

**MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
March 10, 2009**

Present at the meeting that was held at the Town Building were Chairman Thomas Ruggiero and Selectmen Stephen Dungan, Kathleen Farrell, and Jason Robart,

Selectman Ellen Sturgis was absent.

Also present were Town Administrator William Wrigley and Administrative Assistant Susan McLaughlin.

Chairman Ruggiero called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Public Input

None.

Chairman's Comments

Mr. Ruggiero expressed the sadness of resident and activist Jim Ogg's sudden passing away, noting his contributions to the town and his character as "a perfect gentleman." He will be missed.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Wrigley reported on the following topics:

- The Dept of Public Utilities (DPU) has approved two Harvard Acres residents as "interveners" and the Town as a "limited participant" in DPU hearings to set a new rate schedule for the Assabet Water Co. He said there has been a concern expressed in public that Assabet Water 's plan to provide water to the Lower Village is driving the rate increase to Harvard Acres, stating that this is incorrect and that there has never been an interdependency between Harvard Acres and the Lower Village.
- The Nashoba Regional School District budget for FY 2010 is good news, with only a 3.36 percent increase to Stow's assessment. The Minuteman Regional assessment will be \$95.0k more than originally known. In summary, FY 2010 will be a tight budget with level services but without the need for an override.
- The Lake Boon Commission filed an appeal of the Conservation Commission's denial of a drawdown. This raises the issue of legal funds for possible litigation between two Town Boards. LBC Chairman Conray Wharff will submit a written statement to the Board.

Meeting Minutes

February 24, 2009: Mr. Dungan moved to accept the 2/24/09 minutes, as amended; Ms. Farrell seconded; and all voted in favor.

Public Safety Officials Visit

The officials in attendance were Health Agent Jack Wallace, Public Safety Officer Sgt Tim Lima, Fire-Rescue Chief Mike McLaughlin, Police Chief Mark Trefry, and Superintendent of Streets Mike Clayton.

Chairman Ruggiero opened the discussion by reading a letter of commendation from Medical Reserve Corps area representative Lisa Jackson to Stow's MRC leaders for their outstanding work in the December ice storm.

Mr. Dungan asked the officials to comment on what was working well and what could be improved, based on their experience of the ice storm response.

Chief McLaughlin said the Town's strengths were the regular meetings and cooperation within the local emergency planning team (LEPC), the communications center established at the Police Station, the SwiftReach emergency communications phone system, and the Medical Reserve Corps which, once activated, set up the shelter at Hale School and freed up the chiefs and Mr. Clayton.

He recommended adding emergency heating at Hale and an emergency generator at the Town Building to provide water here and at the Fire Station.

Chief Trefry agreed that SwiftReach was highly effective, reaching 90 percent (2,500) of the total numbers in the system. He said the teamwork to create the messages and time them effectively was excellent. He also noted Hudson Light and Power's good response to emergency power problems.

Mr. Wallace said the LEPC is now working on an All Hazard Plan and an Incident Command System and he requested a representative from the Board, stating that Mr. Ruggiero's presence helped manage the emergency response. Mr. Ruggiero volunteered to represent the selectmen going forward.

Chief McLaughlin then discussed the three Mutual Aid programs in which Stow participates: Fire District 14 of 30 area communities, District 8 with Harvard and Bolton, and a state-level task force for backup in specific areas, such as structure fires and brush fires. Each community pays its own salaries for fires, recognizing that all communities need help from their neighbors. For EMS/ambulance services, the sending community does the billing. He said that Mutual Aid has been a huge success from the fire-rescue perspective.

Assabet River and the EPA/DEP Permit for Marlborough

Resident Allan Fierce told the Board that Stow needs to be prepared to appeal an unfavorable decision by the EPA and DEP on Marlborough wastewater discharge. There is only a 30-day period to file. Mr. Fierce suggested forming a town study committee now to work with the Organization for the Assabet River (OAR).

Mr. Wrigley replied that Conservation Committee member Ingeborg Heggeman Clark had drafted a response, which Town Counsel Jon Witten reviewed and filed, and he suggested that they leave the process as is. There was general agreement by the Board that Ms. Heggeman Clark can work with Mr. Witten and Mr. Wrigley to take the necessary steps.

Visit from Senator Jaime Eldridge and Representative Kate Hogan

Senator Eldridge said that he and Representative Hogan were visiting Boards of Selectmen in their districts to introduce themselves and learn about the pressing issues in the towns.

Rep. Hogan spoke of the economy being in a "freefall" and said they are very aware of the economic problems, such as the burden of gas taxes, for residents. She called it a "sobering

experience” to look at the budgets for FY 2011-2012 and said it will take at least three years to recover.

Sen. Eldridge acknowledged that the recent revelations on pension abuses created the perception that there is not enough oversight at the state level. He said the federal stimulus may provide some funds to NRSD special education. The local option to increase meal taxes would hardly benefit Stow, however.

Both officials said they were looking at regional transit authorities to help mitigate possible hikes in gas taxes and turnpike tolls.

Rep. Hogan said that she and U.S. Rep. Tsongas attended today’s Agriculture Day event at the State House and she was pleased to learn that there was a 30-percent increase in farms in the state in recent years.

Town Administrator’s Performance Review

Mr. Ruggiero announced that the Board had conducted its annual review of Mr. Wrigley’s performance. On a scale of 1 to 4, the Board’s collective rating was 3.6, between good and excellent, trending toward excellent.

Dissolution of the Affordable Housing Partnership

Mr. Dungan said that the Board was considering dissolving the town’s Affordable Housing Partnership. It has been struggling to find members, with only two of five slots filled, since the Municipal Affordable Housing Partnership came into being. Connie Kruger at DHCD told him that many communities are moving from partnerships to trusts.

Mr. Dungan moved to officially disband the Affordable Housing Partnership and to recognize its members’ service; Mr. Robart seconded; and all voted in favor.

Ms. McLaughlin will notify the current members.

Town Planner/Community Development Manager Position

Mr. Robart and Mr. Dungan, in their respective roles representing the Board on the Land Use Task Force and Master Plan Committee, said they reached out to other constituencies on whether the town needs additional resources for planning and community development. They found that there does not appear to be support for hiring a staff person for several reasons: people do not see an immediate need; economic times are a factor; there is concern about overlap with other resources; and project-specific needs would not be met by a generalist.

Mr. Dungan said he heard two suggestions for alternatives: pre-qualify experts in different areas of expertise and increase the Selectmen’s engineering budget to cover FY 2010 needs.

Mr. Robart said the Town’s vision needs to have actionable items or it will sit on the shelf, as others have. And a project-specific approach does not work well. It’s where we are now. It is the Selectmen’s responsibility to ensure that the Town’s vision is implemented but the Board does not have the resources to do this now. Staff members have full plates.

They recommended that, given the lack of widespread support, the Board should not ask the Town Administrator to include \$70,000 for this position in the FY 2010 budget but instead should commit to revisiting this when the Master Plan is complete.

Mr. Ruggiero and Ms. Farrell concurred. It was agreed that no vote was needed and that Mr. Wrigley could remove the line item from his budget.

Liaison Reports

Master Plan

Mr. Dungan said that he, the Town Clerk and Ms. Sturgis were reviewing the municipal org chart he did several years ago for possible updates. The Master Plan Committee members are dividing up sections of the plan to write.

Land Use Task Force

Mr. Robart said the task force will come to the Board next month to present their recommendations before Town Meeting.

Assabet River Rail Trail

Mr. Dungan said that he and fellow committee member Scott Arsenault met with US F&W regional director Libby Herland on routing the Rail Trail from White Pond Road through part of the Assabet Wildlife Refuge. This would provide the final link in the rail trail and draw visitors to the new refuge center. They are excited about working together.

Affordable Housing

Mr. Dungan said the Housing Trust is presently interviewing consultants to update the Town's Planned Production Strategy for DHCD.

Capital Planning

Ms. Farrell updated the Board on capital project requests and the committee's upcoming meeting schedule.

At 9:12 pm, Mr. Robart moved to adjourn; Mr. Dungan seconded; and all voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan McLaughlin
Administrative Assistant

Approved as submitted, April 28, 2009