

SELECT BOARD METING, August 25, 2010

Present: Dave DeHerdt, Norm Russell
Doug Field arrived at 7:25 pm

Meeting called to order at 7:10PM

Minutes of the July 28th meeting were approved by those present.

Recognition of Chairman of the Board of Assessors, Richard Chandler, for receipt of an award for his work for the preservation of farmland. through the USDA Agricultural Preservation Program.

Liasion Reports

Fire Department Fire Chief Del Haskins is attempting to obtain a cost for separate phone and internet service for the fire department and town hall . He has learned that as this is service for a municipality, he has to contact a different department. At the moment the town office has no internet service, and hasn't had for a week. The source of the problem has not been located.

Police matters 1.) The Explorer has been moved to a different dealership. The initial dealer did not want to warrantee the vehicle, but a corporate representative from Ford has been helpful in making arrangements. The problem appears to be a failed coil that allowed raw fuel to enter the exhaust system, burning out the converter.

2) Fall Festival is coming and the department has one part-time officer who works limited hours. In previous years the entire department has provided police coverage pro bono for the event. Auxillary officers and constables could be asked to assist, but for liability reasons, due to the nature of police responsibilities, volunteers does not seem to be a wise idea. It might be possible that former officers be deputized for the weekend. This will need to be investigated. Someone suggested using Boy Scouts. Doug Cranson said they have assisted people, but they do not direct traffic.

3) Police Search Committee The search committee has decided to extend the application period to September 15th. Doug Field reported that there are currently 11 applicants.

4) Interim Police Chief Contract The contract will be extended until September 27th.. A motion was made, seconded, and voted to extend the Chief's contract an additional thirty days.

Town Hall Russell reported that a candidate for the Town Clerk position would be interviewed later in the meeting. He reported that after receiving input from the town hall staff, it was decided to review the job description for the Executive Administrator (formerly Town Administrator) position. He also reported that Nancy Dunne and Nancy Intres have been doing a great job keeping town hall operating - business as usual.

Payroll service The Treasurer would like to outsource the payroll process. Russell reported that he has learned that about 40% of towns use a payroll service. The service under consideration is Harper's, based in Worcester. The fee for this service is approximately \$100/per month plus a small fee per person. The rate is guaranteed for three years. Currently, the town pays \$250.00 per year for payroll software. The cost if this service will come out of the current Collector/Treasurer budget. During discussion note was made that the Accountant was in favor of taking this step. This is a good time to make the change, as it's the beginning of a new quarter. A motion was made, seconded, and voted to authorize the Treasurer to employ the services of Harper Payroll Service.

Highway Department All of the blacktopping has been done. When the weather improves the department will work on laying down the new rubberized material on some roads.

Emergency Manager 1) Field reported that he has been in contact with Tighe & Bond for performance of an inspection of the dam at the lake. Last time, Tighe & Bond performed the inspection, so it has all of the figures. The charge will be the same as last time, \$3,500.00. Money is available for this project.

2) Doug Cranson asked if there was any plan to repair the leak. He said there is a leak that only reveals itself when the water is high. He thought it would be a good idea to fix it while it is small rather than waiting for it to become larger.

3) MEMA has reviewed the Town's emergency plan. The only thing questioned was the methods available for notifying people of an emergency. Currently, the fire station siren and word of mouth are used. Field is looking into something called *Connect City*, a phone notification system.

Park Commission Present: Park Commissioners
Nina Coler, Pat Thayer, Kurt Meyer

Coler presented "Exhibit A" which detailed anticipated expenses for finishing restoration land area of the park, totaling \$27,850. She reported that upon receipt of the structural report of the existing condition of the back barn (highway building), the building would not be repaired; it would be torn down. Added to this the planting of trees and painting brought the total anticipated expense to \$59,235.00. (Assuming the demolition did not have to be done at prevailing wage.)

An amended copy of the AG's agreement was then presented. DeHerdt said his understanding was that the initial obligation was to repair the damage due to use by the highway department. He questioned whether or not the current plan was going beyond that which was obligated by including wear and tear that was normal for a park. Meyer responded that the intent of this Commission was to restore the area to a park-like condition. Note was made that the back building, used by the Highway Department was

not there when Belding transferred the property, so it seemed appropriate that it come down. DeHerdt wondered what the Town agreed to when it accepted the park.

Russell said he objected to having to establish a separate maintenance fund. He felt decisions about monies for park expenses should be decisions of the voters, not the AG. As for submitting semi-annual reports; the Board felt one report, filed after annual town meeting should be sufficient. Meyer said the park budget would increase. The Board said a budget should be presented that reflects the actual amounts needed to keep the park operating.

The SB will review and revise the proposed agreement, including the Commissioners suggestions and bring it back for another round of discussion.

Old Business

Town Hall Floor Fund A request was made that the fund currently called the “Town Hall Floor Fund” be changed to reflect the intent to use it for general improvements to the building. A motion was made, seconded, and voted to change the name to town hall preservation and renovation fund.

Delinquent Dogs Licenses Letters have gone out to persons who have not licensed their dogs. A final letter will be sent reminding what will happen if owners don’t take care of this bit of business.

Accountant Management Letter As is normal, the auditing firm of Thomas J. Scanlon has audited the Town’s books, and presented the Board with its findings, along with recommendations for improving the Town’s handling of its funds. Ashfield, being a town should not be paying sales tax. That means that when persons make purchases for the town tax should not be paid. Since most people do not walk around with the town’s tax ID number, it’s usually simpler to just pay the tax. However, when reimbursing the person for the purchase, the Town should not reimburse the sales tax. Another suggestion is that regular audits be conducted within departments. The Board signed the letter indicating that it had reviewed the audit and would work on making the improvements noted.

Town Clerk Present: Ted Murray, Nancy Dunne

Murray presented Nancy Dunne for an interview before the Board as finalist for the position of Town Clerk. To questions asked Dunne made the following observations. She has been working at town hall since October and has already been doing much of the work required of a Town Clerk. She said that while members of the office staff have defined roles, they work together as a team to conduct the town’s business. The biggest challenge to her was the re-establishing the role of Town Clerk. Her background in human resources and credit management has been helpful along with communication and organizational skills. To a question about her interest in remaining Town Clerk for a period of time, she replied that she has already made an investment in the position.

She felt she was comfortable with the “public figure” that as Town Clerk, she would be. Her biggest Achilles heel is patience. A motion was made, seconded, and voted to appoint Nancy Dunne as Town Clerk.

Special Town Meeting A tentative date of the 3rd week of October was set should a Special Town Meeting be needed.

Primary Elections The state will hold primary elections on September 14th. The election will be held at town hall. Wayne Gardner said there has never been a mandate forbidding the use of town hall for elections and town meetings. The ADA inspection showed that none of the public buildings (Sanderson, Town Hall, or Fire Station) meet all the standards. The requirement is that a “good faith effort” be made. Someone will be required to man the lift. A motion was made, seconded, and voted to hold the primary election in town hall.

Appointment At the request of the Town Hall Building Committee, a motion was made, seconded, and voted to appoint Donna Scott to the committee.

Health Insurance At Annual Town Meeting the Town voted to reduce the town’s contribution to health insurance, but it never acted upon the vote. A motion was made, seconded, and voted to reduce the town’s share of employees health insurance from 75% to 65%, effective October 1, 2010.

Town Hall Steward A motion was made, seconded, and voted to provide the town hall steward with an access code to town office.

Mail

- 1) Letters from WMECO announcing a proposed rate increase and a letter from the AG opposing it.
- 2) Letter from someone on the Police Search Committee re: possible conflict of interest of a member on the committee and an applicant. The committee meets on Thursday. DeHerdt will attend to see what this is all about.
- 3) Frozen Face-off – a letter inquiring about permits needed to hold the ice hockey event again at the lake.
- 4) Broadband – looking for a single contact person.
- 5) Mohawk Youth Football will be holding a collection on Rt 2 in front of the Post Office on September 4th. Sounds like Charlemont, not Ashfield.
- 6) FRCOG – Mary FitzGibbon is the current representative. Need to see if she’s still interested.
- 7) Domestic Violence Awareness month is October.
- 8) Census Bureau (BVP) sent maps of the town which need to be reviewed for accuracy. This will go to the Assessors for a response
- 9) Police Department has surplus property – a trailer. A motion was made, seconded, and voted to authorize the sale of town property to the highest bidder.
- 10) The Board signed the warrant for the upcoming election.

A motion was made, seconded, and voted in a roll call vote to adjourn the open meeting at 10:11 PM. and enter into executive session to discuss non-union personnel issue and potential litigation. The Board will not re-convene in open session.

The next open meeting will be September 8, 2010 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Priscilla Phelps