

SELECT BOARD MINUTES – March 17, 2011

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

Absent: Norm Russell

Minutes: A motion was made, seconded, and voted to approve minutes of March 10, 2011.

Appointments:

FRCOG: Present – Joyce Fulmer, Substance Abuse Coordinator

Ms. Fulmer was present to provide information about the Alcoholic Beverages Compliance Initiative which is part of a Community Action Plan sponsored by the FRCOG. The intent of this coalition is to assist towns in ensuring compliance with state and local law and regulations with regard to selling or serving alcoholic beverages and drugs to underage persons. Ms. Fulmer said she had been encouraged to present information about this program by Chief Dronney and Officer Wilder.

In surveys that had been conducted around the county the indication is that consumption of alcohol among youth is greater in this area than in other areas and that the perception among youth is that adults don't disapprove of underage drinking and substance abuse. This is a misconception that needs to be corrected. One way is through participation in this coalition which seeks to educate and also to discourage serving minors. One of the activities undertaken is sting operations in which an underage person is sent in to an establishment to attempt an purchase. Such establishments are given plenty of notice that a sting operation will be conducted. There are penalties for violations which are spelled out in the memorandum.

Following discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and voted to sign the Memorandum of Understanding from the Alcohol Compliance Initiative.

Veteran's Agent: Notice has been received that Leo Parent, longtime Veteran's Agent with offices in Turner's Falls, is planning to retire. He has called an emergency meeting to consider a replacement. Some questions were asked about veterans organizations in Ashfield: Are there any? Persons known to be involved in veterans' concerns are Curt Pichette, Warren Kirkpatrick, and Wayne Farrell, [members of the American Legion.

MAIL

Verizon: In accordance with a directive from the Attorney General's office, a letter has been received from Verizon identifying the contact person for Ashfield as Ellen M. Cummings. This is part of a response to complaints about poor service to the towns.

Animal Inspector: Information has been requested regarding the re-appointment of an Animal Inspector for the town. Kim Reardon has served in this capacity for several years. Ms. Fitz-Gibbon will contact her to see if she wishes to continue as such and to get the required forms signed.

Letter to the AG: Wayne Gardner has sent a letter to the Attorney General regarding public meetings on holidays. A letter in response to his question was read.

Budget time:

Finance committee members present: Lynn Taylor, Janet Rogers, Carl Satterfield, and Tom Carter Absent: Ted Murray

No department budgets were scheduled for this meeting; however, anyone who had a budget was invited to attend, if appropriate. Mike Fitzgerald, Chair of the Planning Board, put in an appearance to let it be known that his board could work with the same budget it currently has. Revisions to state law now requiring applicants to pay costs of hearing, including notices to abutters, etc. removes this expense for the board.

Attention was focused on information about vocational schools. Tuition at Smith Voc. Is \$14,900 per year. An additional \$4,190 may be added if the student requires Special Ed. Services. Four students are expected to graduate from Smith this year. Tuition at Franklin Tech. is not known at this time. There are no students graduating from Franklin this year. The number of new students planning to attend either Tech. school is not known. It will be necessary to make a "scientific wild-assed guess" as to what vocational education will cost the Town, as one finance committee member put it.

FRTA – DeHerdt reported that he had attended a meeting and learned that FRTA wants to assess member towns, even those without bus service, in order to cover overhead expenses. He said the amount was substantial. This will be discussed further at the FRTA meeting in May. He wondered if Ashfield was a member of FRTA.

Following that, attention turned to understanding the town's debt service. Short term debt is what the Treasurer burrows while waiting for tax revenues to come in. This has been less since the Town went to quarterly tax assessments. Long term debt represents debt associated with debt exclusion items. A breakdown of the items considered long term was requested.

DeHerdt tried to understand how the Enterprise Fund worked. He was at a loss to see where the retained earnings to be used appeared on the balance sheet. Eventually, the mystery was solved. Todd Olanyk, a Sewer Commissioner came by later to further explain Enterprise Fund.

Veterans' graves – Wayne Farrell is usually the person who handles veterans' items (flags). Carter slid in notice that someone will be needed to plan Memorial Day, as his wife, Sandy, won't be available to plan the event.

Other items discussed - It is hoped that stipends can be at least partially reinstated and a 2% COLA might be possible for employees. A general review of the overall budget was held to see if there were any additional items for which information was still needed. Transfer station issues were discussed. Trash bags or no trash bags; pay at the dump or at Town Hall; add a day or change hours.

FRCOG assessments include a basic administrative fee, plus fees for services. There were questions about increases in the health services assessment and other areas.

The Selectmen will finalize their budget and meet again with the Finance Committee for a final review on the 31st.

Police Department: The Chief is looking into replacing cruisers and has submitted a letter that will be reviewed next week when the full board meets.

Accident: A letter has been received from Ashfield resident Paul Tacy reporting an accident that happened at the highway garage when Tom Poissant, driving a town truck, backed into him. He submitted a quote from White Lightning for repairs. A report will be filed with the Town's insurer.

MassDOT: MassDOT will hold a hearing on March 29, 2011 at 6:pm at Town Hall regarding plans for the retaining wall work along the South River on RT 116.

WMECO Annual meeting: Field will attend the WMECO annual meeting on 3/31.

Bonding of Treasurer: A motion was made, seconded, and voted that on all checks of \$50,000 or more a counter signature be required.

ITEMS FOR NEXT WEEK:

FRCOG: Letter explaining new fees for participating in the bidding process.

Swearing in of Chief: A date needs to be set to publicly swear in the Chief.

Senior Center : Article for warrant.

Sidewalks: Change in state regulations regarding plowing of sidewalks.

Meeting adjourned at 10:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Priscilla Phelps