

SELECT BOARD MINUTES – March 10, 2011

Present: Dave DeHerdt, Doug Field

Absent: Norm Russell

Meeting : called to order at 7:05 PM

Minutes: DeHerdt made some changes which he added in bold. He also added the time of adjournment as 9:45 PM. A motion was made, seconded, and voted to accept the minutes of March 03, 2011, as amended.

APPOINTMENTS:

Park Commission: Present: Will and Donna Elwell, Nina Coler – Park Commissioner

Will Elwell presented the Board with a letter which he requested be read into the minutes:

“ March 7, 2011

281 Baptist Corner Road
Shelburne Falls, MA 01370

To the Residents and Ashfield Select Board:

Please find enclosed a donation check for \$5,000 to the Town of Ashfield. This is being presented in memory of my Mother, Mary Morrel I Elwell Sands, born in 1919, died in January 2011.

Being that Will's Mother was a world known tennis player and traveled a circuit including Wimbledon and Europe, we would like to suggest that the \$5,000 gift be placed in a separate fund entitled "Mary Morrel I Elwell Sands Memorial Trust" to which additional funds can and hopefully will be added.

Further, we would like to suggest that the money in said fund and any interest accrued ,or gains derived from those assets, be spent by the Ashfield Park Commission only on matters that pertain to the maintenance, conservation, and preservation of the community tennis courts and/or the game of tennis. Examples would include, but are not limited to: resurfacing of the courts, painting of the lines, repair of the bang board or chain link fence, installation of anchors to hold down the centers of the nets and the hold down straps that are required for same, new signs that emphasis proper use of the courts, tennis clinics, etc .

Further, we'd like to suggest that the Ashfield Park Commission , in consultation with Will and Donna , have the authority to determine how and when the money be spent on the above mentioned purposes.

We look forward to encouraging and promoting the game of tennis in Ashfield,

Sincerely,
Will and Donna Elwell “

Following the reading of the letter DeHerdt thanked the Elwells. He noted that the sport of tennis has played an important in many persons lives. He said it is a sport that reflects life in many ways. The

money will be put to good use, not only for present players but for those who come after us. Ms. Coler will meet with the Treasurer to take whatever steps are needed to establish the account for the fund.

MAIL

Police Department:

Chief Droney submitted a listing of his hours. He has them posted on the department door. He notified that he would like to conduct a survey to obtain a reaction from the Town's citizens regarding expectations and effectiveness of the department. Notices would be published in the *Ashfield News* and *The Recorder* to let people know that survey forms are available at the Police Department, as he doesn't think a mailing to everyone would be cost effective. The Board thought making forms available for people to pick up would be a way of getting on-going feedback.

The results of State Police background check on Chief Droney have been received and will be added to his personnel file.

Frontier Adjusters : Notice of casualty loss to buildings in Town has been received. The information was sent to the Select Board, but Assessors and building Inspectors are the ones who need the information. It will be forwarded to them.

Council on Aging: A draft of a Strategic Plan for the West County Consortium on Councils of Aging has been received for the Board to review. The intent is to rework the agreement so that additional towns can join without re-writing the agreement each time that might happen. Field said the consortium would like to change its name to get it away from the Shelburne Center. He also reported that the consortium now has a full board of directors (2 from each member town).

LIAISON REPORTS:

Police Department - The Chief is reviewing the Police policies and conducting an inventory of department equipment. He has moved both cruisers to the town hall because, when needed, the Explorer was snowed in, which didn't make a lot of sense. He's calling vocational schools to see if he can get the exhaust manifold on the Explorer replaced. Smith Vocational was unable to help, but referred him to another school - a graduate school for graduates of the Smith program. He has additional information of possible places to get the work done. Another issue is the need for an evidence locker where access can be controlled and a chain of custody can be maintained. He also needs to set-up a weapons storage area with limited access.

Fire Department - DeHerdt said he hasn't had a chance to sit down with Del to get an update.

Highway Department – Field reported the new town truck is in town and in service. Tom Poissant, who was present, asked whether the whole amount of \$30,000 voted at a STM earlier in the week would be transferred to the winter roads account. Poissant said if dirt roads wash out as a result of rain or melt during winter the winter roads account is charged. A question was asked about the availability of emergency funds. Poissant said if the damage reached a certain threshold (which he wasn't certain of) there might be FEMA funds, but he didn't think Ashfield would qualify.

Caucus – March 22 at 7:00 PM Caucus is one of the few town government events that requires a quorum - 25 people. A lot of positions open this year.

BUDGETS: Present – Finance Committee – Lynn Taylor, Carl Satterfield, Ted Murray

School Committee – Present – Emily Robertson

Ms. Robertson said the budget as presented has been designed with the knowledge that state monies are not known and are expected to be less than last year. The intent is to provide a budget sufficient that it will not have reason to come back to the Towns for more money. This year the district has paid \$45,000 to have roofs shoveled off, something not usually required. Buckland- Shelburne has a bad roof that needs to be replaced. An effort is being made to find funding to replace that roof.

Vocational education - DeHerdt asked if the number of students who would be attending voc schools was known. (Smith and Franklin Tech) Robertson explained that at this point it wasn't. She further said that since Ashfield isn't a member of either school, the number of vocational students who may be permitted to attend is dependent on how much space is available. Tuition costs are not known at this point. The schools need to be contacted directly for information. The Board will ask Mary to check on this.

Charter schools - The school district pays tuition for students who go to charter schools. The state provides some reimbursement for these students, however, each year the reimbursement is less. Mr. Murray explained how the tuition rates for students at Four Rivers Charter School is derived. He said students are accepted using a lottery system. Special education students are part of the lottery, as well.

Questions were asked about class size, students needs, teacher negotiations, reductions in staffing. The formula used to determine town assessments was discussed, with note that the assessed value of the towns' real estate plays a role in that formula. Ashfield is considered one of the more wealthy towns in the district.

The district has applied for a Green Repair Grant to make repairs, such as the roof at Buckland- Shelburne. In order to be considered serious, a design team has to be hired from an approved list (on which there are no western MA firms) to prepare designs for the projects. If the grant is awarded, the work must be done by December 31st in order for moneys spent to be reimbursed. Robertson said by annual Town meeting she expects to be coming to the meeting to ask for a third of the construction costs that will not be covered by the grant. Ashfield's share is expected to be \$50,000 spread over a 5 year span.

Highway, Tree Warden, & Transfer Station budgets – Present – Tom Poissant

Poissant thanked the Board for allowing more time for him to get his budget prepared. He presented both a level funded budget and a 5% reduction budget. He used \$3.35 per gallon when estimating diesel and \$3.00 per gallon for gas. Poissant said on an average year the department uses 9,000 gallons of diesel per year.

When questioned about how he arrived at the numbers for a 5% reduced budget, he explained that one couldn't just take 5% off each line item. Some items, such as utilities, could not be reduced or would not change. What he essentially had to do was reduce the general highway fund, meaning some projects would not be done. This brought up a question about possibly using wood to heat the garage as a way to control/reduce heating costs (the wood being available as a result of storms, etc.). Poissant replied that a study was done when the garage was being designed and propane was determined to be most cost effective heating source.

Questions were asked about Chapter 90 money. Poissant said It cannot be used for general highway repairs. It can only be used for specific projects which must be preapproved by the state. The most

recent monies were used for trip sealing and shimming , rather than paving, in order to cover as much roadway as needed to keep on schedule for roads. He said he has 50 miles of paved roads that have to be repaved every ten years.

As for equipment, Poissant said he has the big trucks back on a twenty year replacement schedule. He has a request for a pick-up in this budget. Questions were asked about surplus equipment. Field said a letter needs to be sent from the Fire chief and Select board to the DCR to become involved in acquiring surplus military equipment. Highway would really like to find a road grader should one become available. There was conversation about towns sharing equipment. Generally, this was problematic as the same equipment would be needed by towns at the same time.

An increase in the hourly rate for highway workers was included in the Highway budget. Poissant said there had been no raise last year; he felt some increase was needed, so he has budgeted a dollar per hour increase.

Transfer Station - Poissant is in charge of the dump. He said he didn't buy bags this year (FY'11) and was debating about whether or not to purchase any for FY'12. Last time bags were purchased the cost was around \$4,500. They're sold for \$2.00 each. He's also debating opening the dump for a day during the week, which people are requesting. Revenues for FY'11 aren't available (as the year isn't over). DeHerdt noted that there had been a profit in FY'10. He thought it would be a good to have the Accountant provide a monthly average to date. He was reminded that spring was coming and with it increased use of the transfer station. If it appears that there might a profit again, adding a day could be considered. There is a fuel surcharge provision in the hauling contract.

Dam - Poissant generally handles maintenance of the dam through the highway budget. However, there is more work that at some point will have to be addressed.

Tree Warden - Poissant submitted an amount that would be about 10 days of tree work. This would not be enough to do all that should be done. He was referring to diseased trees that should be removed or tended to. More information about diseases of some trees needs to be known by the public. He wants to start planting trees. As he noted , the sugar maples that line the streets are at the end of their lives; it's time to be planting for the future.

Some time was taken to consider ways to present department budgets at Annual Town Meeting so that department heads have more flexibility in managing the movement of funds within the budget.

Meeting adjourned at 10:35 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Priscilla Phelps