

Town of Ashfield
Select Board Minutes
April 7, 2014

The Ashfield Select Board meeting was held on Monday, April 7, 2014 at the Ashfield Town Hall. The meeting was called to order at 7.02 p.m. by chair, Tom Carter. There were 6 audio recorders present and 1 video recorder and approximately 10 audience members present.

Select Board Members: Tom Carter-Chair, Paullette Leukhardt , Ron Coler-Vice Chair.was absent

Finance Committee Chair: Ted Murray

Executive Administrator: Mary Fitz-Gibbon

Scribe: Betty Stewart

Payroll and Vendor warrants WP14-21 were reviewed and signed (Document 2 & 3)

The chair said that the meeting minutes of March 17, 2014; March 24, 2014 would be postponed until all board members could be present.

Appointments: Richard Pree, Bird Hill Road was present to talk about winter maintenance of the village sidewalks. Richard passed out a fact sheet and raised points to consider for maintaining the sidewalks in the winter (Document 4). He went on to say that Conway maintains their sidewalks and it takes about two hours to do the work. Conway has a small Kubota that is used for other projects than the sidewalks. Richard presented a petition (Document 5) to ask the Select Board to have a town meeting article to fund this project at \$5000 to start. He also asked what the SB would recommend at the town meeting in May. Victoria Nelson said that not maintaining the sidewalks makes it difficult for some citizens to get to the library and businesses in town in the winter. Nancy Hoff thinks contracting out the work would be best. Maybe there should be a community sidewalk endeavor and the burden would not be on a few homeowners. She stated that she and others already clear sidewalks in their area. She also said we need both sides open.

Tom had Mary do research on the vote if any that had happened when the sidewalks were installed. On Oct. 7, 2002 there was discussion but no vote. On Nov. 27, 1995 minutes said they will be seasonal sidewalks. Paullette mentioned that prior to installation there were dirt paths to cement sidewalks which made it difficult when the curbs were put in. On 6/2/02 a vote was taken for the pedestrian enhancement project.

Deb Nicholson said under ADA the sidewalks should be handicapped accessible. Maybe a movement to senior housing in the downtown the sidewalks would have to be accessible.

Mike Skalski asked whose responsibility it would be to keep snow off where the 3 to 4 places now push snow onto the sidewalks. He also said the sidewalks would have to be salted and or sanded. He said it would be 3-4 hours per storm.

Tom said once sidewalks are cleared there is no drainage and the proposed project is quite a responsibility. He also said the West end would be the hardest to keep clear because of the buildings blocking the sun.

The question was asked where the state boundary was and Tom answered that the sidewalks were in the state right of way.

Tom asked the petitioners where they thought the money would come from. The proposed FY15 budget is now out of balance. He does appreciate the effort gone into research on sidewalks.

Nancy suggested that the \$5000 come from the highway budget because that one can be adjusted. She said it was a small amount of money for an important project.

Paullette thought that a check with Town Council to see if the town is liable.

Richard said alternatives could be used in place of salt, ice melt, potassium chloride or urea which would be no-corrosive. All the sidewalks wouldn't have to be treated every time.

Tom asked what would be saved by only doing one side.

Paullette asked what would happen if there was no money included in the budget at the Annual Town Meeting for the sidewalks.

Ted Murray of the Finance Comm. said he agreed with Nancy that the \$5000 figure was not significant for a one year trial. If we said for all proposals to take some from free cash or maybe go into the remaining stabilization fund, the stabilization would be down to 8% and free cash 10-15%. The stabilization fund started out this year but got whittled down because of the vocational school expenses.

Mike pointed out that he or anyone would have to buy a piece of equipment to do the job and machines aren't cheap.

Paullette said they haven't figured ice removal.

Ted said if the town bought the equipment it would raise the price.

Tom said once the switch is flipped you can't go back. He also wanted to thank Mike for all he has done over the years to keep the sidewalks clear to town hall.

Deb asked if the homeowner was short of funds what who would be responsible for the removal of the snow.

Tom wants to know how much of the sidewalk is the responsibility of the town.

Victoria said there have been so many moves to make everything handicap accessible. Right now if she wants to get to the post office or library it is difficult or impossible.

The town could say everyone is responsible and it wouldn't be the town responsibility.

Paullette asked are the homeowners responsible?

Nancy said it could be a cooperative community venture. Barrels conveniently spread out with sand and it could be everyone's duty to spread it if needed.

Betty Stewart said the water district has to have handicap accessibility and to keep sidewalks and driveways clear of ice and snow. She also pointed out that there is no place to put the snow in some places and no parking on Main Street.

Tom, Paullette and Ted had a discussion about how to solve the budget gap. Ted submitted a 2 page draft (Document 6) and went over the highlights on the budget. The improvements to Sanderson Academy the amount proposed is for the first five years of a multi-year improvement plan. What happens after the first five years? Ted will go to the school committee meeting to get it clarified. This article will have to be put in for debt exclusion.

Tom asked if Ted had any ideas on how to solve the other problems with the budget.

Ted said the dump truck is \$167,000 and they could take \$17,000 out of stabilization, also a debt exclusion article. Cost containment might have to go into stabilization to keep the budget within ranges allowed.

Tom pointed out that the Stabilization Fund is to stabilize the tax rate. The drastic increase in the Vocational Schools budget is throwing the budget out of sync.

Mary will send via e-mail the draft proposal from Ted so everyone can think about it for next week, along with a new updated spreadsheet. These will be sent to both, the Finance Comm. and the Select Board

There will be a vocational meeting on Tuesday April 8, 2014

The Finance Committee will meet at 6 p.m. before the Select Board meeting at 7:00 on the 14th.

On other ways to bring the budget together Paullette thinks the board should look at the stipends.

Tom thinks it is not an easy fix with the Stabilization Fund. It might be better to take out of the SF instead of shortchanging the other items in the budget.

Mary will contact Town Council and the insurance carrier on Tuesday.

Paullette feels uncomfortable taking the school out of stabilization making them the heavy. Maybe take the dam out of stabilization.

The savings in the Vocational in the last year (\$200,000) made a difference in what is in free cash.

Michael Buonoconti(Supt.) (Document 7) would like to meet with the SB and the Finance Comm. for a walk through of Sanderson to show uses and problems in the building. They will meet with him on the 23rd at 7 p.m.

The regular SB meeting will move to Tuesday the 22nd because of Patriot's Day.

Franklin Wickland suggested to the board that they should look at taking the town hall tower repairs out of the Fred Cross Fund. There is currently \$47,000 in that fund.

The Animal Control Officer wants permission to collect late dog license fees. Tom moved that permission be granted the ACO, seconded by Poullette. The vote was Tom yes, and Poullette yes, making it unanimous.

The CDBG will be put on a later meeting agenda for next year's rehabilitation of eligible properties.

A press release about the police camera should be done.

Poullette questioned a couple of accounts that have a negative balance and sees nothing has come out of the Reserve Fund.

There were 2 e-mails about internet prop.(Document 8)*

Mary will get the wording for two articles that will be put on the warrant. The first is about exempting a person on the Fire Dept. from mandatory retirement at the age of 70.

The other is regarding the Ashfield House Lien.

The Town Clerk has asked that an article be put on the warrant to separate the Annual Meeting from the Annual Town Election. It would make them on separated days. The SB would like the clerk to come to the next meeting or e-mail the information on why this is wanted.

Poullette had phone calls and has concerns about the gas leak at the Ashfield House and how it was handled. Kachina Yuryan noticed the smell of gas and notified others about the problem. A call was made to the fire dept. and they responded. It took /12 hour to get people out of the building. She feels that our fire dept. should have evacuated the building before Dead River Company came on the scene.

Tom called Robin Sherman, from the housing authority, and she sent two people up and they also called the gas inspector. Some people said that Dead River had notified the housing authority that a valve needed to be replaced 2-4 weeks before. Tom said we should have more information when all the stories are put together.

Tom motioned and Poullette seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:33 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Document List

1. Agenda for 4/7/14
2. Warrant WP-21
3. Warrant WP-21
4. Fact sheet from Richard Pree regarding sidewalk maintenance and costs.

5. Petition presented to include winter sidewalk maintenance on the warrant.
6. Draft from Ted Murray on how to solve the budget gap.
7. Michael Buonoconti proposed Sanderson walkthrough.
8. 2 e-mails regarding internet Prop.

Approved as drafted June 2, 2014 2-0-1 (TO)