

SELECT BOARD MINUTES - February 17, 2011

Present: Selectmen – Dave DeHerdt, Doug Field, Norm Russell
Assistant Administrator – Mary Fitz-Gibbon

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM

Minutes: Motions were made, seconded, and voted to accept open meeting minutes of February 10, 2011 and February 15, 2011 and executive meeting of February 10, 2011.

New business:

School Committee resignation: A motion was made and seconded to accept with appreciation the resignation of Faye Whitney from her position as a representative of the Town to the Mohawk n Trail Regional School Committee. Emily Robertson, the remaining school committee member, asked that the Board appoint someone to fill the spot until annual elections. She further explained votes of the committee are weighted; Ashfield's vote counts as 8.5. It is important to have someone present to cast Ashfield's vote. It is also frustrating for the hard working committees to not have a quorum so voting could be done.

Town hall Use: Present - Wayne Gardner

Ash field Community Theater has requested use of town hall on three weekends in May and June. Gardner is treating these uses as separate events, stating that a safety inspection needs to be conducted before each weekend. The forms are not complete; he will resubmit then when the proper parties have signed them. Fitz-Gibbon said this was just a preliminary viewing to see if the board would like to meet directly with the applicants.

Announcements:

On Saturday, February 19, from 10 – 12, there will be a Thank You reception for John Cotton for his service to the Town as Interim Police Chief

All materials of the Police Chief Search Committee have been turned in to the Town Clerk.

Dave DeHerdt announced that he will not be a candidate for re-election to the Select Board. He said he has enjoyed the past three years and thanked the citizens of the town for giving him the opportunity to serve on the Board.

Caucus will be held on Tuesday, March 22, 2011.

Special Town Meeting: After consultations with Town Counsel, Town Moderator, and the Treatment Plant Operator, the Board has decided to make changes to the warrant. A motion was made by Norm Russell, seconded by Doug Field, and unanimously voted to rescind the warrant approved by the Select Board on February 15th. A motion was made, seconded, and voted to accept the warrant for a Special Town Meeting on March 7, 2011.

Mail:

MassDOT has submitted a report on its inspection of the Bear River Bridge on Beldingville Road. The Board forwarded the report to the highway superintendant.

A report from the Senior Citizen Task Force has been received stating what they did.

A letter regarding a property on Williamsburg Road is acknowledged. Field said this has been going on for several years. The Board directed that the letter be forwarded to the Franklin County Community Inspectional Program.

Budgets: Finance Committee: Present- Carl Satterfield, Ted Murray, and Lynn Taylor

Fire Department: Present- Del Haskins, Fire Chief

Haskins presented a level funded budget. Although expenses have increased, he said shortages would be made up through the firefighters 'fund, which is not part of the town's budget. He noted that inspections of the trucks are now \$100 each, up from \$29.00. He has had to buy 7 new batteries. There continues to be the problem of a shortage of firefighters available during daytime and requirements for training continue to increase. The department used to pay for all of the training, now he can only pay for one hour. He explained that departments that are considered hazardous, such as Fire and Police, are insured by V.F.I.S., (health and accident insurance) with the departments sharing the cost. He also talked about a possible grant to replace the small 4x4 truck that would be in the vicinity of \$200,000. If received the Town would need to provide a match of \$10,000. Haskins said he currently pays \$455.00 for computer data storage and management.

At this point, Interim police Chief John Cotton introduced Captain John Newton of the Greenfield Police Department to discuss a possible county wide data system.

Captain Newton said that Greenfield, working through the FRCOG, has secured Homeland Security funding to establish a data security information management system designed for the non-urban environment. After an extensive search a system by Stillman Technologies, Inc. from Utah has been purchased. It runs the full gamut of emergency software needed for police, fire and emergency medical departments. One of the key benefits is the ability to share information between departments, something which cannot be done with the system used by most Towns. The mainframe is currently located at the Greenfield Police Station, but could be located anywhere. He noted that the State of Vermont has been using this system for several years.

Newton spent some time explaining how the system would work. He then said he was inviting towns to consider participating. The more towns that wish to participate, the better. If interested a "soft" shared user agreement would be needed. The sooner an agreement was in place the sooner exact costs could be determined. Newton said the cost to Ashfield would be around \$2,018.00, which is close to what is currently being expended. Currently there are thirteen communities that have expressed an interest. He expects the Sheriff and District Attorney will join the system.

Cotton spoke of the many ways in which this system could improve the operation in the Ashfield department. In addition to the ability to better communicate with other agencies, another benefit could be a safer manner of handling persons under arrest. A question was asked about support if an officer needed help operating the system. Cotton said officers would call each other for help. This system seemed to be of interest to both police and fire departments and will be researched further.

Police Department: Present – John Cotton

Chief Cotton presented a level funded budget, based upon FY'10, as FY'11 has been an unusual year. It was noted that the FY'10 budget had been \$118,000. In the proposed FY'12 budget is: salary for a full-

time chief at \$54,000 and around \$40,345 for other personnel and operating expenses. Questions were asked about how the proposed Stillman system might affect the budget. Cotton thought it would fit as funds had to be included for such services, regardless of which system was used. Cotton said although patrols had been less during the year there officers still responded to calls for fires, medical issues, injuries, special events, etc .

School Budget: Present – Emily Robertson

Ms. Robertson presented some of the issues facing the school district as it prepares for the upcoming school year. She said there would be an increase of \$30,000 in Chapter 70 money , but it was not much help, as there would also be a \$500,000 decrease in other state funds. The overall goal this time around is to keep the school budget level funded. She said it appears that is possible. The #1 priority is the student. That means the needs of the students have priority over other budgetary items. Robertson is serving on the teacher contract negotiations committee currently in mediation.

In a motion, seconded, and voted in a unanimous roll call vote, the Board moved to go into executive session to discuss non-union personnel. It would not reconvene in open session.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Priscilla Phelps