

**ASHLAND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2014
ASHLAND TOWN HALL
7:00 AM**

MINUTES

Chairman DeWolfe called the meeting to order at 7:12AM with a roll call.

Norm DeWolfe, Fran Newton, Phil Preston present. Steve Felton absent with notice. Jeanette Stewart was absent without notice

The bridgework for Owl Brook Road was discussed. Preston noted that he had received a call from Stanley Graton asking about the bid process and indicated that he might have submitted a bid. Preston also confirmed that upon examination of the bridge, he found a hole in one of the I-beams that needed attention. F. Newton moved that the board check with the Town Administrator, Paul Branscombe, on the status of the contract with Arnold Graton and that if the contract has not been signed, discuss the possibility of putting the work out for bid. The motion was seconded by Preston and all voted in favor.

The board agreed that we would need to meet with Walter Mitchell as soon as possible next week to discuss a response to a legal concern. Several dates were presented and we will ask P. Branscombe to discuss the dates with Walter Mitchell to determine his availability.

The board agreed to begin the budget review and fill in recommendations on lines where there has been agreement or where expenses are obligated. In general, unless contractually obligated, salary lines and associated expenses (e.g., FICA) will be discussed when the entire board is present to ensure consensus. Other lines were left for discussion as noted below.

Line items for the Police Department to be discussed include computer maintenance, equipment purchase, cell phones, uniforms, police equipment, and training.

For the Fire Department, expense items left for discussion include electricity, heating/propane, water and sewer, EMT supplies and building and grounds.

Line items for Public Works to be discussed include garage telephone, advertising, summer maintenance, uniforms, supplies and radios. General expenses (e.g., disposal of shingles), solid waste dues and hauling for the transfer station are left for discussion.

Paul Branscombe arrived at 7:58 and confirmed that a contract with Arnold Graton has not yet been signed. Newton made a motion to initiate the bid process for the bridge work and notify Tim Paquette and Arnold Graton that we will do so. Preston seconded the motion and all were in favor. Branscombe then left the meeting and sent out an email to both individuals to that effect before returning.

We asked Branscombe to contact Walter Mitchell and propose the following dates for a meeting with him: Monday, September 22 at 6 PM, Thursday, September 25 at 8 AM or 6 PM.

The board then reviewed the Executive lines with Branscombe. His salary is by set contract and therefore remains as presented. Executive retirement numbers are not finalized at this time, but will go up. We were informed that for Group 1, non-Police Department will increase from

10.97% to 11.17%. Police retirement will go from 25.3% to 26.38%. Executive general expense is open for further discussion.

The financial officer salary request is for \$40 per hour, up from \$35, which is a 13% increase. To be discussed is the Election Clerk training, financial health insurance, general expense, and tax collector expense. The Budget Committee submitted a budget of \$1800, up from \$400. This includes \$400 for training and general expenses plus \$1400 for a minute taker, which other committees (planning, zoning) currently have. This request will be discussed with the entire board.

Branscombe explained that the appraisal costs include \$58/hour for pickups, \$87 hourly charge, \$50/hour for data entry, \$52/hour for travel time and \$107/hour for appeals. We are awaiting numbers for the 2015-2017 revaluations.

Legal expenses will be discussed at a later date. However, it was noted that we are no longer a part of the Time Warner Consortium and we should discuss any possible Northern Pass litigation. Branscombe stated that it has been the town's recommendation that the 14 homeowners who will be affected by Northern Pass should bear the responsibility for any litigation they feel appropriate.

Land use expenses to be discussed include a new assistant salary proposal of \$20,000, up from \$700. Branscombe noted that the town has experienced significant process issues. Heads of land use boards should not be in a position to process cases in advance of formal meetings as this might represent either a conflict of interest or implication of agreement. There should be a neutral person responsible for providing process information, process paperwork, etc. The \$20,000 is an estimate based on an hourly rate.

General government repair is to be discussed. The \$23,650 proposed includes \$8775 for energy efficient lighting improvements and \$7875 for carpeting. Branscombe noted that we would get 50% of the lighting expenses back. Safety equipment is to be discussed and it was recommended that we make inquiries with Craig Moore, chair of the Joint Loss Committee for clarification.

General Assistance proposal of \$55,000 is to be discussed. Our expenses are down significantly this year, but there is a recommendation that we keep the figure high as a contingency.

Branscombe stated that he is recommending extended hours for the Parks and Recreation Director, Jim Gleich, but not a full time position. This along with utilities for both booster club and campground, clubhouse supplies, building expense, tennis courts, campground improvements and bussing costs are to be discussed.

Patriotic Purposes, specifically the 4th of July expenses are to be discussed.

It was the consensus of those present that we would need more meetings to finalize the budget, but that we are on target to have this completed by mid October.

Newton moved that the meeting be adjourned and it was seconded by Preston. All approved and the meeting was adjourned at 9:42 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Fran Newton