

1 Board of Selectmen

2 **Town of Upton**



3 **Massachusetts**

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6
7 Meeting Minutes of February 1, 2011

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9 *Location:* Fire & EMS Headquarters, 20 Church Street – 2nd floor training room.

10
11 *Present:* Chairman Michael E. Goodwin, Selectman Robert J. Fleming, Selectman Kenneth
12 E. Picard, Town Manager, Blythe C. Robinson, and Department Coordinator
13 Karen L. Varney.

14
15 The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm.

16
17 Chairman Goodwin informed the residents that at the completion of the Board’s regular
18 meeting, they will be going into Executive Session under M.G.L. c. 30A, section #3, Collective
19 Bargaining and section #6, to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real estate.

20
21 *Motion # 1:* Selectman Picard motioned to approve the meeting minutes of January 20, 2011.
22 Second: Selectman Fleming, unanimous: Chairman Goodwin.

23
24 Town Manager Blythe Robinson gave an overview of the FY12 budget for specific Town
25 Departments:

26
27 As part of the process to propose a budget to the residents of Upton for the fiscal year that begins
28 on July 1, 2011, Ms. Robinson copied for the Board various sections of the budget that are the
29 responsibility of the Board of Selectmen.

30
31 The goal in preparing this year’s budget is to maintain the current level of services provided to
32 the residents in the most economical manner possible. Departments have been encouraged to
33 look critically at all areas of their budgets and maintain or reduce funding levels where possible,
34 but also to be realistic about their needs next year in order to maintain services. It is admirable
35 that the Town was able to “level fund” budgets over the past two years, but in some cases that
36 has put a strain on the Town’s ability to offer the same level of service, or necessary items have
37 been deferred.

38
39 The challenges in assembling the budget for the upcoming year are as follows:

- 40
41 • Wage increases that were deferred until the last two weeks of this fiscal year will need to
42 be absorbed in FY 11/12. These increases for both years range from 4% - 6% depending
43 on the employee group.

- 44 • Health insurance costs continue to rise. The Town was assessed a 13.0% increase on
45 January 1, 2011 that had not been budgeted, and half of this increase affects the next
46 fiscal year. In order to be better prepared in next year's budget the Town Manager has
47 included that 13% for six months, and assumed a further increase of 5.0% beginning
48 January, 2012.
- 49 • Water Enterprise fund rates for water usage has not proved to be sufficient to support the
50 requirements of the fund throughout the year. We will need to find the funds to balance
51 the current fiscal year's receipts, and presently under discussion are rate increases for this
52 fund and for wastewater next year. Despite these it will still be necessary to supplement
53 revenues with support from the general fund for both enterprises.
- 54 • Although it is not known at the time this report was prepared, the dollars needed to
55 support the regional school district will be a significant impact to our budget next year.
56 We will not be able to count on federal stimulus dollars that balanced the current year's
57 budget, and we have yet to learn how much more the MURSD School Committee will
58 need for next year. The school stabilization fund that was established last year and
59 funded with over \$500,000 may be an important part of balancing our budget.
- 60 • We have just received our local aid estimates for next year as predicated on the
61 Governor's proposed budget. Local aid for Upton is due to decrease \$46,030, and local
62 aid for the MURSD School district would be reduced by \$150,611. The details of these
63 changes are attached.
- 64 • The Town's capital needs need to continue to be addressed. While good strides were
65 made last year to replace equipment in the public works divisions, there are road projects
66 to be addressed, development of the third water source, renovation of Town Hall and
67 other important matters to be handled. The Town Manager is working closely with the
68 Capital Budget Committee to determine a roadmap for how and when these will be
69 financed, but this may also be that the Town has done a better job at defining what they
70 are (the pavement management plan and drainage plan being good examples).

71
72 Details of the budgets:

73
74 Accountant:

75 The line items that are the responsibility of the accountant show an overall decrease of 2.38%.
76 This is primarily due to a reduction in the line item for unemployment that for the past several
77 years has been overfunded. This savings is mitigated by an increase in maintenance fees for
78 the VADAR accounting system, an increase in audit fees as plans to send out an RFP to
79 change audit firms next year, and an increase in wages of 1.35%. The wage increase is less
80 than other departments because the Town Accountant has reached the top of his grade and his
81 salary increase has thus been limited.

82
83 Animal Control:

84 The Animal Control budget is increasing by 4.04%, which is all driven by wage increases. No
85 changes are proposed in the expense line items.

86
87 Board of Selectmen

88 The line items for the Board of Selectmen include Selectmen, Bonding, Cable Advisory,
89 Miscellaneous, Town Building and Town Counsel. The recommended budget has been

90 increased by 7.42%. The largest driver of this increase is a \$100,000 or 12.5% increase in
91 insurance. This is generated by rises in health insurance costs, and a 2.0% increase in non-
92 health insurance related lines of coverage. Without the increase of the insurance line item,
93 these line items would actually have decreased 0.32%. The major changes this year are:
94

- 95 • Reduction in telephone expense of \$12,000
- 96 • Reduction in printing by \$2,000
- 97 • Reduction in unemployment compensation by \$8,000
- 98 • Increase in wages of 2.41% (no increase has been calculated for the Town Manager
99 pending the outcome of the performance evaluation process)
- 100 • Increase in Town Manager's Expense of \$2,650 to account for the cost of the town
101 provided car and to attend a professional conference next year
- 102 • Increase of \$7,200 in Selectmen's expense to pay for membership in the Blackstone
103 Valley Economic Development Commission.
- 104 • Increase in Town Counsel expense of \$1,000 (over the total of the budget this year of
105 \$14,000 plus the \$20,000 added at the November STM)

106
107 Cemetery Commissioners:

108 The Cemetery Commissioners have proposed an increase in their budget of \$1,000 to
109 \$37,000. The line item in the budget for cemetery pays for work performed by the
110 commissioners to maintain the grounds and take care of either burials or the interment of
111 ashes. The actual amount spent can be impacted by weather and the actual number of burials
112 that take place each year. Because they overspent their appropriation last year of \$36,000 by
113 \$6,000 and through 6 months of this year they are already at 54% expended they have
114 requested additional funding to address the likely shortfall they would have next year.
115

116 The expenses for materials to maintain the cemetery come from their interest account and sale
117 of lots. They are considering modifying how they allocate the funds from sale of lots to direct
118 more monies to the accounts they can spend from in order to make up for several years of
119 significantly lower interest earnings that have impacted their overall financial position.
120

121 Code Enforcement:

122 This budget has been level funded with the exception of wage increases for the personnel
123 assigned to the division.
124

125 Conservation Commission:

126 The Conservation Commission budget is increasing by 46.98%. This is all due to changes in
127 wages and personnel, and a \$2,000 increase in expenses to supplement the conservation fund.
128 The personnel changes are twofold. A new conservation clerk was hired this year, at a rate
129 higher than the previous clerk which impacts the budget by \$1,346. In past years the
130 commission has retained a conservation agent paid for almost entirely by wetlands filing fees.
131 The previous agent left in 2010, and we were not able to find a qualified replacement agent for
132 the hourly rate of pay that was offered. The Commission is interested in sharing an agent's
133 services with another Town and in this case it is projected to cost \$40/hour or \$20,800 per
134 year. The general fund budget represents 50% of that cost, and the commission anticipates the
135 ability to fund the other half through filing fees. If moved forward with this plan it will be

136 necessary to monitor their revenue to make sure they receive these revenues, or revise the plan
137 going forward.

138
139 Council on Aging:

140 The budget for the COA is increasing by 1.01%. The significant change to the COA budget
141 for next year is as proposal to increase the hours of the driver/custodian from 25 to 30 hours to
142 allow greater use of the dial a ride van to accommodate the needs of our seniors. The current
143 year's budget had included higher utility costs with the assumption that the Town was going
144 to be able to rent additional space. That did not come to fruition, nor does it look like it will
145 next year. Thus the line items for electricity and gas were reduced. With the van in place it
146 will reduce the line item for transportation as our costs to make the van available are lower
147 than hiring this service has been in the past. Those decreases have mitigated the average wage
148 increase of 4.5% for all employees, and the increased hours for the bus driver.

149
150 Personnel Board:

151 This budget is proposed to increase by 48.61% or \$4,399. The primary reasons for the
152 increase are twofold. First, the Board is considering expanding the longevity bonus program
153 to employees who reach their 5th and 25th year anniversaries. Currently the unionized
154 employees receive longevity payments at more levels of service than do non-union
155 employees. Secondly, the Board is considering adding a pool of funds to afford the
156 opportunity for meritorious bonuses to employees based upon their performance reviews. The
157 other line items in their budget have not changed.

158
159 Veteran's Agent:

160 The budget for Veteran's Agent is increasing by 63.45% due almost entirely by a request to
161 increase benefits from \$2,000 to \$20,000/year. As the Agent's attached budget analysis
162 indicates we now have three persons receiving benefits and it is likely the Town could add to
163 that over the next year. Funding the budget at this amount will hopefully avoid the need for
164 mid-year transfers as happened in January. The other change to this budget is a modification
165 to the salary range for the position recognizing that the level of effort has increased from an
166 average of 4 hours to 7 hours/week. That will result in a slight overall decrease to the wages
167 for the position as one person is now performing what used to be two roles.

168
169 The Department Managers who each spoke in support of their budgets were: Seema
170 Kenney, Personnel Board Chair, Margaret Laneri Veterans Agent and Chris Scott, Conservation
171 Commission Chair. Selectman Fleming complimented Seema Kenney for her 16 years serving on
172 the Personnel Board. The Board will be reviewing the Public Safety Budget's at their February
173 8th budget meeting.

174
175 *Town Manager's Weekly Report*

176 Warrants:

- 177 • Payroll: \$ 78,172.11
- 178 • Expense Warrant: \$1,214,947.05

180 The expense warrant was much higher than usual due to quarterly payments to the two
181 school districts, the retirement system payment, amounts due to contractors for snow removal
182 and materials, and payment due for two of the four DPW trucks purchased this year.
183
184

185 Information/Follow Up:

- 186 • This week the Office received notice of a filing on behalf of Katherine Woodin of a
187 notice of Appearance and a Request for a Non-Criminal Hearing regarding the licensing
188 by the Board of Health of horses at Ms. Woodin's property at 4 Westborough Road. The
189 Board has issued licenses in the past two years for which Ms. Woodin has not picked
190 them up or pay for them. There have also been issues regarding the number of horses
191 that can legally be kept on the land owned by Ms. Woodin. This information has been
192 forwarded to the MIIA claims department and will keep the Board updated.
- 193 • Snow storms continue to be a common theme this year, the impact of which we are
194 monitoring closely. A policy has been put in place a process by which employees are
195 directed to follow the lead of the Governor when he makes a determination that there is a
196 significant storm and non-essential employees should report to work later or not at all.
197 With the most recent storm the DPW did blow a transmission in one of the 1-ton trucks
198 that will require some dollars to fix, otherwise the DPW is keeping up with the minor
199 repairs that equipment has needed to keep running. It is evident at this point in the winter
200 that we will exceed our snow budget of \$210,000.
- 201 • It has been determined by the Board of Health and the Building Inspector that there is a
202 property on North Street with an occupied building that does not have the appropriate
203 permits and approvals for either the building or a septic system. The relevant
204 departments are investigating this matter.
- 205 • In the last meeting packet there was a letter from FEMA regarding updates to their flood
206 maps that affect the Town. Since that time we have been contacted by FEMA offering
207 assistance with drafting the necessary warrant articles and by-law language to enable the
208 Town to decide whether or not to accept such changes and be able to continue to
209 participate in the national flood insurance program. The Town Manager has forwarded
210 those to the Planning Board Chair who will investigate the matter further.
- 211 • The VFW is holding its 2nd Annual Chili cook off on Saturday, February 12th.
- 212 • Despite much time spent on the issue over the past few years there still seems to be a
213 discrepancy over whether or not permits are required for inspection of work that is being
214 done at the railroad yard which is currently under construction. Ms. Robinson has been
215 in contact with the Town Attorney to resolve the matter so that appropriate inspections to
216 determine that all life/safety codes can be met are done.

217
218 The Board spoke of declaring a snow emergency. The Town Manager will submit the
219 snow removal numbers to date at the February 8th meeting and call for the snow emergency at
220 that time.
221

222 Regarding Sweetwilliam Farm, the Town Manager informed the Board that she met with
223 members of the open space and the Grant application has been submitted to the State.
224

225 According to the budget calendar the Board considered voting to open the warrant for the
226 May, 2011 Annual Town meeting.

227
228 Motion # 2 Selectman Fleming motioned to open the May 5, 2011 Annual Town Meeting
229 Warrant and to close the Warrant on March 15, 2011. Second: Selectman Picard, unanimous:
230 Chairman Goodwin.

231
232 In reference to the request from Tri-Valley Crisis Intervention program asking for a
233 donation, both the COA and the Board has agreed not to make such a donation this year. Director
234 Jamie Gardner provided the results of a survey of the Tri-Valley towns and whether or not they
235 were planning to make donations. Most have elected not to. Selectman Fleming says he does not
236 see the need for funding and noted only 5 Towns out of 25 are participating.

237
238 The Board will be meeting on Saturday February 12th at 9:00am to start the dialog in
239 reference to the Town Manager's performance review.

240
241 The Board spoke of revising the Town Renovation Committee – Mission Statement,
242 as the committee has completed the work it was charged to do since the Town will be going
243 forward and recommending the town fund the schematic design phase. The Mission Statement
244 will be emailed to the Board to amend.

245
246 Correspondence reviewed by the Board:

- 247 1. Memorandum from Kopelman and Paige Re:
- 248 ▪ Green Energy Projects
 - 249 ▪ Addressing Private Nuisance claims.
 - 250 ▪ Solar and Wind Energy Facilities.
- 251 2. Letter of interest to serve on the Land Stewardship Committee.
- 252 3. Letter of resignation from Barbara Morgan, member of the Cable Advisory Group.
- 253 4. Correspondence from BVRSD re: Superintendent's Annual Gourmet Dinner.
- 254 5. Copy of a letter from the Inspector of Buildings Patrick Roche Re: ADA compliance.

255
256 Motion # 3: Selectman Picard motioned to appoint Matthew Ronzio to serve on the Land
257 Stewardship Committee until May 2011. Second: Selectman Fleming, unanimous: Chairman
258 Goodwin.

259
260 Motion # 4: Selectman Fleming motioned to accept with regret, the resignation of Barbara
261 Morgan as a member of the Cable Advisory Group. Second: Selectman Picard, unanimous:
262 Chairman Goodwin.

263 Additional members are needed to serve on the Cable Advisory Group and it was
264 recommended by the Town Manager to place an ad in the local paper.

265
266 In closing, Margaret Laneri, Upton's Veterans Agent, asked the Board for consideration
267 to make some improvements to her Main Street office, noting that the office is tired and worn
268 looking and in need of some upgrades. In response the Board was agreeable to some minor
269 improvements.

270

271 At 7:30pm the Board motioned to enter into an Executive Session under MGL c. 30A,
272 sec. 21 exception #3, Collective Bargaining. The Board will reconvene their regular meeting and
273 enter into another Executive Session. Poll taken: Robert Fleming aye, Ken Picard aye, Michael
274 Goodwin aye.

275
276 At 7:51pm the Board reconvened and motioned to enter into another Executive Session
277 under MGL c. 30A, sec. 21 exception #6, to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of
278 real estate. The Board will reconvene their regular meeting and motion to adjourn. Poll taken:
279 Robert Fleming aye, Ken Picard aye, Michael Goodwin aye.

280 .
281 At 8:15pm the Board reconvened.

282
283 Motion #5: Chairman Goodwin motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:16pm. Second:
284 Selectman Picard, unanimous: Selectman Fleming.

285
286 Respectfully submitted,

287
288 Karen L. Varney, Department Coordinator

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