

9/21/11
approved
2010

Select board minutes
August 31, 2011

Present: Select board: Norm Russell, Doug Field, Paullette Leukhardt
Interim Executive Administrator: Mary Fitz-Gibbon

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

Minutes: none were ready for review.

Declaration of Emergency: Mr. Russell, read the following statement:

"The Selectboard affirms that a state of Emergency was declared by this Board at 7:10 a.m., August 28, 2011 due to an immediate threat to the health and safety of persons and property in the Town of Ashfield under the authority of state law including MGL c 44/31, MGL c 30/39M and that said State of Emergency remains in effect until all threat to the health and safety of persons within the Town due to Tropical Storm Irene has passed."

Emergency Manager Report: Selectman Doug Field, who is the Town's Emergency Manager, reported that most roads were passable, but not up to snuff, as a result of the heavy rains from tropical storm Irene. Roads that were not currently passable, and probably would not be for some time, were: Murray Rd. – the section from Hill Rd to Rt. 116 (comes out at the Bull Frog Inn), Bullit Rd. where it drops down into Conway, and a section of Smith Rd. He was interested in any photos that had been taken as they would be useful when applying for FEMA disaster aid. He reported that Sanderson Academy had been opened as the emergency center and that folks along the South River had sought refuge there.

Mr. Russell added that he thought the lowering of the water level in the lake two days prior to the storm was an important step in survival of the dam. Tom Poissant and Doug Field had taken the precaution of lowering the level two feet. Mr. Field said Tighe & Bond had inspected the dam following the storm and found it safe. Note was made that the level of water rose six and a half feet in 6 hours.

Appointments

S.T.R.A.P. Grant Application: Present: Paul Kelly and Ray Frankel

Mr. Frankel reported to the board that the state has made available to communities STRAP money for infrastructure projects. The application period is very short, a two week period from September 1 – 16. These gentlemen said this would be an ideal source for money to make infrastructure improvements, such as bringing three-phase electrical service to the school and highway garage, along the RT 116 corridor. Mentioned was the fact that Ashfield Stone had moved its operations out of town due to lack of three-phase availability. Things like air conditioners and freezers, which the school has, would operate more efficiently with three-phase.

Ricki Carroll, sitting in the audience, said she didn't hear it mentioned, but wouldn't this service help Lenny Roberts? She thought the service made 100% good sense, but she didn't want it to be thought that this offer, by these two gentlemen, was being made with the best interests of the Town as its intent. She wanted it clear that the real interest here was to get three-phase to Lenny's mill. Both

admitted that she was right. They said they'd assumed, since they had been present earlier when Lenny presented his gasification plans, people would recognize who they were. Someone asked if this was possibly a conflict of interest. However, as neither is a Town employee, conflict of interest does not apply.

Mr. Kelly noted that for the most part the utility poles that would be needed were already in place. All that was needed was for WMECO to bring in the power lines. He said WMECO had decided against making the installation when its request for a rate hike was denied.

Mr. Field talked about how having three-phase would be helpful for rerouting power should the Ashfield substation go down. He said currently, if that were to happen, the treatment plant would be fine, as it has three-phase, but the rest of the Town would be powerless.

Ms. Leukhardt said she'd gone on line to get the application and found she had to get a password to even see the document. She also noted that there were several other grants available for such things as public safety, transportation, and others. After some discussion Mr. Field made a motion, seconded by Ms. Leukhardt, to authorize the Select Board chair to sign a STRAP grant application and any other applications available through that program. The vote was unanimous.

Closing of Norton Hill Rd.

Although she was not present, the Board discussed a request from Nan Parati to close the Main Street end of Norton Hill tomorrow (Sept.1) for the purpose of holding a Cajun Fiddlers concert. A motion was made by Mr. Field, seconded by Ms. Leukhardt, and unanimously voted, to permit the closing of Norton Hill Rd. between the hours of 6:45pm and 10:00pm.

Police Department Present: Chief Droney

Department Policies Chief Droney presented General Orders 11.1.1 and 11.1.2, which have to do with the organization of the department, for the Board to review and approve. The Board approved both GO's.

Officer Wilder's hours Mr. Russell inquired about the handling of officer Wilder's hours. Droney said things had been worked out so that there was some flexibility. He said he has made her the Senior Officer, the go-to person in his absence.

Auxiliary Officers He then went on to discuss the role of auxiliary officers and his concern about having enough persons available for events such as Fall Festival. Mr. Russell reminded him that as a strong Chief, he does not need the Board's approval to recruit auxiliary officers; however, as the appointing authority, the Board wished to do the official appointing. Droney said he was looking into this area further to see if there were any state regulations he needed to be aware of. It is his understanding that auxiliaries are not required to have academy training, whereas Special officers do. Auxiliaries are self-funded (not paid); Special Officers are compensated. A potential auxiliary was discussed, with Mr. Field strongly supporting the candidate.

Cruisers The department currently has two vehicles: a Ford Taurus and a 2007 Explorer. The Explorer has been out of service due to problems with the engine. Droney reported that Mark Upton, a mechanic in Buckland, recently dropped the oil pan on the Explorer and found it full of metal pieces. Upton's recommendation is to replace the engine. A [short block] engine from Ford is \$6,500. Mr. Field commented the Explorer does not have a good service record.

The Taurus has 116,000 miles on it. It is worth \$3,900, according to Kelly's Blue Book.

Chief Droney reported that he has learned that UMASS has a 2008 Crown Vic that will soon become available. It has 80,000 miles on it and might need some transmission work. He isn't sure whether the vehicle can be sold directly to a municipality or must go through the bidding process. He expects a bid of \$1,800 might be sufficient. Mr. Field thought going for the Crown Vic was a good idea. He recommended selling the Taurus. He also said the Town should have a 4x4 vehicle, especially in winter.

Chief Droney reported the 2012 Interceptor, basically a police vehicle built on a Taurus frame is now available. Coming in February will be a 4x4 Interceptor. It will be larger than the Explorer. Droney would like to first take a look at the Crown Vic. If he can obtain it, he would like to sell both the Explorer and the Taurus and buy a new vehicle in 2012.

Mutual Aid Agreement Notice of this statewide agreement was first made in January. At that time the Board was uncomfortable with committing the Town. Mr. Field, who favors the agreement, said the Town already has mutual aid for fire and police in Franklin County. In fact the Town has had such an agreement since Howard Cranson began the process years ago. He said this agreement simply made the area of coverage state wide. Mr. Russell read portions of the agreement that he was uncomfortable with. After some discussion Mr. Field made a motion, seconded by Ms. Leukhardt, to sign the statewide agreement. The vote was 2 in favor and 1 abstention. (2-0-1)

Special Town Meeting (STM) A STM is scheduled for September 29th. The last day to post the warrant is September 15th. The last day to register to vote is September 19th. The purpose for the STM is to vote on the school project – roof and window repairs at Mohawk. The Town's portion is \$26,697 for ten years.

A second article will be to transfer funds, totaling \$6,930, to provide benefits for a veteran who lives in Town. A possible source of funds is the unemployment account.

The Assessors have requested an article to correct a mistake made earlier. Since this is something that should come out of free cash, and free cash is not available at this time, this article may not appear on the warrant. Ms. Fitz-Gibbon will discuss this with Assessors.

There will be an article to accept the photovoltaic solar bylaw. Mike Fitzgerald, chairman of the Planning Board will move the motion and explain it. This will require a 2/3 vote to pass.

Mr. Field wants an article for funding to purchase a call back system for the Town. He favors the system used in Conway, which he says would cost the Town just under \$3,000 / year. He said people have to sign up for the service, as it can go to unlisted numbers and cell phone numbers, as well as listed numbers. During discussion, questions were asked about the effectiveness of such a system. Mr. Russell thought this was a discussion that should be held on STM floor.

Storm Food Purchases Mr. Field requested that Phil and Doreen, at Neighbors, were very generous during the emergency. He would like to reimburse them an amount of approximately \$500.00 for food. Ms. Fitz-Gibbon said that could appear on the next warrant.

FRCOG Services: Mr. Russell would like to review all of the contracts the Town has with FRCOG. Of particular interest at this time is the agreement for health services. He turned to Deb Nicholson, who was present and asked if her issues had been resolved. (see minutes of 8/17/11 meeting) Ms. Nicholson said, she had received the inspection requested, but was still waiting for what the law says should happen. She has no paperwork. She said the Agent, Mr. Ayers, has been discussing things he considers problematic with the Housing Authority [Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, owners of the building], but he has not discussed them with her. Therefore, she has decided to take her case to the state. Ms. Fitz-Gibbon concurred that there is an automatic right for a hearing.

Some people are anxious for the Board to take immediate actions which both Mr. Russell and Mr. Field are not willing to do. As Mr. Field said he is not willing to go behind the back of the Board of Health. Mr. Russell would like members of the Select Board to attend the next BOH meeting (9/20) to discuss concerns and proposed actions. As he put it, " We are not going to do this in a rushed irrational manner." Ms. Leukhardt, indicating that something should happen sooner, suggested an invitation to BOH to join the Select Board on the 14th. Mr. Russell and Mr. Field found this an acceptable idea.

Mr. Russell said the process for getting out of an agreement requires 60 day notice. A replacement plan for health services would then need to be in place. He proposes to review the Town's overall relationship with the FRCOG and be ready to act on any desired changes as of January 1st. Cited as examples of other areas to review, include the building permitting process. He noted that for a person wishing to build a new home the basic permit for a 2,000 s.f. house is \$1,800.00. Every other permit needed , as the project progresses, requires an additional fee.

Back to the health agent issue, the suggestion was made that a qualified person be found to temporarily perform the necessary duties of health agent. Mr. Field wondered if it would be possible to find someone willing to step in, given the situation. Mr. Russell reminded how hard it was to get people to even apply for the Selectman's Assistant position last year because of all the turmoil.

Liaison Reports

MEMA and FEMA will be coming out next week. Joann Ostrowski, who lives on Smith Rd inquired about getting something to warn people about the washout just beyond her house. She put her lawn chairs out to block the road. Mr. Field told her the Highway Dept. had run out of pylons and barricades.

Thank you emails have gone out to the police and fire departments regarding their work involving the hurricane Irene emergency. Also notes to JJ Williams, Mike Skalski, and Ricki Carroll for their work.

Mail

Mr. Russell has prepared a letter to Donna Cote of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority requesting release of the remaining \$40,000 + funds it is still holding.

A letter has been received from the Hampshire COG regarding purchase of electrical services.

A letter was read from Del Haskins, Fire Chief, to Robin Sherman, Executive Director of the FCRH&RDA, reporting on the improper fuel storage situation at the Ashfield House and requesting information about where it was now being stored, as he needed to inspect the new location.

A letter of thanks has been received from Lenny Roberts for having the opportunity to explain his gasification project.

Ms. Leukhardt said she had attended a Board of Health meeting and a Conservation Commission meeting where the same people who had attended the Select Board meeting were present to ask many of the same questions about the gasification project.

At this point, a motion was made, seconded, and voted to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Priscilla Phelps