

**SELECT BOARD MINUTES
APRIL 21, 2011**

Present: Select Board members: Dave DeHerdt, Doug Field, Norm Russell
Executive Administrator: Mary Fitz-Gibbon

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM.

Minutes: Hold for next meeting

Requests for Town Hall Use:

- 1.) Performance Application by Ashfield Community Theater – dates: 5/27,28,29 and 6/3 &4; hours 4:30 – 10:00 PM; David Knowles – contact person, will also be in charge of lifts along with house managers; admission will be charged; food will be served on 1st floor. Total fee: \$650.00
A motion was made by Russell, seconded by Field, and unanimously approved to permit use of Town Hall by the Ashfield Community Theater.
- 2.) Rehearsals by Ashfield Community Theater – no sets will be built until after May 8th. Town Hall Steward has signed. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously voted to approve use of Town Hall for rehearsals. During discussion, Russell commented about using care with power tools. He noted observing an unattended drill with its bit pointed toward the floor. He said some people would be quite upset if anything happened to the floor.

Budget Review:

The Board turned to the latest version of the FY'12 spreadsheet.

A revised library budget has been received. It includes a 2% cola for the librarian. The Board questioned the hourly rate for the janitor, which appears to be greater than that paid for town hall services. It also questioned an increase in internet service (going from \$ 650.00 to #1,000.) An explanation will be requested. A level budget had been requested and an increase had been incorporated due to the CWMARS program. The decision was made to leave the numbers as already presented for the time being.

Transfers of funds after May 1st. It appears that several accounts will need to be adjusted and funds added or moved around by joint agreement of the Select Board and the Finance Committee. These boards/ departments will need to complete a form requesting the changes:

- 1) Planning Board has a lot going on and needs additional money to pay its scribe - \$100- \$200;
- 2) Fire Department received a second delivery, part of which was at a higher rate than agreed upon;
- 3) Highway Department would like to move funds from one line item to another to cover a \$550 shortfall in procurement. This may be the result of something having been charged to the wrong account.

Russell said the Select Board (SB) expense account, with a current balance of \$16.00, could be increased, as well. He recommended using Grant Program Income, which can be used at the discretion of the board.

This led to a conversation about expectations resulting from the increasing the Admin person's hours. One of the intents was to increase the number of hours Town Hall would be open to the public. Part of this discussion was addition of taking the Select Board minutes to the Admin position. Should the Admin person do this? It was estimated that typing up minutes from a Board meeting would take at least as long as the meeting itself, which would be two to three hours. Adding that amount of time to the Admin position would not solve the existing problem of not enough time to get the essentials done. As a temporary fix another person had been handling this responsibility. Did the Board wish to continue this policy? Russell suggested one of the Board members could do the minutes.

Ricki Carroll, who had attended a recent Finance Committee (FC) meeting, reported that there seemed to be the feeling that evaluations of the staff were not being done, suggesting that a solution might become obvious through this process. Ricki suggested there were places where volunteers could help out – doing things like issuing dog licenses, selling dump stickers. Fitz-Gibbon said the compression of lots of people in limited space was a contributing factor.

Russell emphatically stated that he found the persons who worked in the office made excellent use of their time. Perhaps the FC didn't really understand what has to happen in town office. In fact, several positions had been short on hours to do the jobs well for a long time.

The requests for additional / transfer of funds need to be completed and submitted and the FC advised so that the boards (SB & FC) can meet of May 4th to take the appropriate actions.

Review of Warrant Articles:

The FC recently met and had several questions about warrant articles. Ricki Carroll, who attended that meeting was present to contribute some of what was discussed.

Article #5 – Fitz-Gibbon reported that she has talked to Judy Willis, at Mohawk, in search of numbers for this article. Field is concerned that people will think that the town is being asked to participate in the funding of the Buckland-Shelburne and Colrain projects, as well as the Mohawk project. The FC didn't like seeing this article on the warrant, but the SB feels this is the kind of article that belongs on an Annual Town Warrant, where a lot of people participate, rather than a poorly attended Special Town Meeting.

Article #11 – The FC doesn't feel there is a need for an Assistant Treasurer. The feeling is that with the farming out of payroll, the Treasurer should have plenty of time to handle her responsibilities. Field said there is still a lot of work for the Treasurer in preparing the necessary information for the payroll service. FC is concerned about performance evaluations. Fitz-Gibbon commented that even with outsourcing the Treasurer doesn't have enough hours to do her job.

Russell said that for years the Town has been pouring money into the Highway Department, etc., and in the process short-changing the women in the office who are doing all the work to keep the Town functioning. He said the thing is this work is not obvious – like a pothole. He gave an example of what happened when not enough time was devoted to checking things out. In reviewing the unemployment situation, he discovered that previously, the Town was billed \$2,500 for unemployment expenses. This was followed by a bill for \$1,500, and a third for \$1,000. These bills were paid without challenge. For all intents and purposes, the Treasurer at the time gave away money, because she didn't have time to evaluate the bills.

Fitz-Gibbon said other towns of similar size, with similar budgets seem to have many more hours devoted to administering the Town. DeHerdt said he wondered how they accomplished that. Some time was taken compare Buckland and Ashfield, as they are similar in size and budget.

Article #17 - FC member Tom Carter likes the detailed breakout that has been done in the past. DeHerdt said the SB was looking for more flexibility by combining some items, although the accounting would not change. This will likely be discussed on town meeting floor.

Articles #25 & 26 – the Stabilization articles – The purpose of putting \$10,000 into Capital Stabilization was to earmark it, possibly for a cruiser. Usually, if grants are available, there is a matching component. This is a way to have that money available.

Article #6 – Transfer from sewer to reimburse the Town for an FY'11 expense should not be on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

Old Business:

Transfer Station: A motion was made by Russell, seconded by Field, and unanimously voted to keep the Transfer Sticker price at \$40.00.

Police Department:

- 1) Sexual Harassment Policy - A motion was made by Field, seconded by DeHerdt, and unanimously voted to approve the Sexual Harassment Policy as presented by Chief Droney.
- 2) A motion was made by Field, seconded by Russell, and unanimously voted to accept Chief Droney's Housekeeping policy including: Oath of Office, Code of Ethics, Authority to carry weapons, Constitutional Compliance, Motor vehicle pursuits, Seat belt use, and Counselor notification policy.
- 3) Chief Droney plans to request that all officers reapply for their jobs. He did not hire them and would like the opportunity to do so.

Council on Aging: Field said he has received everything the CoA has on Ashfield. He had a spreadsheet that shows Ashfield as 7% of the CoA revenue source.

Pole hearing: There will be a brief hearing on May 4th on a request by Verizon regarding poles on Apple Valley Road and John Ford Road.

Buckland Road Sewer Extension: A draft of an agreement for installation of a sewer line to The Field and cottage off Buckland Road was reviewed. The Board will sign the agreement to give an easement, shown as easement A on the accompanying plan.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Priscilla Phelps