

Review

Approval 12/1/10
3-0-0

Select Board minutes – November 10, 2010

Present: Dave DeHerdt, Doug Field, Norm Russell, Mary Fitz-Gibbon

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM

Minutes: A motion was made, seconded, and voted to accept the minutes of November 3rd, as amended.

Dogs : DeHerdt reported that he has been following up on the matter of a few dogs that have not been registered for this year. In one case owner had just got the dog; it has current rabies certification. One owner has an appointment with the vet to get the vaccination. One phone number is no longer in service; DeHerdt left messages for two others. The final one sent in a check which was returned with no explanation. Warren Kirkpatrick, the Animal Control Officer, has called to check on DeHerdt's progress.

FRCOG: Present – Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director

Ms. Dunlavy said she would explain what the Franklin Counsel of Governments is and tell how it serves Ashfield. The COG, as she called it, is a voluntary organization formed in 1997 that includes all of the towns in the former Franklin County. It was formed when Governor Weld decided to abolish counties in western Mass.

Fees - As members, towns pay three types of fees: 1) Statutory Assessment – to cover the unfunded liability of regional retirement and health insurance costs for persons who have worked for the county; 2) Regional Services; and 3) Fees for Services used by the individual towns.

The **statutory assessment** is determined by a 90/10 ratio of the town's equalized value (as determined by the DOR) and its population. The unfunded liability is expected to have been covered by 2028.

Regional Services - This is basically the town's membership fee. It covers operating costs. The COG manages 9.7 million dollars per year, much of it being pass-through monies from grants, etc. Its actual operation budget is \$3.3 million per year. Ashfield's fee is \$9,843. For this Ashfield can obtain administrative assistance, accessibility assessment, an energy audit of town buildings, IT services, employee assistance, legal hot line, educational forums, broadband advocacy, etc. Dunlavy said Ashfield has used most of the services except for Engineering and IT.

Currently the COG in managing \$5 million dollars in funding from Homeland Security. Part of that is for a 14 tower emergency communication system. The COG owns two of the towers, one of which is the Shelburne tower.

Fee for Service - The Inspector program which provides building, plumbing and electrical inspectors is available to towns on a fee basis. As are Health Inspector services. Board members had comments about recent experiences with a new-to-the-town health inspector that were essentially the result of miscommunication.

Ashfield participates in procurement services for large quantity items, such as sand and salt for the highway department, and bulk purchase of fuel (diesel, gasoline and heating). Questions were raised about a problem that occurred when the town ordered too much fuel oil. There appears to have been a communication problem between the Sewer Commission and the Town Administrator. At this point the current Select Board was in the dark about what had transpired previously, what (and who) was involved in a resolution to the situation, and most importantly, what the resolution was. Dunlavy said she would find answers to the questions.

Other services - As the fiduciary for **homeland Security** since 2004, the COG can provide many services, such as organizing and training emergency responders. A project that could qualify for funding under this program is the repair of the spillway at the lake. Interestingly, in this situation where state funds might be available, but require matching money from the town, the matching funds could come from the federal government by way of Homeland Security.

As a result of the ice storm in 2008, mobile trailers are being made available to bring into areas where help is needed. These trailers are stocked with cots, blankets, pillows, etc. Field said one such trailer is currently in Greenfield. There are also 4 foam trailers to be available in the event of an emergency.

The COG is the **regional planning agency** for Economic Development in the former Franklin County. Services such as a Brownfields study to determine if an area is contaminated are available. It could have agricultural applications. There are services to help the town become a green community.

Because of the efforts of Congressman John Olver, there is now a risk management tool which can make the application process easier. Dunlavy will get the password so the Board can access the database. There is significant money available for mitigation grants. She thinks 4 – 8 projects can be funded. With the risk management tool available to provide the engineering required to do a cost/benefit analysis, more towns may be able to participate. One mitigation project, to find and solve the erosion problem along Rt 116 has reached a roadblock over the possibility of an endangered species – a plant. The COG is working with MassDOT (formerly MassHighway) to move this project along.

Ricki Carroll said she's heard talk about cutting a lot of trees along RT 116 in order to get wind turbines into the area. Dunlavy said this is unlikely to happen as RT 116 is part of a scenic by-way corridor, much the same as RT 112.

Regional health - The health agent has provided services to Ashfield for perc tests, well permits, bed bug issues, and food safety. The Health Agent witnesses perc tests for the Board of health which are performed for new septic system installation. Field said as Fire Chief he had been required to be present at perc tests as well. Similarly tests are needed for permitting of wells for potable water. Dunlavy said the bedbug issue has been contained to an area. Preparedness for handling such medical matters as controlling H1N1 virus is part of the regional health responsibility. In the Mohawk area (which includes Ashfield) the COG provided supplies, trained personnel, and provided refrigeration for the vaccine. Forty one persons were inoculated.

Preparedness training for handling hazardous materials is another service available from the COG.

Since 2005 the COG has been providing an average of 8 hours per week of accounting services for Ashfield. This includes preparation of customized budget reports.

A question about the terms of contracted services was asked. Dunlavy responded that most were annual contracts with a three year roll-over option. For most, the town could opt out by providing a 60 day notice.

Dunlavy said the town's representation to the COG did not have to be an elected official, although it was usually better if the representative was either a selectman or town administrator.

To a question about Councils on Aging, she replied that at this time the COG didn't work with them.

She said the COG has a General Council that meets quarterly. It is composed of one representative from each town and a representative from the Franklin County Regional Planning Commission. There is an executive committee of five people: two elected regional representatives, 2 members of the general council, and 1 FCRPC. Members serve 3 year terms.

Carl Satterfield, Chair of the Finance Committee, asked if the Board had an agenda re: the FRCOG. DeHerdts replied this was simply the first step in gathering information to see if the town was getting what it was paying for. Russell noted that they had questioned the inspection services, having noted that for the previous two years the town was paying more in service fees than it was collecting in permitting income. Mr. Satterfield said he encouraged the Board to do a thorough examination of the use fees before making any decisions.

Nina Coler reported that she was experiencing difficulties getting return calls from the accountant. Fitz-Gibbon will look into this.

Park Commission : Present: Nina Coler, Pat Thayer

DeHerdts said Town Counsel has made two recommendations regarding the draft agreement to be submitted to the Attorney General. Attorney McNicol asked that the title be: Memorandum of Understanding. She also suggested that any reference to inappropriate use of the park be removed. Another change made would limit the reporting requirement to one time – June 1, 2012. After brief discussion a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously voted to sign the revised memorandum. It will now be sent to the AG with a covering letter.

Town Office Computer: The computer used by the Assistant Administrator has once again gone bad. The suggestion is that the hard drive has been corrupted. Paul Swem recommends the town purchase a new computer. A motion was made, seconded, and voted to expend up to \$750.00 to replace the computer.

Non-disclosure Agreement – A motion was made, seconded, and voted to execute the confidential non-disclosure agreement with WMECO.

Mass Broadband anchor facilities list - Fitz-Gibbon reported that she has the list but has been unable to print it out due to a computer problem.

Resignation - After stating that Suzanne Corbett was quite adamant that she had done all she could do on the Police Chief Search Committee, DeHerdts proposed that her resignation be accepted. A motion was then made, seconded, and voted to accept her resignation with regret.

Warrants: Warrant # _____ in the amount of \$ _____ and

Warrant # _____ in the amount of \$ _____ were reviewed and authorized for payment. In reviewing the warrants discussion was held regarding who was checking and signing certain payroll sheets for accuracy. The Assessors should be signing the Assessor's Clerk timesheets. Someone needs to sign Donna Scott's sheets.

Budget cycle: Mr. Satterfield inquired about the upcoming budget process. He asked about a schedule of meetings with the various boards, suggesting Thursday evenings.

Lighting Committee: Present: Ricki Carroll

Ms. Carroll requested that Anne Yuryan be appointed to the Street Lighting committee. A motion was made, seconded, and voted to appoint Anne Yuryan to the committee.

Personnel Committee: In response to a comment about requiring physical exams as condition of employment of employees such as the Police Chief, note was made that appointments were not made to the Personnel Committee in June. No one seemed to know who had been on that committee, other than Kit Nysten and maybe Curt Pichette. Fitz-Gibbon said Nysten told her there was a complete folder with the committee's work, but MF has been unable to find it.

Liaison Reports

Police Department -

Fire Department – It is not wise to store two day old ashes in a cardboard box in the basement, as one town resident learned the hard way.

Highway Department – The question raised a couple of meetings ago about the free cash number involves Chapter 90 money.

Emergency Management- There is money coming to the towns, hopefully enough to purchase a generator.

Town Hall Staffing- Russell reported that he is holding monthly meetings with the office staff. The topic for discussion at the November 30th meeting will be resetting hours for town hall to be open. He thinks the hours will change as of January 1st. There will also be decisions about town hall hours during the holidays. He has visited the Buckland town office to see how space is utilized. He noted that something that works there is a common room which is open to all.

Town hall building committee – [During this meeting (which lasted 3 hours) there appears to have been no heat.] At moments during the meeting Doug Cranson had spent some time talking with Norm Russell about getting the furnaces serviced. Finally, the matter was raised and Cranson was able to recommend Glen White, who has been servicing the Community Hall (and who Cranson considers "reasonable") be called to quote on (and perform) the needed maintenance.

Budgets: It is time for departments to prepare their budgets. DeHerdt hopes the members of the Board can meet with the committees and departments to better understand the needs and to make the process a little more friendly. He requested an electronic copy of the excel sheet used so he can begin to plug in the known numbers.

Mail : 1) Advice of credit for elder affairs from Unibank.

2) Nancy Garvin has been talking with the town Clerk and has discovered lots of little funds

3) Note from Harry Dodson – Clear Sky has offered to be on the wind advisory committee. Field commented that they're (Clear sky) is talking with Cumington and also Aaron Lewis of Worthington.

4) Franklin Co unty Cooperative Inspector Program has received a grant for a "full circle" software program that will permit the application of permits on line. To do this data is needed from the Assessors.

5) FRCOG – A list of services received from the Health Agent to date.

Follow-ups :

Need to get IT quotes for a computer

Meeting – DeHerdt and Fitz-Gibbon need to sit down to work out a plan for flow of information. Agenda needs to be set by Monday. 19 hours is not a lot of time. Should Fitz-Gibbon be at all meetings?

MIIA - Cost of litigation.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Priscilla Phelps