



Ashfield Select Board Meeting

Monday, April 10, 2017, 7:00 pm

Ashfield Town Hall, 412 Main Street, Ashfield MA 01330

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Select Board was held in Town Hall at 7:00 PM. Chair Olanyk convened the meeting at 7:05 pm with no recording device in use.

Present: Todd Olanyk, Chair, Tom Carter

Absent: Ron Coler

Also Present: Town Administrator Warren

Finance Chair Murray convened the Finance Committee Meeting at 7:06 pm.

Finance Committee Present:

Ted Murray, Chair, Melinda Gougeon, Carol Lebold, Mary Fitz-Gibbon,
Carl Satterfield

Approximately 12 audience members present including David Newell, Emily Robertson, Poppy Doyle, Lynn Taylor, Beth Ann Bezio, Fred Bezio, Dan Thibault, Gretchen Gerstner, Conan Pelc, Kate Burnett, Alix Burnett, Nina Coler.

Minutes – N/A

Discussion/Decision Items

Chair Olanyk asked the members whether they would object to taking up the Police Chief Appointment item first; there was none. He read the offer letter to Beth Ann Bezio into the record (Document 2) and noted that Ms. Bezio had already signed it.

Motion to direct the Select Board Chair to sign the employment offer letter to Chair Beth Ann Bezio: Olanyk

Second: Carter ***Vote (3-0-0)***

Motion to appoint Beth Ann Bezio as Chief of Police for a three-year term: Carter

Second: Coler ***Vote (3-0-0)***

The members congratulated Bezio on her appointment and welcomed her aboard. They look forward to working with her. Chief Bezio thanked them again for the opportunity.

Chief Bezio asked the Select Board to consider transferring funds from the Police Chief Salary to fund additional shifts in May and June. Carter thought they had a transfer listed on the Special Town Meeting Warrant, but it was noted that the transfer had been removed from the Special

Select Board agree to move forward with that plan. Carter clarified that Newell would write up the request. Newell agreed that was his plan. Carter noted that the correct way to submit to Town Counsel would be to send it to the Town Administrator for review and submission. The Select Board agreed to that approach. He provided the language that VEAC will review at their upcoming meeting on April 13, 2017. Coler would like to make sure that the bills are monitored. He thanked Newell for his work on the vocational education analysis, making it easy to understand. Chair Olanyk asked Warren to monitor the bills to make sure they are correctly split.

Poppy Doyle thanked Newell for his work on the VEAC Amendment and setting up an operational protocol document. She stated that he has done a phenomenal job working on the VEAC amendment and on the protocol booklet. Chair Olanyk thanked Newell for his exceptional work. Newell stated that the VEAC towns will spend over a million dollars this year on vocational education costs, acting effectively independent school departments. Codifying the relationship between the Towns and MTRSD, as well as the responsibilities of all parties. This will establish clear guidance and effective operations.

B. Emily Robertson & Poppy Doyle – Heath and Rowe Town Meeting Articles and MTRSD budget

Robertson shared a draft copy of the MTRSD budget handout (Document packet 5). She stated that a great deal of work has gone into the Heath amendment to the MTRSD regional agreement. The MTRSD and Heath School Committee have approved the changes, which Martha Thurber (MTRSD School Committee Chair) asked each of the member towns to include on the Annual Town Meeting Warrants.

Carter asked who has the best deal. Robertson stated that finally achieving this goal after 10 years is a significant achievement in and of itself. Closing Heath Elementary School will reduce costs, but with a transitional period over the next two years. Heath will be tuitioning the children into Hawlemont and will decide whether to withdraw formally from MTRSD and perhaps request being added to the Hawlemont district. MTRSD will pay a portion of the capital debt for the upcoming three years at \$80,000. Chair Olanyk asked whether, if Hawlemont doesn't agree to adding Heath, MTRSD will educate the Heath students within the district schools.

Coler asked whether Robertson thought this would pass. Robertson is hopeful, but if it doesn't there is a bare-bones structure for the operations of the Heath Elementary School. Finance Chair Murray wondered if the MTRSD Budget specifically anticipates closure of the Heath school. Robertson stated that the budget was drafted at a reduced rate (average cost per student paid in the district) of approximately \$600,000. Reductions may not be adequate, however, the need to reduce costs was paramount. There may need to be resources allocated from other areas if the Heath articles do not pass. Doyle again stated that everyone is hopeful. Robertson reminded everyone that Heath started this conversation, met diligently for over a year and one half, approached MTRSD to negotiate the agreement to achieve a long-term savings for both MTRSD and the Town of Heath. Coler asked whether there was a general sense of agreement with this effort from the other towns. Robertson and Doyle believes there is support, but Town Meeting votes will tell.

Chair Murray asked what will happen to the Heath School, as he thought that the elementary school would not be allowed to be closed. Robertson stated that the Town of Heath owns the building and owes approximately \$760,000 on the building. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has given verbal approval for the closure, but may be waiting to see the amount of support for the building closure before sending out a written approval. Chair Murray asked whether Doyle and Robertson see opposition to this. Doyle pondered whether the parents of school age children that had not lived in town during the disagreement with Rowe will take issue with it. The Town of Heath may be the hang-up with this effort. Robertson reiterated that the options were either this closure or such a bare-bones school that it might not meet the educational needs of the students. Chair Murray asked about why the \$80,000/per year payments for the school was necessary. Robertson stated that this was the negotiated number agreed upon by both parties.

Carter wondered whether this negotiation will set the stage for the similar, upcoming negotiation in Colrain as the Colrain Elementary School closure is the next phase of reduction. Is MTRSD setting too high a level of negotiation? Robertson stated that Colrain would not be tuitioning their students out of district, but rather sending them to Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School. Colrain also owns their elementary school building. Colrain is trying to determine what to do with that building as well.

Robertson stated that the DESE requested that the article amending the MTRSD Agreement to add Rowe into the District, be voted again. This language was approved last year except by Rowe. The only change is the effective date of July 1, 2017. All district towns have been asked to re-vote it to be safe, but DESE has not confirmed in writing whether all the District towns must re-vote.

Robertson stated that financially it would be advantageous for the District. Coler wondered if Rowe is a serious partner in this effort; he is not convinced based on Rowe's actions that they are. Robertson responded that should any of the towns vote to not allow Rowe into the District, there will be an amendment to the MTRSD Agreement in 2018 related to the tuition of Rowe students. Carter voiced his displeasure in having to wait for Rowe for this long. Chair Murray asked whether Robertson and Doyle support this article. Robertson and Doyle reiterated that there is a financial benefit, though small. Coler asked whether they would vote for it or not and both stated they would vote to allow Rowe into the District. Gougeon asked whether it is a moot point since DESE has not stated whether it must be re-voted at all. Robertson said that if DESE states that the article does NOT need to be re-voted, she would move that it be passed over or tabled on Town Meeting floor. Carter asked why Rowe has been so disagreeable about this issue by delaying their own vote for so long that it has precipitated another request for vote by all the towns. He would not have approved the addition of the article to the Warrant if he had known more of these details.

Motion to remove the Rowe article from the Annual Town Meeting Warrant: Carter

Hearing no second, motion died.

Chair Murray asked whether the vocational education expenses are considered during the MTRSD budget process. Robertson stated that it gets discussed in relation to the Ch 70 reimbursements, but not during the actual MTRSD budget development. Doyle reminded

everyone that vocational education is effectively a separate department based on the educational tasks of both tuition and transportation. Chair Murray's concern is that there are two large elements to education of Ashfield residents, costs for MTRSD and for vocational education. Satterfield noted that if MTRSD does not consider at all the effect of the costs for vocational education, there is a significant burden on the taxpayers. It amounts to twice the burden of Proposition 2½ or approximately 5% of the total annual budget for FY2018 for residents. Robertson reminded the group that there is a correlation between District and vocational education reimbursements in the Ch. 70 allocations from the State. If there is an increase in vocational education expense, there may well be a corresponding reduction in the MTRSD Ch. 70 allocation. Robertson noted that the District, led by the Superintendent, is lobbying for revisions to the Foundation Budget. Doyle also noted that the District is considering introducing vocational education elements to the offerings at MTRSD to incentivize students staying in the District. Chair Murray wondered if that would require significant capital investment. Robertson stated that a collaborative effort with Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) has been considered, but there is no way to know that definitively now.

Robertson stated that she has one year left in her three-year term and will not be running for another term next year. She invites anyone that the group may know that might be interested in serving to contact her.

Chair Murray asked whether any figures related to the other BEST recommendations have been discussed by the School Committee. Doyle stated that the focus is on Heath right now, after that they will begin work on the other recommendations.

Budget Discussion/Decision Items

A. Final Budget Review (Document packet 6)

Chair Murray has gone through the updated budget spreadsheet and done a back-of-the-envelope calculation. He noted that the Transfer Station debt exclusion is not included in the total. Also, the Lake Dam Maintenance account has been eliminated from the Public Works budget section, but remains in the Culture & Recreation section. This makes room to allocate funds to a line item for the Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP) Committee to complete updates to the Open Space Plan.

Chair Murray suggested that with the looming cost of Broadband possibly being more than originally anticipated, it makes sense to appropriate more money in preparation for the development and construction. He suggested that instead of \$80,000, the Finance Committee and Select Board submit a request for \$100,000. This amount stays within the levy allowance and maintains reserves of approximately 11.4%, within the margin outlined between 10-15%, but is closer to the original request of \$120,000.

Carter requested the Town Administrator investigate whether the Green Communities contract with the Executive Office of Energy Resources requires the position in the current grant and whether there is any formal agreement for the position internally.

Carter suggested that the request for approval for Transfer Station Improvements of \$100,000, instead of \$70,000. He noted that there is no dollar figure in the Ballot Question. The amount of the request is specified in the Town Meeting Article. Further, he noted that if project costs exceed the estimated \$70,000 that Superintendent Poissant asked for earlier in the budget season, requesting \$100,000 might alleviate the need to go back to Town Meeting. Carter stated that the borrowing would be planned for FY2019, this allows the Town to pay off the debt for the Highway Truck and backhoe and leaves room to raise and appropriate for this project. Chair Murray agreed that was a good plan.

Motion to increase the Transfer Station Improvements debt exclusion request to \$100,000: Carter

Second: Coler Vote (3-0-0)

Carter wondered about the Retention Wall Repair account in the 600 Series (Culture & Recreation section) of the budget. Coler stated that repairs for the Wall may be \$50,000 or more, but there is no way to know at this time. Coler suggested that funds continue to be set aside. He has applied for a MassWorks grant, but not received it in the past two years. Carter suggested combining the Public Works Account (400 Section) with the Culture & Recreation Account and continuing the current appropriation, and then funding the Culture & Recreation Account in the amount of \$3,000. Chair Murray agreed.

Carter asked whether the Town has paid any Workers Compensation claims in the past fiscal year. The balance in the current fiscal year is \$1,800, having used \$9,100. The projected amount for FY2018 should remain at \$11,000.

Coler asked to return to the Broadband article as a vote had not been taken. He questioned whether the amount to be raised and appropriated should be \$80,000. Carter stated he would be comfortable with an additional \$30,000. Coler preferred \$20,000. Chair Murray agreed that \$20,000 makes sense, making the total to be appropriated \$100,000. Chair Murray also noted that if the Energy Manager stipend was eliminated, that \$3,506 becomes available within the levy.

Motion to raise and appropriate \$15,000 and transfer \$80,000 from Free Cash: Coler

Second: Chair Olanyk

Carter offered a friendly amendment to the motion, accepted by Coler to increase the amount set aside for Broadband at ***\$20,000 to be raised and appropriated.*** Chair Olanyk called the vote on the amended motion: ***Vote (3-0-0)***

Line Item Changes –

Vocational Education	529,900.00
General Insurance	57,541.00
Police Chief Salary	58,827.00
Energy Manager – Pending More Info	3,506.00
Retention Wall (300 Series)	Eliminated
Broadband	100,000.00

Transfer Station Improvements 100,000.00
 * TS Improvements not calculated in totals; debt exclusion not approved and funds not appropriated.

Carter stated that with these changes, as noted in the Budget Report in the packet, he considered the budget complete. Chair Murray reminded the group that there was no resolution on the Energy Manager line item. Warren noted that she had to investigate further, but that the Boards could address the matter at the meeting on April 18th. Carter stated that the General Government Budget could be reduced on the floor of town meeting if there was still any questions at the next meeting.

Budget Series Totals -	R & A	Free Cash/Other
General Government	415,384	
Public Safety	207,894	
Education	2,826,926	
Public Works	600,001	
Health & Human Services	53,393	
Culture & Recreation	77,972	
Debt Service	169,594	
Intergovernmental Assessments	54,410	
Benefits	178,578	
Separate Warrant Articles		
HAEMS		89,957
Sewer/WWTP		155,219
Capital		
Town Hall Repairs/Maintenance	25,000	
Re-Wiring Project		5,000
Highway Pickup Truck		43,500
Highway Bridge Related Work		50,000
Senior Center Expansion		15,000
Parks Commission		3,425
Belding Memorial Restoration		12,500
Broadband	<u>20,000</u>	<u>80,000</u>
Total	4,629,152	454,601

B. Special Town Meeting Warrant (Document 7)

Carter requested that Warren get the amount to be transferred to Winter Roads by Friday. Warren responded that she has sent an email, but will contact him again tomorrow.

C. Annual Town Meeting Warrant Draft (Document packet 8)

Motion for the Select Board to sign the Warrant at their convenience and upon completion with the budget revisions: Carter

Second: Coler Vote (3-0-0)

D. Public Forum Status

Chair Olanyk asked about the status of the Public Forum. Chair Murray thanked Finance Committee members Gougeon and Lebold for development of an article for the Ashfield News. This article will outline the budget. Chair Murray and the Town Administrator will continue work on the slides for the upcoming Budget Public Information Session on April 18, 2017. Chair Murray expects to develop at least 4 slides. The Select Board looks forward to his presentation.

E. Broadband Project Status Update

- i. MLP Director Kulp notified the group that he has filed the grant application (Document 9) with the Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development (EOHED). He plans to ask for more money than was originally allocated since the pole survey identified additional poles, as well as poles in poor condition, increasing make-ready costs.

Coler asked Kulp how positively he thought that would be received by EOHED. Kulp stated that Bill Ennen is looking forward to our submission. Kulp plans to propose structuring the project so that significant increases can be identified as quickly as possible.

Motion for the Select Board Chair to sign the EOHED Broadband Grant with revisions by Kulp: Carter

Second: Olanyk Vote (3-0-0)

- ii. WG&E Contract

Kulp advised everyone that Town Counsel had requested boilerplate language changes in the contract, indemnity clauses, and specific references to attachments for various deliverables of the entire project. WG&E has not completed the changes. Kulp expects the contract to be reviewed by Town Counsel again next week.

F. Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP) – (Document 10)

Warren advised both boards of the pending Roberts Bros. participation in the state EDIP. She provided an overview of the program copied off the EOHED. The Town is encouraged provide economic incentive on the local level, but the bulk of any tax incentives come from the State.

Finance Committee Chair Murray advised the Select Board that they will recess to the Small Meeting Room.

Town Administrator's Report

The Town Accountant has asked each of the towns that hold meetings on Monday nights if they would consider changing their regular meeting days to another calendar day to allow more time to process the vendor and payroll warrants. Alternatively, the Select Board could designate a member as a signatory and review the Warrants at a subsequent meeting. The Select Board does not want to change their meeting day of Monday.

Carter suggested that perhaps there could be a shift of the Warrant schedule to accommodate the need. That would mean completing a Warrant for a period of a single week to reset the warrant schedule.

Warren stated that unless the Select Board has any objection, she plans to take a vacation from June 5-9, 2017. There was no objection.

Mail – (Document packet 11)

1. Mass DOT “Chapter 90” Allocation letter
2. Eversource notice of aerial patrol schedule
3. Superintendent Poissant request to increase Mollison’s pay rate after successful completion of introductory period. Chair Olanyk read the memorandum into the record.

Motion to approve increase rate, effective Friday, April 14, 2017: Olanyk

Second: Carter *Vote (3-0-0)*

Upcoming meetings

The Select Board will meet again on April 18, 2017.

Items Unanticipated – N/A

Adjourn – 9:30 pm

Select Board

Motion to adjourn at 9:30 pm: Olanyk

Second: Coler *Vote (3-0-0)*

Respectfully Submitted,

Kayce D. Warren
Town Administrator

Document List:

1. Agendas
2. Employment Offer Letter to Beth Ann Bezio
3. Animal Inspector Nomination letter and form
4. Memorandum by David Newell for Vocational Education Budget, VEAC Amendment language
5. School Committee correspondence, Draft MTRSD FY2018 Budget Handout
6. FY2018 Budget Report and updated Budget worksheets
7. Draft STM Warrant
8. Draft ATM Warrant, Town Counsel email re: Municipal Revolving Funds
9. EOHED Broadband Grant Application
10. EDIP Program Outline
11. Mail (listed above)

Approved 05.30.2017