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**SELECT BOARD MINUTES
AUGUST 03, 2011**

Present: Select Board: Norm Russell, Doug Field, Paullette Leukhardt
Interim Executive Administrator

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

Minutes of open meetings held on July 6, 2011 and July 20, 2011 were accepted in a motion made by Ms. Leukhardt and seconded by Mr. Field.

APPOINTMENTS:

Tree Committee: Present: Harry Dodson

Mission Mr. Dodson presented a mission statement for the new committee which says, in part, the committee will work with the Tree Warden to plant, protect and maintain Ashfield's public street trees. It will meet regularly with the Tree Warden, promote tree planting, tree maintenance, and promote volunteer activity in public education about trees. It will work with the Tree Warden on proposed tree clearing for major projects such as utility line clearing or cutting major or important trees. On big important things the committee would work with the Tree Warden, Mass Highway, and the utility companies to get broad based input on how trees are cut, where, and when, and strive for a consensus decision.

Nominees A list of a possible 15 members were suggested. The Board suggested a smaller number for ease in obtaining a quorum. In a motion made by Mr. Field, seconded by Ms. Leukhardt, and voted, the following persons were nominated and appointed: Harry Dodson, Susan Todd, Doug Cranson, Laura Bisette, Ramon Sears, Johanna Pratt, and Tom McCrumm as regular members and Greg Thorpe and David Kulp as alternates. Mr. Dodson thought ex-officio persons could be: the Tree Warden, a finance committee member, and a conservation committee member.

Town Common Mr. Dodson said he will buy four trees to replace those on the common that need to be removed. Planting will be done in the spring.

Animal Control : Present: Warren Kirkpatrick

Mr. Kirkpatrick attended a meeting on July 26, at the County Jail regarding a plan to create a county dog officer and kennel. The kennel would be located in the industrial park in Turners Falls, a round trip distance from Ashfield of 54 miles. Each member town would be assessed an annual fee. Mr. Kirkpatrick said the Town has few dog issues; most of his work is with domestic animals and wildlife. He, therefore, recommended that the Town not participate in this initiative.

Gasification Plant Issues : Citizens Group and Roberts Brothers

Present: Roberts Brothers representatives: Lenny Roberts, Ryan Donovan, Ray Frankle, Barry Holister
Citizen's Group: Ken Kippen, Peter Wildermuth, John Maddox, and others

A group of Ashfield residents, largely from the Spruce Corner area had submitted a request to appear before the Board to voice their concerns about a project that might have a serious impact on their neighborhood.

process, especially since it hasn't been proven. He said there are a lot of questions. Essentially, gasification seems like an attractive source of green energy; however, as the papers being distributed reveal there are some technical problems that make it less attractive as an alternative source of energy. With that he introduced John Maddox, a new resident, having just purchased the Bud Howes farm.

Mr. Maddox, said he was surprised to learn that this project has been going on for three or more years without anyone in the neighborhood knowing about it. He said a 2 megawatt facility is not a small thing. For it to have been going on for three years raises questions to him about how this community does things. Speaking as the engineer that he is, he said we have to answer the questions: What is this thing? Is it good for this community? He said what he has learned makes him think he doesn't want it near his house. The paper contained information with many references for people to read so they will be able to judge for themselves.

This process is not like burning wood in a fireplace. As Mr. Roberts said it's like a pressure cooker where the wood is heated, releasing the gases. That gas is sent to the engine, where it replaces the diesel fuel. What is this gas? The two main components are carbon-monoxide and methane. The problem is that about 10% of this mixture is tars. Wood chips have less tar than some bio-mass materials that could be used. The gas comes out very hot; it has to be cooled, which takes a lot of water (for a 1 megawatt plant, 350 gallons /minute). At the same time the tar has to be removed as it will clog the engine. What do you do with all the water? What do you do about the tars? These tars contain benzenes and other toxic materials; they're not clean charcoals for your garden. There's a reason why there are no gasification plants in this country; it's that a massive water treatment facility is needed.

In Europe, these plants are part of government programs; all the right water treatments are available. The process works, but is not economical. In third world countries, where environmental concerns are not an issue, the water simply is directed to the nearest river or swamp.

There is a concern about air pollution as gas is never perfectly clean. The syngas fired engine would not have a catalytic converter on it to reduce the pollutants being released into the air. Mr. Maddox said, using the figures available, he calculated 520 tons of chips per month would be needed to run the plant. Without the catalytic converter the engine would run wide open. He has been trying to find data on this.

The type of fire proposed is a down-draft gas fire, which is actually the best type of fire for this process because it produces the smallest amount of tars. The downside is that the wood chips need to be of consistent size. Mr. Maddox said the use of a mixture of bark, wood chips, and sawdust, as proposed would not be consistent. He had concerns about how this would affect the process.

The load needed to run the mill has spikes and lulls, which works fine with gas or oil, where the fuel is stored in a tank and can be regulated. More can be delivered as needed. It isn't apparent that this is the case using the gasification process. Mr. Maddox made the point that most of the energy generated by this plant would go to the grid, only a fraction actually would be used by the mill.

Mr. Maddox concluded his remarks by stating that as a technologist he was interested in getting to the bottom of what this thing is. He agreed with the need to find alternative forms of energy; he just wanted people to learn what it is all about.

year of your rate payer money . That's per year. Then in addition there's the \$400,000 grant and a \$250,000 grant." Mr. Roberts replied that the \$250,000 chipping grant, as he called it, had been turned back. He went on to say that anyone in agriculture can make up to 2 megawatts of energy, making them eligible for energy credits . "You might be able to use to light your home with green renewable energy."

Mr. Fitzgerald spoke to the emissions issue. He said if such emissions as suggested, were made, the plant would be shut down. He also said that as far as he knew the Board of Health can put such regulations on the project , as are reasonable, if there were problematic emissions.

Kari Gibson asked about the 3phase wiring, To her something requiring 3phase electricity meant something big. She wondered what that would mean. She wondered how much the business was expected to expand. She thought there seemed to be a lot of questions that needed to be asked. She didn't like to hear from the Planning Board that if you're agriculture you can do anything you like without any kind of public hearings or legalities. If you're agriculture you can do anything you like.

Mr. Field responded to the 3phase question by saying that there had been a plan to run 3phase from the Ashfield substation (on Baptist Corner Road) to the Plainfield substation for emergency purposes. Mr. Kippen corrected that saying WMECO has decided not to bring 3phase power in because it would cost 2 million dollars and the DPU said they could not back charge the rate payers for that extension.

Jim Labley (?) who lives at Spruce Corner Rd, is very sympathetic to Mr. Roberts position as a small businessman. He was interested in the technology; the presentation was very convincing. On the other hand the track record has not been so convincing. His question was, " How are we going to get to the point of deciding whether this technology is safe or not? " He was concerned about the water issue and the fact that it seems not to have been addressed in the feasibility study. He wondered where an objective analysis of this could be found.

Mr. Russell said he should answer this." Mr. Roberts has to get a building permit. When he does so, the Building Inspector has to make certain determinations as to whether this is a plant that requires any special type of permitting, or is it in fact a standard agricultural function. Ashfield is a by-right agricultural town, but it's also a by-right to build a house town - on a two acre lot with two hundred feet of frontage. But you still have to go through the process and build conforming to certain codes and other things. So there are a lot of built-in safeguards that will be responded to as the process goes forward."

He went on to say that second of all, this whole thing is being done with involvement of the state. Most of the work here the state Dept of Environmental Protection is directly involved in. If it doesn't meet DEP standards it won't be allowed. The state is providing a substantial amount of grant money." It's hard for me to think the state would do that without vetting for environmental safety. As a Board, we can communicate with the DEP to assure the town that in fact the proper procedures are being followed and the scientists who work for the state, who I dare to say are disinterested in Mr. Roberts personal finances, can assure that they are in fact following proper procedures. Beyond that we're trying to provide a forum for people to speak to it."

Mr. Russell made the point that the Board was providing this opportunity because people had expressed a concern. He doubted this would be the last and only time this issue would be discussed. He said that it

Ms. Corbett, former owner of the Ashfield House, has had tenants and neighbors approach her with concerns about what is going on in the building. As she put it, "it seems that the place has lost its flavor of helping people have a better life." There are problems, but tenants have been hesitant to speak of them, fearing harassment and retaliation. It has taken people a long time to find their voice. She went on to describe issues, some of which are health related issues, such as bedbugs and rodents, which should be addressed by the Board of Health, through the FRCOG Health Agent. In the remodeling process exhaust vents, from bathrooms, etc, may have been blocked so that moisture is trapped in the attic possibly creating a mold issue. There are electrical problems that have not been addressed. The Health Agent has been to the building, but has not been willing to take any action. Ms. Corbett asked the Board for help in removing this individual, Mr. Ayres, from this situation. She feels that Mr. Ayers may have a conflict of interest. She would like an alternate inspector assigned to the Ashfield House.

Mr. Field read a letter from Ms. Nicholson, in which Mr. Ayers is reported to have stated it is not his policy to report code violations of the Housing Authority properties because he has to work with them.

Anne Yuryan, the mother of one of the tenants, said conditions at the Ashfield House are getting worse. She commented about the behavior of some tenants and the harassment experienced by her daughter because she has complained about conditions.

Recently Ms. Leukhardt was at the building with the Fire Chief. She reported on witnessing the gasoline storage problem with the containers of gasoline, equipment, and gasoline odors and also, Carmen told them that this storage area had been used this way for four years. Ms. Corbett was prepared to continue describing problems, but Mr. Russell stopped her because this matter will be discussed further at the August 17th Board meeting when representatives from the Housing Authority (Franklin County Regional Housing and Development Authority) will be present. The Health Agent from the FRCOG is expected to be present. Linda Dunlavy, the Executive Director of FRCOG should be included. The Ashfield Board of Health could be invited, as well.

WiredWest: As no one was present from the WiredWest steering committee, and it was late, the Board decided to meet briefly next week to review and sign the agreement to join the cooperative. Mr. Russell read the revised section that had previously been problematic, stating that he felt it clearly the Town's position that no financial obligations be enacted without the Town's approval.

Town Hall Project: Present: Ricki Carroll

Ms. Carroll requested permission to have the floor and walls stripped and cleaned to get the mold off the future police station located in the basement of town hall. She said the cost would be \$700 to \$750. Cleaning will be done on Monday.

School Project: Present: Emily Robertson

Ms. Robertson reported that Mohawk has received the grant to repair the roof at Mohawk. The cost to Ashfield for the next ten years will be \$22,000 per yr. She explained how the amount was determined. There will be a presentation by the architect on August 10th at 7:PM in the chorus room at Mohawk. The article for special town meeting will be ready next week.

Special Town Meeting: A STM will now need to be scheduled to approve the school expenditure. There are some other items that can be on that warrant, as well: the proposed bylaw and another to cover benefits for a veteran who lives in town.

Semitism in any fashion or form it might take in our society or anywhere in the world, just as we do for gender, race or any other form of discrimination.”

A motion to adjourn was, made, seconded, and voted. The meeting adjourned at 10:45PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Priscilla Phelps