

Accepted: 2/18/2015

Voted: 3-0-0

MEETING MINUTES OF ASHFIELD FINANCE COMMITTEE

Town Hall Conference Room

January 8th, 2015

Members Present: Ted Murray (Chair), Ricki Carroll, David Newell, Tom Schreiber, Janet Rogers

Ted called the meeting to order at approximately 7:02 PM

1. Minutes:

The minutes of November 19th were read, a motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to accept the amended version. 5-0-0 (See Doc 2)

2. Wired West / Massachusetts Broadband Institute

A discussion was had about financing this project, the largest ever for the Town. It was reported the Select Board has signed preliminary options and at the end of January there will be a meeting with Joe Markarian at the Town Hall to answer some questions. There are many compounded questions we as a board need to know about this project, because it would be the largest financial undertaking the Town has ever taken and we will have to explain the financing for this along with any options at the Town meeting to our citizens. There are many risks to the Town, including those of long term bonds. (see Doc 3a from MBI).

David shared his comparisons of Mohawk Regional District to Wired West (Regional) Cooperative. The purpose of this report is to illustrate the similarities and differences, hoping it will help our committee understand the governance issues relating to the interface between Ashfield and Wired West. (See Doc 3b)

3. Ashfield Pre-School

There was a continuing discussion from our last meeting on the financing of the private Ashfield Pre-School (APS). As discussed in the last meeting the APS came to the Town asking for help with financing in anticipation of a budget shortfall. As a Board we feel this is not an appropriate responsibility for the Town and to our knowledge the Select Board has not done anything yet about this request. Mohawk has looked into having a Pre-School at Sanderson, which the APS at this time has not shown any interest in. It was reported the Cummington School has closed and they are looking for other options for their children who at this time will be going to Dalton, a farther trip than Ashfield for many in their town. Due to the fact that Ashfield does not offer a public Pre-School the options for taking some of Cummington's children is lowered at a time when our own enrollment in the school is down. We feel strongly as a committee that all parents in Ashfield need to be given the possibility of sending their children to Pre-School. From data available to us, it

appears that the APS's relatively high tuitions may be one reason not all children in Ashfield attend the School. We will look into this further.

4. Division of Local Services (DLS)

We received the Review of Financial Operations from the Division of Local Services/Technical Assistance Section and will take it home to look at. (See Doc 4- available in Town Hall office)

5. Mary Priscilla Howes Fund

We continued our discussion from our last meeting about the idea of how much in grant monies can come out of this fund due to the restrictions by the donor on only using the "earnings". Tom will look into how this fund is managed/invested and as a committee we will then take up how the funds can be spent. (Doc 5)

6. Annual Report

A motion to accept the Annual Report as written was made and unanimously accepted (5-0-0) (Doc 6)

7. Town Audit:

Roselli, Clark and Associates from Woburn will start the audit in April and hopefully have it finished by the end of April.

8. Handicap Lift Inspection

All paperwork and application fees have been submitted, and we are awaiting notification of the inspection date..

9. Budget and Budget Hearing Schedule

One meeting date has been changed from Feb 16th to 17th. It was noted that Paullette Leukhardt sent us a reminder to look into surplus equipment before spending money on new equipment. She cited a town that got a long list of equipment and saved themselves a lot of money.

10. Vocational Education Transportation update

David reported everything is going fine. The kinks are being worked out with the buses getting gas from Neighbors when it was not available at the Highway Department on one occasion. This should enable the plan to operate smoothly.

11. Post Employment Benefit (OPEB) issues

We need to put funds away for the funding of future obligations the Town may have in the next 10-20 years as employees retire. Tom will look into this and will bring his finding back to the committee.

12. Future Meetings

The next meeting of the committee will be held on February 2nd at 7pm with the Select Board.

13. There being no other business before the board, a motion to adjourn was made, seconded and passed unanimously 5-0-0. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm

DOCUMENT LIST

1- Agenda

2- Minutes from November 19th, 2014-amended

3- Information from WW

- a. Financing the project
- b. Comparison of MRSD and WWRC

4- Booklet on Review of Financial Operations from the Division of Local Services
(available in Town Hall office)

5- Mary Priscilla Howe's Fund information sheet

6- Annual Report

Submitted by,

Ricki Carroll

1/13/2015