

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MINUTES  
Slade Building  
December 13, 2010**

**Members present: Matthew Castriotta, Chair  
Michael Stauder, Vice Chair**

**Staff present: Debra Roussel, Town Administrator; Fire Chief Bob Hayes**

**Others present: Resident Walter Ducharme**

**Meeting commenced at 6:30 pm**

Chief Hayes entered the meeting. Chairman Castriotta thanked the Chief for putting together a new reporting format, as was requested by the Board to obtain a snapshot of monthly activities for each department. Chairman Castriotta asked that a twelve month rolling figure be added to the report, showing a full year at a glance, so that trends will be more apparent.

Dr. Stauder noted grant for engine #4 was turned down. Chief noted the brush truck is scheduled for refurbishment on this year's capital plan. Engine #4 failed pump test once, however Engine #4 is only used in brush fires. Capacity of pump on Engine 1, the primary attack truck for use on structure fires is of grave concern. Pump on Engine #1 did pass its test this year, but will have to be watched. Engine #3 is the new truck with the checkerboard detailing. Engine #1 has a traditional truck cap and Engine #2 has custom cab with flat front to fit into station.

In response to query, Chief indicated moral at all time high; have new people coming on. Marty Scott, new full-time officer on board for several months and is working out great. Just hired new call guy; busy with area town fires; keeping busy. Chief discussed live fire training members recently attended in Gardner. It was noted there is no fee for attendance.

Ms. Roussel asked if Chief had completed policy for write-offs. Chief indicated had turned task over to Deputy Chief Duggan, who is looking over sample policies and will make a recommendation to the Chief who will present to Board, once criteria for review is established. Chief indicated he could find no record of how it was handled previously. Almost two years of accounts to review for write-off once a policy has been established total approximately \$20,000. When asked if that was a higher percentage than in previous years, Chief noted he had not researched, noting Board should keep in mind that there was a higher call volume previously also.

Chief reported he had been asked to present before Finance Committee in regard to ambulance funding, noting Mr. Blanchard noted intent to put receipts from ambulance, as well as brush permits into the general fund, rather than in the receipt reserved for appropriation and revolving accounts, respectively. Mr. Blanchard believes this would provide for expenses to be appropriated in the same way other departments are funded, not based on revenues. Chief indicated intent is being proposed as an accounting procedure rather than to gain control of funds, however Chief's opinion that if Town needs funds can vote to appropriate from receipts reserved for appropriation. Fin Com also indicated to him that their problem is that EMS expenditures are not broken out for review. Chief believes in depth material is provided to both the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen at budget time; process is no different than any other department budget line. Concern with revenue decreasing that existing funds will be used for appropriation and the funding won't be available for EMS service, which will require lower service levels. Current accounting method provides for a level service, despite trends in calls. Fin Com utilized argument that Fire Department is the only department with revenue available to supplement their budget. Chief noted concern that Ambulance Service will become susceptible to budget cuts, as are other departments and what does that mean for residents in terms of level of service provided and continued revenue from service.

Dr. Stauder noted personally in agreement with Finance Committee and that he didn't understand why there should be a concern. We need to fund public safety at a certain level, whether its police, fire or ambulance services; we have an obligation. Chief indicated when you start sharing the revenues the ambulance service will be dependent on

the budget process. If we have to reduce services as a result of lower revenues, it not only affects the service, but will also reduce future revenues as a result. Dr. Stauder indicated was a recommendation from DOR within management report, not just a recommendation of fin com. Ms. Roussel noted the recommendation did not come from DOR report, providing copy for Dr. Stauder to review. Chief noted has same issue with the brush account - Town Meeting set up the revolving account in 1998, so that the fees from the brush fire permitting would cover the cost of fighting brush fires. Fin Com indicated this was not 1998 and Town needs revenues. What happens if we use those funds; how will you afford the same level of service offered?

Dr. Stauder indicated belief that comes down to philosophical approach to funding the ambulance service. While it was initially set up as a separate enterprise, it has historically been run as part of the fire department all along as part of the budget of the fire department. He further indicated no intent to cut services or funding as part of conversation. Dr. Stauder indicated loss of public service in many other towns as a result of financial situation.

Mr. Castriotta noted appreciation for Dr's outlook, but recalls Town Meetings where revolving account for brush fires and ambulance services were set up, noting concern about trajectory where revenues from ambulance services supplement other departments budgets. Chief indicated just believe in need to protect the one area that creates revenue for Town and offsets cost of fire services. Ms. Roussel reminded Board that subject was not on the agenda this evening. Chief exited the meeting. Dr. Stauder noted agreement that recommendation was not found in DOR financial management report.

Board reviewed request for consent for mutual legal review of changes brought forth in regard to Quabbin Regional Agreement. Mr. Castriotta indicated does not wish to participate in issues involving his employer, the District. Move item to the 12/20/2010 agenda.

Board reviewed request for gift of lot in Pinecrest. Highway Superintendent responded indicating may be favorable, but lot should be surveyed to determine which lot holds current drainage piping and that lot is in buffer zone and would not be buildable. Ms. Roussel reported have confirmed with Counsel that Town Meeting action is necessary for acceptance. Question about whether property was in tax title, deferred further action until next meeting date. If it is not in Tax Title, Board will put forth article for ATM warrant.

Board reviewed description of temporary laborer for clearing of walkways and sidewalks on Town property during winter months. Position to be posted in house first before advertised.

**Motion: M. Stauder**

To approve the creation of winter seasonal laborer position.

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Castriotta**

**Vote: All in Favor**

Ms. Roussel brought forth question from playground committee member Jessie Twarog regarding cost of handicapped ramp to provide access to playground to be created in field, responsibility of playground committee fundraising or involvement by Town or School District. Is there regulation requiring. Building Inspector is responsible for determination of requirement. Board members agreed that understanding fundraising responsible for associated costs. Dr. Stauders asked if CPA funds could be used. Ms. Roussel indicated suit before State Supreme court regarding use of CPA funds for improvement of land not purchased with CPA funds. Chairman Castriotta indicated we have a group of residents that have come forward and worked hard to commit, the Town should agree to commit \$10 or \$15K from Stabilization to assist. Board members are supportive with seeking funds at Town Meeting, but group should continue with fund raising efforts in interim. Dr. Stauder will follow up with Ms. Twarog.

Ms. Roussel brought forth correspondence created for two lapsed Class license holders. While it was noted both locations look like attempts are being made, not significant. Ms. Roussel reported you have two individuals not licensed and Board's responsibility to notice Registry of Motor Vehicles of forfeiture of any plates outstanding.

**Motion: M. Stauder**

To approve and authorize correspondence to two lapsed class license holders.

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Castriotta**

**Vote: All in Favor**

Chairman Castriotta reported on the resignation of Ms. Roussel to Dr. Stauder, noting the opportunity for advancement that had presented to her as Assistant to the Town Manager in Amherst, MA. Dr. Stauder indicated he

had learned of the resignation upon return from vacation and understood the need to promote one's career. Board members applauded Roussel's work ethics during her tenure.

Ms. Roussel presented MMA guide for recruitment and copy of report from Collins Institute for the Town of Ashby that might be useful. Options from Collins Center would be they advertise, interview and appoint an interim administrator and the Town contracts with Collins Center or they forward candidates for the Board's interview and appointment, which would be the less costly approach. The organization is affiliated with UMass and therefore the services do not require procurement. The Collins Center keeps a listing of current retirees in the state interested in serving as interims. First question that Board must decide is to whether or not to move forward with services. Mr. Castriotta asked if Ms. Roussel would be agreeable to coming back as needed by interim at an hourly rate as was paid to Ms. O'Connell. Ms. Roussel indicated she would be willing to assist as was able. Dr. Stauder questioned why we are looking at an interim rather than full-time. Chairman Castriotta indicated with the scope being reviewed by Charter Committee, thought it unfair to hire an individual and then receive a recommendation of the Committee that Town Meeting supports for a change. Collins Institute has also offered its assistance in the work the Charter Committee is doing. Ms. Roussel noted she has advised the Chair of the Charter Committee of the availability of assistance through UMass Boston and also guidance on the process through the MA Managers Association and or the graduate departments at Clark or UMass Amherst, although timing may be an issue. Dr. Stauder wondered if it would be worthwhile to hire the Institute to assist in the study to provide a response prior to Annual Town Meeting. Ms. Roussel indicated hiring an interim as a contracted service would eliminate employment costs such as benefits and unemployment. Since the Collins Institute is working with Ashby, the possibility of a shared Town Administrator was mentioned as well. Chairman Castriotta asked if Ms. Roussel would contact Brian Bullock, recently retired from Holden to see if he was interested.

**Motion: M. Stauder**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Castriotta**

To secure the services of Collins Institute for recruitment of candidates for the Board of Selectmen to interview and hire an interim Town Administrator

**Vote: All in Favor**

Chairman Castriotta questioned discussion of capital planning without full complement of Board present. Ms. Roussel brought forth information outlining expenditure in current fiscal year for capital totaling \$147,000. If Board utilizes \$51,000 levy capacity previously needed for special education transfer students, Town will have \$152,988 available for debt service in FY12 or 2.4% of estimated locally generated receipts as outlined in debt policies. Outstanding debt service for FY12 is \$97,917, leaving \$55,071 available for new debt for capital in FY12. Quabbin noticed the Town today they have received approval from SBA at 57.74% of reimbursement. Ms. Duval indicated belief there will only be an interest payment due in FY12. Principal and interest payments for permanent funding will not happen until FY13. Under the new MSBA reporting requirements - reimbursement is ongoing with the project. Quabbin will bond 42.26% of the total cost of the project, which at this point is \$4,000,000. Based on the apportionment for FY11, Hubbardston would be responsible for 29.38% or \$1,680,000, estimated at \$170,000 annually over ten years. They will be working on formal estimates for the Town for budget purposes.

Recommendation from Town Administrator was to put together a concerted effort to put forth the school roof project debt as an exclusion over the ten year period. Otherwise, the Town will not be able to afford any capital or have to cut the budget to assume the cost within the levy. Dr. Stauder indicated after the recent override failures the Board should not put any override question forth in spring. Chairman Castriotta indicated our responsibility to provide choice for voters. Mr. Ducharme indicated intent to bring forth petitioned article for road repair outside of levy. Ms. Roussel indicated if taxpayers say no than it is the job of this Board to provide for the needs of the Town within levy, which will require cutting services to provide prioritize capital expenditure for existing departments to continue to function. Recent seminar attended on capital funding brought forth capital committees are complement of department heads, financial team and Finance Committee rather than citizen members, as they are aware of need and availability. Capital Improvement Planning Committee as it exists could be appointed to review need for municipal land put forth by Mr. Blanchard. Dr. Stauder indicated so much negativity and misinformation surrounding recent decision to study future need for public sewer and water. Ms. Roussel responded that as managers of the Town it is Board's responsibility to look at future needs of Town, not only as they exist in the present. Mr. Ducharme indicated residents become over dependent on volunteers. Mr. Castriotta indicated state funding is drying up as well. Dr. Stauder indicated aghast at the negativity that playground committee is getting for fundraising efforts. Mr. Ducharme indicated highlights need for better communication. Discussed need for greater focus on management and finances. Town Administrator noted inefficiencies she believes exist in current situation.

Board members suggested audit of current services. Ms. Roussel provided update on regional assessing services and concerns that have been brought to her attention. Mr. Ducharme brought forth issues with getting assistance from the Assessors office; clerical staff unable to provide assistance in any capacity.

Mr. Castriotta noted Ms. Roussel has worked hard during her tenure to ensure accountability the Board shouldn't allow it to go backwards. Ms. Roussel noted an issue had arisen over the last several weeks that dealt with gossiping, providing a copy of information she had distributed to staff, as to how it affects moral. Ms. Roussel indicated there are individuals in supervisory capacity that are contributing to it in a way that is so unprofessional, creating a huge problem. Suggestion to repost all positions if people aren't doing the jobs they were hired to do. Board asked that individuals be brought before the Board, so that the full Board is at a minimum aware of what has transpired to date.

Mr. Castriotta brought Dr. Stauder up to date on the land use clerical position. Mr. Ritchie is concerned with the loss of individualized clerical staff and is going to other committees warning them that they will lose supervisory capacity over clerical staff. Need for continuity and communication key to need for residents or users of services, often those who work for residents. Board of Selectmen has full authority to create position; will come before the Board at next meeting on January 3, 2011. Mr. Castriotta reported Board/Committees have until that meeting to come forward with concerns/changes, as he will bring it forward for a vote that evening.

Ms. Roussel requested Board waive fees for electrical permits required for change in lighting that has occurred. Board noted change in lighting. Ms. Roussel reported she had spoken with electrical inspector and Mr. Sweeney noted the change will create savings in electricity, however removes heat from the lighting. Ms. Roussel noted electrical inspector will still charge for the services, however there is sufficient funds in revolving account to cover that cost.

**Motion: M. Stauder**

To waive permit fees for electrical permitting for the lighting upgrades

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Castriotta**

**Vote: all in favor.**

Ms. Roussel asked the Board to reconsider their prior vote at the tax classification hearing and affirm adoption of single tax rate with no new exemptions for FY11. Ms. Roussel reported values and new growth were certified by DOR on Friday and recap was submitted. RRG is hoping tax rate will be set by end of the week to allow tax bills to be sent by first of January 2011.

**Motion: M. Stauder**

To affirm the Board's vote at the tax classification hearing held on November 22, 2010 for adoption of a single tax rate for FY11.

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Castriotta**

**Vote: All in Favor**

Board reviewed request of Senior Building Committee at request of committee member Ed Blanchard to appoint ad hoc municipal land committee to seek available land for municipal purpose. Ms. Roussel indicated Capital Planning Committee has done much of the investigative work necessary to proceed should the Board move to act on the request for municipal land. Proceed with capital plan as it exists this year. Before start of fiscal year revise capital planning process, so that you'll get buy in from department heads.

**Motion: M. Stauder**

To authorize memorandum to capital planning seeking interest in service as municipal land committee as outlined by Senior Building Committee.

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Castriotta**

Ms. Roussel updated Board on various projects including website transfer; security update on Slade Building including push button lockset; computer networking; and cluster mailbox installation. Ms. Roussel noted citizen volunteers Tom Howlett and Chris Norcross poured a concrete base and were installing the mailbox, charging the Town only for materials needed. Update on outstanding legal issues including encroachment on Route 62 with fencing installed on town owned land; and dog kennel.

An interesting prospect came forward today; the possibility of an LLC being created to work with municipalities and put forth an RFP for municipal acreage of ten acres or greater with appropriate solar exposure for a solar energy farm which would achieve significant savings for the cost of electricity estimated at about 1 cent per kwh. If the rate of electricity went above or below the contractual rate, the contractor would be responsible for payment of the delta. It is my understanding that the companies interested in construction are hungry for the renewable energy certificates that are offered in exchange for the megawatts of electricity generated by renewable energy.

**Motion: M. Stauder**

To adjourn the meeting at 8:10 pm

**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Castriotta**

Vote: All in Favor

Respectfully submitted,



Debra A. Roussel,  
Town Administrator

Approved: January 3, 2011.