

1 Board of Selectmen

2 **Town of Upton**



3 **Massachusetts**

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7 Meeting Minutes of February 8, 2011

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

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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.
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15 The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm and was mainly a budget workshop meeting
16 with the Public Safety Officials and Public Works.
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18 *Motion #1:* Selectman Picard motioned to approve the February 1, 2011 meeting minutes.
19 Second: Selectman Fleming, unanimous: Chairman Goodwin.
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21 Town Manager’s Weekly Report as submitted to the Board:
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23 Warrants:

- 24 • Payroll: \$ 73,907.99
25 • Expense Warrant: \$ 87,014.01
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27 Information/Follow Up:

- 28 • Managing continuous snow storms is the focus for staff this year. Public Works has put
29 in many hours this week plowing and sanding, followed by working to widen roads that
30 have become increasingly narrow with storm after storm and little melting. In general the
31 equipment is holding up and the Town mechanic is keeping very busy. Of growing
32 concern is the road salt supply. We are only receiving 1 load a day and at this point need
33 20 loads to fill the DPW shed. Ideally we will have a break in the storms soon and will
34 be able to catch up.
35 ○ With such a winter the office has had an increasing number of calls regarding
36 resident’s mailboxes that have been damaged and in need replacement. Up to
37 now the practice of the Town is to send out staff to replace boxes for residents.
38 Request that the Board consider the adoption of a policy that allows the Town to
39 fairly compensate residents whose boxes are directly hit by plows and put the
40 responsibility on the homeowner for installation. The plan is to speak with DPW
41 and draft a sample policy that will be brought back to the Board for discussion.
42 ○ The Fire and Water/Sewer Departments are working hard to keep up with clearing
43 fire hydrants. The staff is able to clear hydrants, and the Fire Department has

44 bought and installed stakes that reach above the top of the hydrants so they are
45 more easily found.

- 46 ○ As many residents & businesses are doing public safety is keeping a close eye on
47 the roofs of our municipal buildings. We have had leaks in the Fire Department,
48 Town Hall and the Risteen Building and are working to address those. The Police
49 Department with help from Fire has been shoveling portions of the PD's roof to
50 help runoff and weight load, and also monitoring the COA.

- 51 ● Negotiation of the successor license for Charter Communications are moving forward
52 and have been assisted by the PEG Access Provider in developing a budget of our
53 personnel and equipment needs, and have furnished them to our attorney for review. The
54 license actually expired on December 31st, but Charter had mutually agreed to a three
55 month extension. The plan is to meet with them soon and begin discussions. Besides
56 funding the Town's costs to manage our cable programming, at the same time focusing
57 on the customer service issues the Town has had in an effort to improve that experience
58 for our residents. If residents have any comments or concerns that we can bring forward
59 in our discussions with Charter to help them understand where they need to make
60 improvement, please forward those comments to the Town Manager.
- 61 ● The regional dispatch study project between the Towns of Upton, Uxbridge, Douglas,
62 Sutton and Northbridge will be kicking off on Monday, February 14th. The Town
63 Manager, Police Chief and Fire Chief will be attending meetings in Douglas along with
64 the consultant selected for the study to begin this process in earnest.
- 65 ● The process to acquire a portion of Sweetwilliam Farm is underway. Meeting with the
66 Open Space Committee have met and reviewed the steps necessary to accomplish this
67 task with the Town Attorney. Once the Town gets the green light from the State that they
68 have also signed the LAND grant contract and the Town is then allowed to expend funds
69 related to the purchase and start to do so. The Town is looking at a possible closing date
70 this April, due to the large amount of snow on the ground may make this difficult.

71
72 *FY 2011/2012 Budget Transmittal Memo submitted by the Town Manager:*

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74 As part of the process to propose a budget to the residents of Upton for the fiscal year that
75 begins on July 1, 2011, Town Manager Blythe Robinson submitted to the Board for discussion
76 various sections of the budget that are the responsibility of the Board of Selectmen.

77
78 The goal in preparing this year's budget is to maintain the current level of services
79 provided to our residents in the most economical manner possible. Departments have been
80 encouraged to look critically at all areas of their budgets and maintain or reduce funding levels
81 where possible, but also to be realistic about their needs next year in order to maintain services.
82 It is admirable that the Town was able to "level fund" budgets over the past two years, but in
83 some cases that has put a strain on our ability to offer the same level of service, or necessary
84 items have been deferred.

85
86 The challenges in assembling the budget for the upcoming year are as follows:
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- 88 • Wage increases that were deferred until the last two weeks of this fiscal year will need to
89 be absorbed in FY 11/12. These increases for both years range from 4% - 6% depending
90 on the employee group.
- 91 • Health insurance costs continue to rise. The Town was assessed a 13.0% increase on
92 January 1, 2011 that had not been budgeted, and half of this increase affects the next
93 fiscal year. In order to be better prepared in next year's budget Ms. Robinson included
94 13% for six months, and assumed a further increase of 5.0% beginning January, 2012.
- 95 • Water Enterprise fund rates for water usage has not proved to be sufficient to support the
96 requirements of the fund throughout the year. There is a need to find the funds to balance
97 the current fiscal year's receipts, and presently open for discussion is a rate increases for
98 this fund and for wastewater next year. Despite these it will still be necessary to
99 supplement revenues with support from the general fund for both enterprises.
- 100 • Although it is not known at the time this report was prepared, the dollars needed to
101 support the regional school district will be a significant impact to our budget next year.
102 The Town will not be able to count on federal stimulus dollars that balanced the current
103 year's budget, and we have yet to learn how much more the MURSD School Committee
104 will need for next year. The school stabilization fund that was established last year and
105 funded with over \$500,000 may be an important part of balancing the Town's budget.
- 106 • Local aid estimates were just received for next year as predicated on the Governor's
107 proposed budget. Local aid for Upton is due to decrease \$46,030, and local aid for the
108 MURSD School district would be reduced by \$150,611. The details of these changes are
109 copied to the Board members.
- 110 • The Town's capital needs need to continue to be addressed. While good strides were
111 made last year to replace equipment in the public works divisions, there are road projects
112 to be addressed, development of the third water source, renovation of Town Hall and
113 other important matters to be handled. We are working closely with the capital budget
114 committee to determine a roadmap for how and when these will be financed. This may
115 also be that the Town has done a better job at defining what they are (the pavement
116 management plan and drainage plan being good examples).

117

118 Details on the budgets are as follows:

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120 Department of Public Works:

121 This budget is proposed to increase by 7.15% or \$68,351. The primary reason for this change
122 is a proposal that we include the salary for a full-time Director of Public Works at a rate of
123 \$90,000/year. The budget also still includes \$20,000 for the DPW Consultant. Depending on
124 when a director could be retained, this line item or that of the director could be reduced. The
125 position is included for a variety of reasons. Most importantly there are a number of
126 important projects and issues facing the Town (development of the 3rd water source, storm
127 water management, TIP project, other road projects and equipment replacement projects) that
128 need the attention of a full time director. It is anticipated that the requirements in the area of
129 water and sewer will continue to increase, and someone with expertise to manage them will be
130 important. Wages have been increased by 2.0% for the end of this year and again next in
131 accordance with the union contracts. In order to accommodate this increase the department
132 has taken a close look at their line items, and it was noted that some line items have been
133 reduced and others only increased modestly.

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Fire Department:

This budget is made up of emergency management, emergency medical services and the fire department.

- The emergency management budget has increased 2.15% or \$233. This is all due to an increase in the line item for wages. No changes are proposed in the program for this area.
- The emergency medical services budget is increased by 9.72% or \$15,607. The significant areas of change are in wages to pay for personnel to staff the ambulances throughout the year, and a new line item for fuel (\$6,000). Currently fuel for the ambulance has been paid for out of the Fire Department budget. In order to more accurately budget for expenditures where they occur, the Town Manager has asked Chief Goodale to submit his budget with this addition. Because fuel overall for the department was budgeted as much less than need this year, overall the line item is higher. The Fire Department budget has been increased 5.22% or \$29,643. The primary driver behind this is wage adjustments, particularly for the unionized staff which is 6% over both fiscal years. Also impacting this budget is an increase in the vehicle maintenance line item of \$5,500. It appears that in past years some annual maintenance has been deferred if it could not be done in house, and testing of equipment to ensure it is ready for heavy use when required was not done at all. The increase in this line item will allow us to address these matters and hopefully avoid more costly repairs or replacements.

Police Department:

The police department budget is increasing 3.85% or \$57,487, primarily due to wage adjustments as called for in the union contract. Chief Bradley has offset some of this increase by reducing the accounts for the education incentive program to be more in line with what was required in recent years. Again this year the budget includes the replacement of one vehicle, a 2077 Dodge Charger that has been the source of many repairs this year. If the Town continues with replacing only one vehicle/year, we can expect higher maintenance costs to keep vehicles on the road a little longer.

The Town Manager strongly recommended that for all the budgets next year to make a change in the way these budgets get approved at Town Meeting so to reduce the number of line items and aggregate funds into just two accounts – wages and expense. This has already been done for the Council on Aging, and there are several positive reasons to extend this practice to other departments. The department heads manage their budgets very closely and have been commended for doing so. Many budget line items are tight, even in a “good” year, and it can be even more challenging when the year is not good, such as the Town is experiencing now. By aggregating “expense” related line items all together, the department head would have a better opportunity to “manage” their costs and decide where to make adjustments that will allow them to stay within budget. This might also cut down on the need for special town meeting articles during the year, and the need for year end transfers between line items in all but the most critical situations. The level of detail now provided could still be included in the Finance Committee report so that residents have a thorough understanding of what their taxes are being spent for.

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181 The Board welcomed Police Chief Michael Bradley who presented his FY12 operating
182 budget (see brief detail above). In his summary Chief Bradley spoke of the need to replace 1
183 vehicle next year and noted that his vehicle has 121,000, miles and has transmission issues. Next
184 year he intends to request the replacement of two vehicles. The Chief also spoke of the EIP
185 (Educational Incentive Program) and his thoughts on incorporating an educational
186 reimbursement program subject to union negotiations. Regarding building maintenance, Chief
187 Bradley stated that the stucco exterior of the station is in need of repair along with exterior trim
188 and informed the Board he will be approaching the CPC for possible funding at Town Meeting.
189 Selectman Picard complimented the Chief on his presentation and the format of his budget
190 summary.

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192 Fire Chief Ron Goodale and EMS Director Brian Kemp also came before the Board to
193 present their FY12 operating budget (see brief detail above). Chief Goodale was well prepared
194 and went through his summary in great detail. Director Kemp gave his budget summary as well.
195 Mr. Kemp informed the Board that he is working with Central Mass Regional Planning (CMRP)
196 to set up GPS type maps which would indicate the exact location of the Town's fire hydrants.
197 CMRP has the equipment to install this information onto the dispatch system.

198
199 DPW Highway Supervisor John Johnson, Water/Wastewater Supervisor Ron SanSouci
200 and DPW Consultant Larry Bombara came before the Board and presented their FY12 budget
201 summary in detail (see brief detail above). Discussion regarding transferring the \$8,000 beach
202 program line item to Recreation took place and the Board concurred with this approach. Filling
203 the open DPW Director position was also discussed with a possible summer hiring once the line
204 item is approved by town meeting. DPW Consultant Larry Bombara confirmed that he would
205 stay on for a period of time to assist in the transition period of the new Director. Regarding the
206 Water Department, the Board noted the scheduled overtime in amount of \$18,000 and had a
207 conversation about the possibility of hiring another person which will enable the department to
208 stagger shifts. Mr. SanSouci said this person would be required to be certified and we have had
209 difficulty hiring people who are already licensed.

210
211 All 3 Department budget summaries are available in full detail for review at the Selectmen's
212 office.

213 In regards to a Snow Emergency Declaration, in past the Board of Selectmen have had
214 the responsibility under MGL Chapter 44, section 31D to declare a snow emergency and allow
215 the Town to over expend the available appropriation for snow and ice removal. With the hiring
216 of a Town Manager, this section of the law allows the Town Manager to make this declaration,
217 along with the Finance Committee. The Town Manager will make this declaration, and seek
218 concurrence of the Finance Committee at their meeting tomorrow evening.

219
220 At 8:28pm the board motioned to recess for 5 minutes.

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222 The Board reconvened at 8:32pm and began discussing the possibility of a Water &
223 Wastewater rate increase. At their meeting on January 18th the Board had begun discussion about
224 rate increases for both of these enterprise funds. DPW Consultant Larry Bombara gave the Board
225 a draft chart depicting options for a proposed FY12 Water and Wastewater rate increase. For

226 water, the target commitment of \$478,000 listed 4 options. After review of the information
227 gathered by Mr. Bombara and Mr. SanSouci, two members opted for the \$40 base with a 30%
228 increase in water usage rates estimating the revenue at \$477,000.

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230 Motion # 2: Selectman Fleming motioned to increase the Town's water rate with a \$40 base
231 charge and a 30% increase subject to review of the General By-Law by the Town Manager. New
232 rates will be effective with the fall 2011 billing. Majority: Chairman Goodwin.
233 Poll taken: Robert Fleming aye, Michael Goodwin aye. Ken Picard no.

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235 Next the Board reviewed the Wastewater rate options for increase to meet the proposed
236 FY12 target commitment of \$452,000. After consideration, the Board made a motion.

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238 Motion #3: Chairman Goodwin motioned to reset the guidelines for the Wastewater rates to 0-
239 6000 and >6000 with a 20% increase with the estimated revenue of \$362,000 subject to review of
240 the General By-laws by the Town Manager. New rates will be effective with the fall 2011
241 billing. Second: Selectman Fleming, unanimous: Selectman Picard.
242 Poll taken: Michael Goodwin aye, Ken Picard aye, Robert Fleming aye.

243
244 Last on the agenda, the DPW Consultant presented information to the Board in regards to
245 the recent findings in connection with access to the 3rd water source at the Richard Wellfield. It
246 appears that the area the Town has been using as an access to this site is in fact not on Town
247 owned land and may affect the cost of this project. Mr. Bombara displayed a map indicating the
248 road access to the 3rd Water Source and how it relates to the development of the project.

249 Mr. Bombara will be contacting the property owner to discuss obtaining an easement.

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251 Motion # 4: Selectman Fleming motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:35pm. Second
252 Selectman Picard, unanimous: Chairman Goodwin.

253
254 Respectfully submitted,

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256 Karen L. Varney, Department Coordinator

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