

Board of Selectmen

Town of Upton



Massachusetts

Meeting Minutes of March 1, 2011

Location: Fire & EMS Headquarters, 20 Church Street – 2<sup>nd</sup> floor training room.

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

Motion # 1: Selectman Picard motioned to approve the meeting minutes of February 15, 2011. Second: Selectman Fleming, unanimous: Chairman Goodwin.

Motion # 2: Selectman Picard motioned to approve the meeting minutes of February 12, 2011. Second: Selectman Fleming, unanimous: Chairman Goodwin.

Motion # 3: Selectman Picard motioned to approve the meeting minutes of February 17, 2011. Second: Selectman Fleming, unanimous: Chairman Goodwin.

Motion # 4: Selectman Picard motioned to approve the meeting minutes of February 26, 2011. Majority: Selectman Fleming.

Next on the agenda Chairman Goodwin gave an overview of the evaluation process of the Town Manager Blythe Robinson and why all elements of the Managers Act were being reviewed. Ms. Robinson was hired as Town Manager 10½ months ago to oversee all Town operations under control of the Board of Selectmen. Each Board member spoke of her job responsibilities and expressed praise for her ability to effectively communicate and working together with all town departments. She has gone beyond the normal for managing emergencies noting the recent incident of a gas leak at the Millhaus apartments. At the conclusion of the 45 minute evaluation, the Board listed six goals for Ms. Robinson;

1. Recommend a Town debt policy in concert with the financial departments.
2. If funded, manage the process to recommend the hiring of a Director of Public Works.
3. Investigate and recommend opportunities to provide town services on a regional basis.
4. Investigate the staffing and salaries of town departments and make a recommendation to the Board on whether to retain the current structures or change them.

44 5. Develop a more effective process for budget review of those departments under the Selectmen  
45 / Town Manager's authority.

46 6. Get State approval to access Town land that is land locked at the Town property lines of  
47 Upton, Northbridge and Grafton via the State Forest. The Town of Upton land could be used as a  
48 future cemetery.

49 Ms. Robinson was appreciative of the Board's comments and felt the goals were achievable and  
50 will give it her best effort.

51

52 At the Board's meeting of February 15<sup>th</sup>, Town Manager Blythe Robinson submitted a  
53 mailbox damage policy to the Board for their review and approval. After making some minor  
54 changes, this policy was presented again for final approval.

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56 *Motion # 5:* Selectman Fleming motioned to accept the Mailbox Damage Policy as submitted  
57 and recommended by the town manager effective September 1, 2011. Second: Selectman Picard,  
58 unanimous: Chairman Goodwin.

59 Ms. Robinson stated that the DPW staff has been out this week replacing some of the  
60 damaged mailboxes.

61

62 The Board reviewed the Town Hall Renovation's Mission Statement, modifying some of  
63 the content. It will be forwarded to the Renovation Committee and once they give their input, it  
64 will be sent back to the Board for final review on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

65

66 Town Manager Blythe Robinson gave the Board a draft of potential articles for both the  
67 Special town meeting and the Annual town meeting on May 5, 2011. The Personnel Board has a  
68 total of 9 articles plus 2 place holders. Selectman Fleming asked about consolidating some of  
69 these articles, in response Ms. Robinson said she had a conversation with the Personnel Board  
70 and they feel most of the Articles need to stand alone due to the detail of the article however a  
71 few housekeeping articles may be grouped together.

72

73 In regards to a letter the Board received last fall from Johnson & Borenstein, LLC, who  
74 represents Pulte Homes of New England, is formally requesting the Town to accept the Glen  
75 Echo subdivision (Howarth Drive and Francis Drive). Ms. Robinson will follow up with the  
76 Planning Board for their input. Selectman Picard, who is a former Planning Board Chairmen,  
77 gave an overview of the Street acceptance process.

78

79 Selectman Picard spoke of the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) proposed  
80 from Hartford Ave north to the Hopkinton line and the need to begin thinking about setting aside  
81 funds to help with obtaining the \$26,000 needed to pay for consulting and project start up cost  
82 for the grant requirement.

83

84 Also Selectman Picard noted that it will be necessary to start a funding mechanism for  
85 ADA Compliance. The Town Manager was asked to review all the budget accounts and balances  
86 for any possible funds that could be transferred for this use.

87

88 Town Manager Blythe Robinson gave a summary of the Noble Vista project agreement  
89 that was forwarded from Attorney Tallerman. Selectman Fleming stated that this agreement has

90 been an on going negotiation for 7 years and noted that the Boards of Selectmen during that time  
91 has made considerable concessions trying to work in partnership. The suggested changes were  
92 reviewed by each Board member.

93  
94 On page 2, # F, Selectman Picard stated that instead of Noble Vista paying for the complete  
95 intersection improvement for the Route 140/Maple Ave intersection, he recommended they only  
96 pay a portion of the design cost seeing the TIP program will be redesigning the area. The Town  
97 Manager will contact Beta Engineering in an attempt to find out a possible cost. This plan was  
98 welcomed by both Chairman Goodwin and Selectmen Fleming. Page 6, on the first paragraph,  
99 remove Director and insert Representative. On page 10 of this document phase 4 to be eliminated  
100 as long as the Building Commissioner is ok with this change. Also Noble Vista is to pay for the  
101 water connection from Northbridge.

102  
103 A request from Fire Chief Aaron Goodale to approve his recommendation of appointing  
104 4 call Volunteer firefighters was endorsed by the Board.

105  
106 *Motion # 6:* Selectman Fleming motioned to concur with the recommendation the Town  
107 Manager and Fire Chief Aaron Goodale in appointing Seth Grill, James Hill, Stephen Saucier  
108 and Zach Ward as call volunteer Firefighters for a probationary period for a minimum of one  
109 year, and to waive the 15 day requirement and act immediately. Second: Selectman Picard,  
110 unanimous: Chairman Goodwin.

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112 Town Manager's Weekly Report

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114 Warrants:

- 115 • Payroll: \$ 70,847.85
- 116 • Expense Warrant: \$ 798,047.05

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118 Information and follow Up:

- 119 • On Friday, February 18<sup>th</sup> there was a significant gas leak at Millhouse apartments that  
120 required a coordinated effort by Police, Fire/EMS and Council on Aging staff to evacuate  
121 the building to ensure the safety of all residents. The leak was caused by an icicle falling  
122 from the roof that hit the gas meter. The residents were relocated to the Upton Center,  
123 and the road was closed down until the gas could be shut off and provisions made to  
124 repair the line. There are a variety of reasons why this emergency went very well and the  
125 outcome was that no one was hurt and residents were returned to their apartments in a  
126 fairly short period of time. The Town Manager is very grateful for the donations of food  
127 by Dunkin Donuts and Blackstone Valley Tech, as well as the assistance from area  
128 departments to provide fire department backup and ambulances (8 in all). Staff will be  
129 using the lessons learned in this process to plan for possible future incidents. All in all  
130 we should be very proud of how well coordinated an effort this was and the work done by  
131 all to keep residents safe and the public out of harms way.
- 132 • The editing process for the Town Report has been completed and sent off to the printers  
133 so they can complete their job of printing and binding. We're looking into the possibility  
134 of the printer providing us a copy of the report that we can post to the website in the  
135 future so that people have more access to it.

- 136 • The deficit in the snow/ice account has increased as invoices from contractors have come  
137 in and we have had to reclassify some vehicle repairs that we've had to make due to the  
138 winter to the snow and ice account. The shortfall now stands at \$68,738.56. Although it  
139 is good news that the salt shed is full, the down side is that there is a further \$25,000 in  
140 invoices waiting to be paid.
- 141 • The office has received a good response to the bid that has been posted for lighting  
142 fixtures, as several firms have contacted us. This bid is due in our office on March 9<sup>th</sup>.
- 143 • Master plan meeting – today the DPW Consultant, Water/Sewer Supervisor and the  
144 Town Manager met with Tata & Howard staff regarding the water system. In particular  
145 the focus was on the capital efficiency portion of the project, reviewing all of the critical  
146 components of our system (customers, mains, major highway and railroad crossings and  
147 water main breaks) as well as all areas of asset management (install year, pipe material,  
148 soil conditions, pipe diameter, water pressure levels, water quality, major road projects  
149 forthcoming). This is important history that was not compiled when the water  
150 distribution plan was done 12 years ago (this was not typically included in evaluations of  
151 that period). The intent is to have a draft report available by the middle of April for  
152 comment.
- 153 • The Town Manager will be setting up a joint meeting with Code Enforcement and the  
154 Board of Health in the next week or so to develop a plan on how to address the cabin  
155 located at Sweetwilliam Farm that is not in compliance with building code and our Board  
156 of Health septic regulations.
- 157 • Today was the first meeting with Charter Cable regarding the renewal of our license. The  
158 meeting went fairly well and they are amenable to most of the requests we had made for  
159 the renewal license. Both parties have some more work to do as a follow up, and  
160 anticipate this will be wrapped up fairly soon.
- 161 • A spreadsheet, as requested was provided to the Milford Daily News regarding the  
162 number of employees who are issued town owned vehicles 24/7.
- 163 • In the coming week the Fire Chief will be providing the Board with a report about Fire &  
164 EMS department fuel usage and costs that will help justify the increases the Town  
165 Manager has requested in next year's budget. However in the short term she wanted to  
166 pass on that there are a number of factors that have contributed to why the department has  
167 seemingly been able to manage on \$6,000/year. Those reasons include: in prior years  
168 the dept. has not repaid public works for the actual amount of fuel used, fuel was charged  
169 to other dept. line items when they ran short at the end of the year, and fuel usage has  
170 increased this year, particularly the need for unleaded gasoline.

171  
172 In reference to the Superintendent's search, the Town Manager informed the Board that  
173 she received an email from a member of the Superintendent's Search Committee saying that they  
174 received 27 applications with 6 strong candidates. The interviews are scheduled to take place  
175 next week.

176 The Board will attend the March 9<sup>th</sup> finance meeting when they meet with both the  
177 MURSD and BVT School Committees to review their budgets. The Finance Committee will  
178 review the status of the town budget with the Selectmen March 16<sup>th</sup>.

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180 Discussion in reference to the Town's website, Selectman Picard asked the Town  
181 Manager to research and compares our site to other Town websites for a better way to  
182 communicate. This is for future discussion.

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184 Motion # 7: At 8:39pm Selectman Picard motioned to adjourn the meeting. Second: Selectman  
185 Fleming, unanimous: Chairman Goodwin.

186

187 Respectfully submitted,

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189 Karen L. Varney, Department Coordinator

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