

Apr-2-0-1

**SELECT BOARD Meeting – May 4, 2011**  
**Minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05.

**Present: Select Board** - Dave DeHerdt, Doug Field, Norm Russell  
Executive Administrator – Mary Fitz-Gibbon

**Minutes:** A motion was made by Field, seconded by Russell, and unanimously voted to accept the minutes of the April 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, as amended by DeHerdt.

**Pole hearings:** Present - Al Bessett, Right-of-way representative from Verizon

- 1) Apple Valley Road – #6ABGZ8 Mr. Bessett presented a plan for the installation of three poles to shorten the span between poles on Apple Valley Road. No abutters were present with questions or comments. A motion was made by Russell, seconded, by Field, and voted to approve the proposal.
- 2) John Ford Road - #9ADR72 At 7:15 PM a proposal was presented to place a pole on the west side of John Ford Road, with a supporting pole on the opposite of the road. Mr. Bessett said the plan as presented shows the new pole on the wrong side of the road. He will provide a corrected plan. There being no abutters present, a motion was made by Russell, seconded by DeHerdt, and voted to approve the proposal, as amended.
- 3) Comment was made by Russell about branches and trees lying across wires on poles. In one instance he called both utility companies; each said it was the other's problem. Mr. Bessett explained that phone lines are the lower lines on poles; power lines on top; Verizon cannot encroach on WMECO space. He said that anytime a situation such as the one described arises let him know and he can at least get the information to the right place. The hearings were closed at 7:22 PM.

**Appointments:**

Present – Doug Cranson

- 1) Hiking trail - Cranson said a trail from Stroheker Road to Smith Road was being planned. He asked permission to include a stretch of land owned by the Town ( shown as lot 39 on the map he presented) that includes part of the old Boston or Albany Post Road. A feature of historical interest on the trail is a stone bridge just below the transfer station. He said one of his Scouts would like to do a community service project possibly making a picnic area at the bridge site as his Eagle Scout project. Other property owners whose land this trail would pass through are: John LaBelle, Dick Sebeck, and Ray Gray. Cranson had a GPS map to illustrate the trail location. He said the provisions of MGL Chapter 21, section 17C would protect property owners from liability. A group called Ashfield Trails would maintain the trail. Note was made that the portion containing the stone bridge is included in the RT 112 Scenic By-way legislation, which could mean there might be funds available for repairing the bridge.

A motion was made by Russell, seconded by Field, and unanimously voted, to approve the construction and maintenance of a trail on an old road through Town owned land, identified as parcel #39.

- 2) Pledge of Allegiance The second item on Mr. Cranson's agenda was to obtain permission to conduct an invocation and pledge at the opening of the Annual Town meeting on Saturday. He said it was a tradition that had recently been abandoned and he would like to see it reinstated. He suggested doing this before the return of service was read so that it would not infringe upon the

duties of the Moderator. Mr. Cranson wanted the Board to vote to approve a presentation, including the Pledge, which the Board could not do. Field had no objection (he said he had several calls about this), but both DeHerdt and Russell expressed objections.

In the lengthy discussion that ensued Cranson made his case, including a reading of a letter from someone serving in Iraq. He also revealed that part of his motivation was to give a young scout working on his Eagle badge a chance to participate in a Town Meeting (civic /community event).

Russell was clearly unhappy about the discussion and stated that he would remain neutral. DeHerdt said he had served in the military and had grown-up saying the pledge at school. He didn't recall a moment when there was any reflection on what the pledge meant. He felt it would be better to let the scouts post the flag and then tell what democracy means to them in this day and age. For the Annual Town Meeting he felt the Board had a responsibility to respect the rights of all, i.e. to find common ground. It seemed to him that people noticed who didn't say the pledge, which led to a perception of being unpatriotic. Sometimes that leads to anything but the principals we're trying to uphold. He thought this would not be a uniting way to begin the Annual Town Meeting.

Field said any meeting he had ever gone to in his 30 years of being on the Fire Department always had the pledge of allegiance. Paul Swem waiting to speak to the Board on another matter, said he thought he'd heard someone suggest posting of the colors prior to the beginning of the meeting where people who wished could participate and those who didn't could continue to converse.

Suzanne Corbett said something about having to listen to things she finds offensive. She mentioned the speaker at the beginning of last year's ATM made her feel very uncomfortable. She echoed an earlier suggestion that before meeting someone/group selected by Select board make a presentation, then at 10:00 the business meeting begin.

Cranson then read what he suggested a scout might say, if given the opportunity to speak, concluding that there should be the opportunity to say what it means to be an American. Ricki Carroll thought this was sort of an educational tool that could be informative to scouts and the audience, as well. DeHerdt thought posting the colors, as should be done, then having the scouts turn and one (possibly the Eagle Scout candidate) step forward to speak a few words about his thoughts on what his impression is, then the meeting could go forward. Cranson insisted this be followed by the pledge, as it is tradition.

DeHerdt said that yes it was a tradition, but it came from the Cold War when it was instituted to make sure we didn't deviate from "the path." DeHerdt said he respected Cranson's opinion; however he felt he had to represent the Town as a whole, not just one point of view. No decision was made at the meeting.

**Website: Present – Julia Jacobson**

Ms. Jacobson said that Charlie Heath, who runs the website, has been asking if the e-mail situation has been resolved, as the handling of e-mails has a lot to do with the website. He sent an e-mail advising that the opportunity to switch over to Google Apps, which is currently free, is going to change by the end of next week. If action isn't taken it's going to end up costing the Town \$800/year. She said there would be pluses to switching from the current host to Goodle. She read comments from Charlie Heath's letter detailing some of the important points. Google Apps has capabilities, including back-up and storage capabilities which Hilltown Hosting doesn't. It also has

greater capacity for individual mailboxes. DeHerdt said he had learned that the Town's website name, Ashfield.org, does belong to the website, meaning the Town will not have to rename its website when it moves to Google. He provided some information about how Google handles e-mails and the archiving of them. The Town's IT person would help with the process of moving accounts and providing training in their use.

A motion was made by DeHerdt, seconded by Field, and unanimously voted, to authorize the switching from Hilltown Hosting to Google for managing email applications. Ms. Jacobson will ask Mr. Heath prepare the necessary set-up.

**Town Hall use Application:**

Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter School submitted an application for the use of Town Hall. The responsible person is Gloria Pacosa. The request is for use of the upper hall at an uncertain date. Fitz-Gibbon thought it would be sometime in June. Expected attendance: 150, no admission fee – donations suggested - all receipts after expenses will be donated to Town Hall fund or the library. A motion was made by Russell, seconded by Field, and unanimously voted, to approve the application of the Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter School, contingent upon availability of town hall.

**Transfer of funds:**

In a meeting to be held sometime after Annual Town Meeting the Finance Committee will be asked to consider the following requests:

- 1) Transfer of \$751.74 from Collector's expenses to Treasurer's Expenses to pay for payroll processing. A motion was made by Field, seconded by Russell, and unanimously voted, to approve the request.
- 2) Disbursement of FRCOG procurement charge of \$550.00 between departments: Highway – 1/3, Police – 1/3, and Town hall – 1/3. A motion was made by Russell, seconded by Field, and unanimously voted, to approve the request.

**Managing accounts:** Fitz-Gibbon reported that she has met with the accountant and treasurer regarding setting up accounts for FY'12. She said the main accounts will be as voted at Town Meeting. Russell agreed but clarified that these accounts can be broken into sub-categories that provide the same detailed information currently available.

**Computers:** DeHerdt said he thought the Town needed to recognize Ricki Carroll for the assistance she has provided the Town. Thank you, Ricki! He has learned that she has three computers which she wishes to donate to the Town. They are less than a year old. She has asked Paul Swem to take a look at them to see if they are compatible with what the Town has.

**Review for Annual Town Meeting: Library** – At the last budget meeting changes to include a COLA for the Librarian and an increase in energy accounted for a change in the total library budget. There was a question was about how much money could be used from the revolving fund. DeHerdt said the revolving fund gets replenished during the year, so the amount shown is the ceiling of that account. Once again the library isn't sure how much money it has in the revolving account. DeHerdt's comment was, "How can we lose track of this account so quickly?" There should be about \$2,100 in that fund. If \$1,500 of that has been taken for use there isn't enough remaining for another \$1,500 to be used in the FY'12 budget. For the moment the library budget will remain as on the warrant: \$32,358.

Talking points – No free cash is being used in the FY'12 budget. It might be useful to go back a couple of years to show how much free cash has been needed to balance previous budgets. The total budget is only a 1% increase over FY'11. The increase in the FRCOG assessment is still not explained. Fitz-Gibbon requested a drop-dead time for completing talking points.

Cultural Council Fitz-Gibbon presented a standard contract from the state to the Board for signing so that money can be released to the Cultural Council. A motion was made by Russell, seconded by Field, and voted to sign the contract.

**Liaison Reports:**

Highway - 1) Bad news - The grader is down. A bearing in the rear drive system is bad. This repair has the potential to be expensive, possibly as much as \$10,000, as the manufacturer of this machine (now 30 years old) is out of business. The cost to rent a grader is also expensive - \$7,000/ week. The Board would like Poissant to discuss this at a board meeting.

2) Good news - Several trees along the sidewalk between Town Hall and South Street are dead. Harry Dodson has offered to cover the cost of replacing the trees, including installation costs. The replacement trees would be sugar maples approximately 3" in diameter. Trees and stumps would be removed using Highway Dept. equipment and manpower. A motion was made by Russell, seconded by Field, and voted to authorize the tree replacement project, as outlined in a memorandum dated May 2, 2011, to move forward.

Council on Aging Wayne Wickland reported that the assessment for the CoA has been reduced from \$22,537 to \$21,933.

Town Hall Building Committee Russell reported that he met with Mary Quigley and Stuart Harris. Quigley has agreed to oversee the project. The plan is to move the Police Station once Quigley has cleared the planned use of the basement area with the Building Inspector. There should be a major upgrade in the phone system, but for now we'll move what we have. He had some questions about wiring.

He has also had further communication with Donna Cote, who says the check will be in the mail. The Board will need to direct that the money (\$33,000) go directly to Grant Program Account (GPI). GPI money is under control of the Select Board, but needs to go before a Town Meeting.

Police The mechanic who has looked at the Taurus can't find anything wrong with it. There may be some air in a power steering line. He's working on getting the Explorer back from the Tech school.

Field said he wanted to say "Thank you" to DeHerdt for all of his work this year. Russell repeating a comment he'd heard said he'd like to shake the hand of one honest man. DeHerdt said he'd be around. With that a motion was made, seconded, and voted to adjourn at 9:40PM

Respectfully submitted,  
Priscilla Phelps