muir, Advisory Board members; Alan Chaney, Conservation Commission

Joint Discussion of the FY2016 Budget

Greetings and Salutations from the Selectboard to the Advisory Board

The meeting was jointly brought to order by Mr. Metzler and Mr. Alterisio. The two boards started off by noting that Annual Town Meeting will be on May 11th. Approximately two weeks prior to that date a public hearing on the topic of the budget will occur. Ms. McKenzie took the opportunity of the two boards being present to reiterate each board's role in the budgetary process. The Board of Selectmen are responsible through the warrant articles for the budget while the Advisory Board is responsible for making recommendations for what the budget should be.

➤ *MS4*

From that point of clarity, Ms. McKenzie reported to the boards that she recently discovered that the ongoing MS4 cost will be \$20,000 for this budgetary period. She noted that this will have to be a warrant article.

➤ *Ice & Snow Removal Deficit*

Ms. McKenzie informed the board's costs for snow and ice removal continue to escalate as the season winds down. She went on to explain that she had consulted with the Town Accountant on the issue of paying for ice dams and other winter related expenses. There was some talk about the final number for snow, but Mr. Metzler noted that until all the bills have come in and been processed, knowing that figure for certain will be difficult. He suggested waiting until the bills are paid before worrying about figuring out how the town will pay for them before the Annual Town Meeting. Ms. Muir inquired as to the manner by which the town will pay for any deficit in the snow budget. Mr. Metzler suggested that the town should pay the full amount out of free cash and reimburse free cash with any expected FEMA/MEMA funds. The Board noted some concern about the impact on the budget as well as possible depletion of free cash.

➤ *Budget Timeline & Warrant Articles*

The boards moved on to the timeline for the budget and warrant articles. The Board noted that what has been done so far by Ms. McKenzie, working jointly with both boards and in consultation with various department heads, appears to be relatively "there" on the formation of a budget. The departments appear comfortable with the numbers so far with the exception of Fire. The Fire Chief has asked to come in and discuss the matter with the Board which they have agreed to do.

➤ *TADS Funding*

Groton and Dunstable have both committed to help fund TADS this year. Dunstable is only contributing \$2,000 whereas Groton is funding \$8,000 and the GDRSD is funding \$2,000. It was noted by the board's

Approved and adopted 4/15/15

that there is no direct oversight by the town on this budget. Advisory asked whether this will be a reoccurring expense for the town. The Board suggested that the town would see how it goes and determine if it should continue to be funded moving forward. Mr. Metzler inquired about who would make that ultimate determination. Ms. McKenzie stated it would likely be the next Town Administrator. The board's then moved on to discussion as to where the funding for this commitment would come from. Mr. Metzler noted the mental health line under the Board of Health could be a good place to put this. Advisory counseled that this expenditure should be under Board of Health (distinct from Nashoba) and not as a direct article on the warrant.

➤ *Furnace & Transfer Station*

The board's discussed the matter of the furnace and the necessary repairs that need to be conducted. Ms. McKenzie noted that the number has been substantiated and that she has sought bids from several companies. From there the boards turned to the matter of the Transfer Station and how to support it moving forward. Alternatives were discussed including the fact that more citizens have been moving to curbside trash services. Due to this decrease in public use, subsidies for seniors may need to be decreased. There was also discussion about the need for a fence around the Transfer Station property. The two board's then briefly discussed the concept of the town providing curbside trash pickup services. Currently private operators supply this service to residents, but many municipalities do this as a public service. The last time the town considered doing curbside trash pickup it would have cost around \$500,000 per year. It was speculated that the cost has likely increased since then.

➤ *Chapter 70 & Cherry Sheet Funds*

Ms. McKenzie informed both boards that the town will be getting money for Chapter 70 and some funding for veterans this year. Both of these are due to changes in what Dunstable receives in Cherry Sheet funds.

➤ *Increase from Last Fiscal Year on Budget Total*

Ms. McKenzie noted to both boards that the budget last year was approximately \$8,131,888. The proposed budget for Fiscal Year 16 will be about \$34,149 more than Fiscal Year 15. That total figure will be around \$8,166,037 or so.

➤ *Water Project*

Mr. Metzler started out this topic by expressing the opinion that the town should champion the Water project now, and put off some of the other priorities for a period of time (around 2 years or so). He feels confident that to do otherwise would mean all such projects would go down in flames. Ms. McKenzie noted that a representative from the Commonwealth will be meeting with the Treasurer/Collector to discuss the rate and funding for this project. Ms. McKenzie tentatively thinks this rate will be about 3.5 percent. In the meantime the Water Commission will be meeting with engineers to firm up the cost of the project.

The boards then turned to the discussion of repayment for borrowing for this project. It was noted that there will be a betterment charge along with the debt for users of the water system, while the people not on the system, who will pay just the debt and therefore less. The Board expressed belief that there is no alternative. Regardless of how creative you get we must look at what is realistic for the town to afford. The Board further elaborated that the impact for the town must be made clear, so that people aren't just seeing a multimillion-dollar infrastructure project.

➤ *Senior Housing Project's Impact on Water*

The boards moved on to the topic of senior housing and the impact that such development would have on the water system. Mr. Metzler noted that the town will own the senior housing development and it will be managed by the town. Unlike the MUD situation that was previously planned. The Board further noted that there remains a possibility of someday running the water system to GDRSD. The regional school district has experienced issues with the water system to the High School as it currently exists. The Board expressed confidence that there are some real opportunities for development of the situation. The boards then discussed the idea of a community wide informational event and agreed that such an event should be conducted so that the public will better understand what the town needs to do here.

➤ *Police Budget/Cruisers*

Moving on from the water project the Advisory Board requested the Board recommend action in regards to the police budget specifically the two cruisers that are being requested this year. The Board expressed opinion that some thought will need to go into this matter. Currently the town needs to work with the number that it has so far and see if the cruisers will fit.

➤ *Closing of the Warrant & By-Law Changes*

Ms. McKenzie informed the boards that the warrant will need to be finalized and closed soon. She also noted that the Zoning By-Law changes are currently in front of the Planning Board which will be holding a hearing on the matter on April 13th. Mr. Metzler determined that an Advisory Board member should attend the hearing. The Board also agreed that it should have a presence there as well.

➤ *River Street Survey*

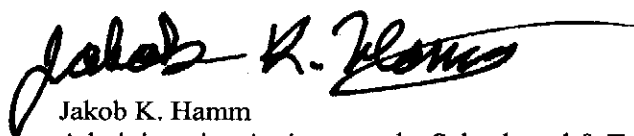
The Boards turned to discussion of the Conservation Commissions request that a survey for River Street that totals \$17,500 be conducted. Conservation feels that this survey is a necessary expenditure. The Board discussed the matter and how it possibly related to the issue of placing the Salt Shed approved at the Special Town Meeting in October 2014. Both boards also discussed the general cost for surveys, and why they need to do this now. It was noted that this survey is pertinent because, as noted by Mr. Chaney, the property is larger than originally thought when the land was purchased. It was supposed to be about 36 acres, but now appears to be in excess of 50 acres according to Mr. Chaney. The boards agreed that it is necessary for the town to ascertain exactly how many acres it owns.

➤ *Audit Recommendations*

Ms. McKenzie informed both boards that the auditor's report for this year had arrived in her office. She then elaborated that the report isn't stellar, but the town is not in trouble. There are a few things, she said, that the auditors recommend for improvement. This deals with a few different areas. With this in mind, the Advisory Board formally requested the Board provide it with copies of the report. The Board agreed to do so and directed Ms. McKenzie to fulfill their request.

A motion to adjourn the Board of Selectmen at 8:00 pm was made by Mr. Leva and seconded by Mr. Devlin. It passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by



Jakob K. Hamm
Administrative Assistant to the Selectboard & Town Administrator

Approved and adopted 4/15/15