

SELECT BOARD MEETING - January 26, 2011

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

Meeting called to order at 7:05 PM

Minutes: Minutes of the January 13th open meeting were approved, as amended.* Minutes of open meetings on January 19 and 20 were approved, with one clarification on the 20th minutes. Minutes of the January 6th executive meeting were accepted and declared public. The January 19th executive meeting were approved and will be made public.

*This was in reference to a possible need for police presence at the Frozen Face-off event to be held on the lake. The event has been canceled due to the ice conditions.

Appointments:

Park: Present: Nina Coler, Chairman of the Park Commission

Ms. Coler was present to request that the Town accept a gift to the Park Commission. She said in the estate of Will Elwell's mother, who recently passed, a stipulation was made that a sum of money go to various non-profits, and because Will's Mother, was a professional tennis player in her younger days (having played at Wimbledon), the Elwells would like to give \$5,000 to the park for use to maintain the tennis courts. Ms. Coler read the letter of intent, which stated that the donation was a gift from the estate of Mary Morel I Elwell Sand. Stipulations for the gifting: 1) proof of non-profit status; 2) trust money is to be kept in a separate account; 3) money from the trust may be spent for matters pertaining to maintenance, preservation and promotion of the game of tennis, (resurfacing, replacing backboard, strapping for netting, etc), and purchase of rackets, etc for public use; 4) money and interest may only be spent by the Park Commission in consultation with Will and Donna Elwell. A decision on acceptance of this donation is requested by February 1, 2011.

A motion was made by Norm Russell to accept the gift, donation for the purpose of maintaining tennis courts and/or promotion of the game of tennis. It was seconded by Doug Field; the vote was unanimous. Ms. Coler said this is a wonderful donation. She said others could contribute additional monies to this trust.

Deliberations: On the interviews of Police Chief candidates

Doug Field began by saying he had made some phone calls and had some input from people in Ashfield. He said he had reservations because comments made by people he talked with in Maine were not what he had been led to believe this gentleman was all about. Field said in ten years Mr. Minkler had bounced from 5 different places. He did call Loomis- Chaffee and he can't find anything wrong with Mr. Droney. Norm Russell said he had listened with great interest to both presentations and his sense is that Mr. Droney is a more appropriate person for this Town at this time. Russell said Mr. Droney seems to have a greater sensitivity to issues that are important here in Ashfield. Dave DeHerdt prefaced his comments by saying that having listened, checked the internet, and having made some phone calls to persons in Northfield and communicating with others he had some observations. What he observed during the interviews was that Mr. Droney answered questions very thoughtfully and very honestly. Droney's focus on policy and procedure struck him as being very important for a police department. His experience raising up through the ranks in a department in a town about the size of Northampton, staying there for a number of years, and having no real negative report about his performance said a lot

about the gentleman. DeHerdt said he was impressed with Droney's ability to apply his skills very efficiently in a completely different environment is an indication that he would probably be able to effectively transfer those skills to a small town environment. DeHerdt felt that Mr. Droney was at a point in his life and career that he didn't have anything left that he had to prove and that he would probably work to be the best police chief Ashfield has had in a while. DeHerdt said he had some of the same concerns about Mr. Minkler – jumping from job to job, some of the comments from Maine, the issue of his familiarity with budgeting (based on information from Northfield). At this point in time he felt Mr. Droney was the better choice for Ashfield.

Russell made a motion that Mr. Droney be appointed to the position of Police Chief. It was seconded by Field.

DeHerdt said it should be made clear to Mr. Droney that this appointment was contingent upon passing of a pre-employment physical, deep background checks performed by the State Police, CORI report, and approval of a waiver of training in order to be a police chief in the state of Massachusetts. He further added that he had a letter from Mary Lou Powers, Director of Training stating that should Mr. Droney be hired by a Massachusetts municipality, his request for a waiver would be looked upon favorably. Russell raised the question of whether the position offered should be part-time or full-time. Field said he had taken an informal survey of about fifty people. He said only 4 thought the position should be part-time. DeHerdt said he thought it would be difficult to begin part-time. He thought it would be better to go full-time initially and back it down to part-time, if that seemed appropriate. The other issue to be negotiated is the actual salary. DeHerdt felt it is extremely awkward to negotiate a salary with a potential employee in a room full of people and with reporters sitting there. He said the Board could disclose the salary range posted: \$45,000 to \$54,000. A suggestion was made that in discussing hours, that there be some evening hours, maybe one night a week. A concern was voiced about the commute from Enfield. DeHerdt pointed out that when you look on the map, you see Enfield is close to Springfield, which is about an hour away. This will be discussed with Droney. He noted that flexibility would be the key here.

Vote: The vote to appoint Patrick Droney to the position of Police Chief, contingent upon the terms stated was unanimous.

At this point the Board took a break to make calls to the two candidates to advise them of its decision. At 8:10, back in session, DeHerdt reported that Mr. Droney was pleased and will come up soon to complete the negotiations.

Liaison Reports:

Emergency Management - 1) Field reported that, as is normal, he has received conference calls regarding an approaching storm that is expected to deliver 4 – 6" of precipitation to this area. He has not heard of any power outages or other problems resulting from previous storms.

2) He was a little concerned when he looked out his window and saw Harris and Gray sanding Bullitt Road. Upon investigation he learned that the Trustees of Reservation had hired Harris and Gray to sand the road, as it had an event scheduled at its new headquarters. He advised the Trustees that by placing a call to the Highway Department the Town would take care of the road, providing more sand if needed. Field felt the road was fine, no one was having trouble getting up and down, but it apparently was a concern to the Trustees who were expecting persons unfamiliar with the area.

3) He said the Town needs to think seriously about the reverse 911 system. The Town of Cummington has just done it. That town has 4 exchanges and they've been able to do it. Russell asked if there is a cost. Field said it would be \$2,500. Russell wanted to know if that was a one-time fee, or an annual fee. Field said he would have to look into it further. He said the system is set up so that by dialing one number a message can be sent to every household in Town with a land line. If no one answers a message is left. It doesn't work for cell phones which Russell quipped isn't a problem in Ashfield. If the system had been in place it could have been used to notify voters of a change in polling place, saving \$800.00 in postage. Field said Conway has the system and has used it several times.

Police Department - DeHerdt said Diane Wilder and Duane Beauchesne are doing an excellent job in making sure the police presence needed happens.

Fire Department – Fitz-Gibbon said Chief Haskins has done the necessary paperwork and is setup as the Town's contact person for surplus goods. He's checking into generators, but at the moment the sizes needed aren't available.

Town Hall - Russell said he has been checking into sources of funds for redoing the Town hall. In a meeting with Julie Hanowski (?), who had helped the Town with a previous project, it was determined that the Town is too well off to get a grant from that source. This brought up the matter of annual audits. What it means is that any year a town receives \$500,000 or more from the federal government an audit must be done.

The thing that came out of this discussion is the idea of trying to do what is needed to obtain a designation of "Green Community" for the Town. Russell said he had mentioned this previously. There are certain things the Town would have to do, but in doing them the Town would become eligible to receive a grant that could pay for things like putting on storm windows at town hall and replacing the boiler. The building committee thought the Town should look into establishing a green committee for the purpose of obtaining this grant. He said Mary Quigley would serve and she'd suggested a few other people who might be willing to work on it. If the interest is great enough, he would invite James Barry, the gentleman he previously spoke about, to make a presentation to the Board. Fitz-Gibbon suggested that the informal group of people in town who have been working on green projects might be a good place to find interested persons.

The town hall building committee - The committee is working on language that would allow the lifts to be used for things other than transporting people, as long as the steward was present to oversee the use. There would be a small charge for the service.

Nondiscrimination statement - Any time a town accepts federal money there is a requirement that a nondiscrimination statement included. This statement needs to appear on all correspondence.

Overcharge – Russell reported that apparently the Town was overcharged by the bus company last year. The error has been discovered and the bus company is issuing a credit of \$7,000 against this year's bill for tech school transportation.

New Business:

Board of Health - Information from FRCOG inquiring about interest in possible training and a new collaboration to provide local health services (regionalization). The Board signed indicating interest.

Next week's budget meeting will be on Thursday. Individual budget requests will be emailed to finance committee members on Friday so that everyone has time to review them before the meeting. (Town Hall and General Government) Emily Robertson is scheduled to come on 2/10/11 to talk about the school budget.

Mail:

2010 Census certification of Town boundaries. - Assessors say the map is Ok as far as they can tell. The Board signed.

Gold Cane - A card was signed by Board members to go with the cane which will now be presented to Walt Whitney. The cane traditionally goes to the oldest registered voter in Ashfield.

Public Forum:

Persons present said they were excited about the appointment of a new chief.

Motion made, seconded, and voted to adjourn at 8:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Priscilla Phelps