

SELECT BOARD MINUTES - April 6, 2011

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

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM.

Minutes: A motion was made, seconded, and voted to accept the open meeting minutes of March 30, 2011. A motion was made, seconded, and voted to accept the executive minutes of March 30th. DeHerdt said that in light of what happened today with the unemployment appeal, the executive session minutes may become open.

Liaison Reports:

Highway: Field reported that he has prices for trash bags: 33 gallon @ .24/ bag, \$48.88/case; 41 gallon @ .29/bag, \$58.83/case; 41 gallon (2mil) @ .30/bag, \$66.51/case. They all have drawstrings. The quote is for 100 cases and is good until the 14th of April. There was discussion about not having bags at all, use of a card punch, or some other system. A comment was made that plastic bags do not decay. A question was asked about the cost of paper bags. Before making a decision information on the number of bags needs to be known. This will be on the agenda for next week.

Chapter 90 money for FY'12 amounts has been released. Ashfield will get \$299,555, which is \$60,000 more than last year.

Dept. of work Force Letter: A motion was made, seconded, and voted to send a letter to the Department of Work Force, with a copy to the Town's State Representative. Russell reported that following last week's discussion about the Town's responsibility for payment of unemployment benefits of former employees, he contacted the Town's State Representative. He then presented a letter he had prepared for signing. DeHerdt added that in some cases the Town is being asked to pay unemployment benefits that were greater than the actual wage paid the worker while on the Town's payroll.

Town Hall Building Committee - The Building Committee would like to thank Stuart Harris and Wayne Gardner for their work in developing ideas of how to rearrange town hall. It really all began to come together when the Chief said he's like to take the police department downstairs.

GAW The Building Committee having not had follow-up communication from GAW had considered dropping GAW. DeHerdt said he's recently received an email from GAW leaving the impression that they (GAW) is not sure the idea will work. He will forward the email to the building committee.

Rugs- Donna Scott would like to get new rugs for town hall. Russell said she will get a price. Field said there is a company that will bring in rugs and clean them on a regular basis.

Budget Present: Ted Murray

Ted reported that he had filed notice of a possible conflict of interest because his wife, Carolyn is currently serving as a Library Trustee, as Treasurer

New budget sheets showing Select Board (SB) and Finance Committee (FC) versions were reviewed. The two versions were much the same. The SB increased the Town Administrator budget to make it a

25 hr/week position. The budget includes a 2% increase for all employees who have worked 6 months or longer for the Town.

The SB had added a \$10,000 figure toward a police vehicle, which, following discussion, will appear in the Capital Stabilization Fund. FC thought it was time to put something into Stabilization in as well. The FC added a small amount to the local Council on Aging budget. Field will obtain a breakdown of the Council on Aging budget request.

There was discussion about whether to add \$15,000 to the General Highway budget or leave the money in Free Cash where it can be accessed, if needed.

Murray will bring back information to the FC for another review. The two boards will meet again before ATM.

Warrant: The SB then turned to considering how best to present the budget information at Annual Town Meeting (ATM). The usual format of very detailed articles could be used. In it money is very specifically allocated and cannot be easily moved from one item to another without a special town meeting(stm). Other Towns, such as Buckland, present more general articles that appear to provide greater flexibility, reducing the need for frequent STMs. One thought was to present general articles, with a budget worksheet to clarify how monies in the articles were intended to be used. Fitz-Gibbon said it was her understanding, after consulting the Town's DOR person, that the worksheet would be as binding as the actual motion made at ATM. DeHerdt suggested Town Council be consulted about this.

A discussion of the distinction, mostly with the office staff, between salary and hourly. Salaried people are paid a set amount regardless of the number of hours they actually work. Hourly people could expect to be paid for the number of hours they actually work. However, in practice they are only paid for the number of hours budgeted, regardless of the hours actually worked. Russell said then there needs to be some flexibility for hourly people who might need to work more hours one week but could work less another week. DeHerdt said two years ago the issue of comp time was addressed. That would resolve a lot of the problem now. But because the policy wasn't clear at the time, it was decided there would be no comp time. This may need to be revisited.

The question was raised about whether there is a personnel board. The board was created at some point in the recent past. At the current time no one present was sure who was last appointed. This is a project to be addressed after ATM. The warrant for ATM in 2003 had an article creating the Personnel Board.

Brief visit from Fire Chief - Del Haskins appeared to advise the Board that the Town is still in the running for a firetruck. He also reminded that next Wednesday there is a meeting at the Greenfield Fire Department to consider a new dispatching idea. Fire departments are meeting in the afternoon. Police will meet earlier that day.

Change of meeting date: In order to also allow someone to attend the School Committee meeting, also on Wednesday, the board will move its meeting date until Thursday.

The **WiredWest article** will appear again, exactly as it appeared on the STM meeting, thus meeting the required two votes by the Town.

Debt Exclusion Question- There will be an article for the schools (roof repairs at Mohawk). It is a debt exclusion so there will also be a ballot question.

Items for the Board to sign:

1. **Chapter 90** The Board signed two copies of a reimbursement request for highway work.
2. The Treasurer requested authorization to do **short term borrowing** in the amount of \$100,000.
3. The Board signed forms verifying that the Town has **one precinct**

Animal Control: Kirkpatrick requested permission to call owners of unregistered dogs reminding that the grace period for registering dogs will soon be up. There are about 80 dogs that have not been registered for the current year.

Treatment Plant: A notice from DEP regarding a need for action to address the situation where, due to melting snow and heavy rains, the treatment plant exceeded its permit of 25,000 gallons/day on eleven days during the month of March. A response needs to be prepared that identifies the source of the problem and presents a plan for removing the source of the overflow.

Thank you: There has been a change in accountants; Liz Braccia has moved on to a new position with the Town of Greenfield and Joyce Muka has replaced her in keeping the Town's financial books in order. Letters expressing appreciation will be sent.

A thank you goes to Ricki Carroll for the fantastic job she did in cleaning Town Hall.

Mail:

A letter has been received from the City of Melrose looking to partner with other communities in an effort to regionalize technology services and data center operations.

A letter has been received from Jamie Godfrey advising the Board of a meeting on April 15th at 3:PM with the MA Office of Elder Affairs. The focus will be on regional agreements and respective roles and responsibilities of Boards of Selectmen, regional directors, local councils, and staff.

At ATM the Boys Scouts will present the flag and lead a Pledge of Allegiance. The Board thought it would pass on having an invocation.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Priscilla Phelps