

Approved 12/14/11

Select Board meeting minutes December 7, 2011

Present: Select Board – Chair Norman Russell, Doug Field, Paulette Leukhardt

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

Minutes

Minutes moved to end of meeting.

Appointments

Mark Graves, Sandy Lilly, Wayne Gardner, Board of Assessors: Tax Classification Hearing. The Assessors informed the Board that although there is new growth of about \$2.3 Million in property and about \$1 Million in personal property, overall, new growth is about \$1 Million less than last year. The value of real estate in town has dropped about 1%, to an average valuation of approximately \$237,000 this year from approximately \$240,000 last year. Ashfield has always had one tax classification rate and the rate must be voted every year by the Select Board. A motion was made, seconded and passed to maintain a single tax rate for Ashfield.

On another matter, the Board of Assessors informed the Select Board that The Assessors Clerk's hours will be increasing from 10 hours a week to 15 hours a week as of January 1, 2012. The clerk's new hours will be Mondays 1-6 p.m. and Tuesdays 11 am to 4 p.m.

The Tax Classification Hearing closed at 7:17 p.m.

Emily Robertson, School Committee: Mohawk Trail Regional School District budget preview. Emily Robertson began by thanking everyone for approving, by debt exclusion, the Green Roof Project for Mohawk. She said that an original deadline of December 1, 2011 has been moved to December, 2012 and that therefore the first charges to the Town will probably occur in FY14.

Emily told the Board that although the District is facing some serious financial challenges and the budgeting process is just getting started the Budget Committee is determined that the overall assessments to the towns will not increase beyond the 2 ½% increase that towns are allowed each fiscal year. She pointed out that the State determines each individual town's share based on an average-income formula and for that reason it is possible that Ashfield's assessment could rise, but she reiterated the commitment that the goal is budgetary sustainability for the town's overall. Emily informed the Board that student numbers continue to go down due to general demographic trends and that next year there may be under 1,000 students in the District for the first time.

Mrs. Robertson will continue to meet with the Board every few weeks throughout the budgeting season to keep them informed as the District budget takes shape.

Duncan Colter, Chair, Board of Health: Board of Health member resignation and new member appointment to fill the unexpired term. Duncan Colter formally notified the Board in writing of the vacancy on the Board of Health and the need to appoint someone to fill the unexpired term till a new member can be elected at Annual Town Meeting in May 2012. The Select Board and the Board of Health will meet together at the next Select Board meeting on December 14th and there, by roll call vote of both Boards, appoint a new Board of Health member.

Susan Clark of Ashfield was present and expressed an interest in being appointed to the position. The Board has also received a letter from Suzanne Corbett expressing interest in the Board of Health appointment.

Old Business

Lake spillway sink-hole at 245 Main Street update. Lucy Leete (homeowner) and Minette Weaver present. Doug Field described for the Board the condition of the Lake spillway as it runs under the Leete house on Main Street as well as initial plans to stabilize the area. Lucy Leete, who walked through the spillway during the Town's inspection shared pictures she took with the Board. Doug Field informed the Board that he, Tom Poissant (Highway), Ray Gray (Harris & Gray), Lester Gavin (Conservation Commission) and Lucy along with her own inspector will have a meeting to agree upon a plan for immediate stabilization.

New Business

Student Awareness Fire Education Grant Award: The Chair read aloud a letter informing Fire Chief Del Haskins that the Department's S.A.F.E. grant application has been approved for funding for FY12. The Ashfield Fire Department will be awarded \$3,765 in state funds for student fire education. A motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the FY12 grant award and sign the required paperwork. Chair Russell signed for the Board.

Town Hall Floors:

A motion was made, seconded and passed to sign a disclosure form allowing Wayne Gardner to work on refinishing or otherwise improving or protecting some of the Town Hall office floors. The form stipulates that there is no regular Town employee whose job it is to do such work, allowing Mr. Gardner to do the work for a small fee beyond the stipend he receives as Town Hall Steward.

Police Department vehicle: Chief Droney has sent a letter to the Board to inform them of the newest issue with the Taurus, one of two APD vehicles. During a recent oil change a mechanic discovered a hole rusted through the floor on the passenger side of the vehicle. As the Taurus has a uni-body frame and repair work is not advised on such frames the Chief has taken the car off the road as a matter of officer safety. The Board examined pictures of the damage provided by Chief Droney and agreed that the rusted out floor does present a serious hazard and that further, a repair of such damage would compromise the structural integrity of the vehicle.

Liaison Reports:

Doug Field, Highway Department: Doug reported that all roads in Spruce Corner are back in good shape and that the Highway Department is still working on repairs to Lilliput Road.

Public Forum:

Wayne Wickland, Chair, Council on Aging: Mr. Wickland reported that he has had two tires on the COA van replaced. He told the Board that he expects that the Council will want to place an article

on the next Special Town Meeting warrant, once one is scheduled, to raise money to replace the other two tires sometime in the Spring. Mr. Wickland stated that he is looking ahead regarding the next two tires to be replaced but that the van is now safe for use.

Future Meetings

The next Select Board meeting will be Wednesday, December 14, 2011. The Board will meet at 6:45 for pole hearings for John Ford Road and Ranney Corner Road.

Minutes: The Board reviewed the minutes for the 11/16/11 Select Board meeting. A motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the minutes without changes.

After a motion was made, seconded and passed, the meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.