Town of Ashfield
Select Board Minutes
November 18, 2013

The Ashfield Select Board meeting was held on Monday, November 18, 2013 at the Ashfield Town Hall. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by chair, Tom Carter. There were 4 to 5 audio recorders present and 1 video recorder, and approximately 10 audience members present.

Select Board Members: Tom Carter-Chair, Ron Coler- Vice Chair, Paullette Leukhardt
Executive Administrator: Mary Fitz-Gibbon
Scribe: Susan Clark

Tax Certification Hearing: Assessors Sandy Lilly, Peter Wiitanen and Wayne Gardner were present and provided an Assessment/Classification Report FY2014 **(Document 1).** The estimate for the tax rate for 2014 is $16.16 ($15.09 for 2013, $14.69 for 2012) and Assessors recommend maintaining a single rate (vs. split rate) for taxation. Assessors report that the value of residential property went down by about five million dollars from the previous year, while the amount of Chapter land went up as more people have put their land into Chapter programs. Properties must be assessed every nine years and the next revaluation will be next year on personal property. Assessors report that they came within $1700 of the levy limit.

MOTION: Ron Coler moved to apply the single rate classification for taxation as in the past. Leukhardt seconded the motion**. VOTE:** Carter-aye, Coler-aye, Leukhardt-aye. Passed 3-0-0.

Community Development Block Grant Hearing: MJ Adams, Director of Community Development at Franklin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority appeared to present information about the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) **(Document 2**). MJ stated that Ashfield would potentially be partnering with Heath, Hawley and Charlemont in applying for grant money that will serve all four communities. In addition to the eligible activities outlined in Document 2, MJ stated that CDBG funding may also be used for "urgent community needs" such as Smith Road. Nina Coler and Michael Epstein spoke on behalf of the Ashfield Community Hall in expressing interest in being part of the grant for improvement of handicapped accessibility for the Community Hall. They confirmed for MJ that the Community Hall is owned by a 501 C3 entity.

Coler brought up the need for elder transportation for Ashfield, for Meals on Wheels, etc. and Leukhardt cited the need for the elderly to be able to leave Ashfield to address medical and shopping needs, Mike Epstien also brought up the point that it's not only the elderly that could use this service there may be a need for the low or moderately low income residents as well. Wayne Wickland reiterated the need for

transportation. Carter asked whether other towns have asked for help in administering mandated activities. MJ explained that state Peer-to-Peer grants are available for such activities.
Warrants: Payroll & Vendor warrants were reviewed. **(Documents 3 & 4)**

Minutes: The following corrections were noted in the 10/21//2013 minutes; page 2, third paragraph "announcementas" should be "announcements"; page 4, third paragraph, last sentence should read "Carter asked Coler to respond to Town Counsel and have her proceed as soon as possible." In addition, the amended minutes **(Document 5)** and agenda **(Document 6)** should be added to the document list.
MOTION: Coler moved to accept the minutes of the 10/21/2013 meeting as amended; seconded by Leukhardt. **VOTE**: Carter-aye, Coler-aye, Leukhardt-aye. Passed 3-0-0.

Appointments:
Highway Department: Tom Poissant was unable to attend the meeting but sent a written recommendation to hire Todd Senecal for the Highway Department vacancy **(Document 7)**. Todd has accepted the position, and will be able to start working in early December. There was some discussion about new hires starting at a 50 cent per hour lower rate for a probationary period.
MOTION: Leukhardt moved to hire Todd Senecal per Tom Poissant's recommendation; seconded by Coler. **VOTE:** Carter-aye, Coler-aye, Leukhardt-aye. Passed 3-0-0.
Carter reported that he spoke with Tom Poissant today and there is an issue on Baptist Corner Road where a forsythia accidentally was mowed and Tom Poissant is handling this. There was also a letter from Jean Silver regarding a tree at the edge of her property. Regarding the grader delivery, Tom Poissant agreed to make a call to find out the date of delivery.

Finance Committee:
Grader: Ted Murray was present to represent the Finance Committee, and later David Newell arrived. Regarding financing of the grader purchase, Ted reported that the Finance Committee voted unanimously on November 5, 2013 to raise and appropriate $80,000, transfer $55,000 from free cash and borrow the balance of the purchase price with a debt exclusion of two years duration. This would be in line with the original proposal from the Town Meeting. The total price of the grader and blade is $223,206 ($217,761 + optional dozer blade). Mary F-G reported that the Treasurer solicited the following rates: 0.70% for 1 year or 1.00% for 2 years. The amount that will need to be borrowed is $88,206. There was discussion about the best way to finance the loan for the balance. Carter proposed that the Treasurer borrow $88,206 at the one year rate of 07% with the possibility of opting for the lower interest rate, half could be paid the first year and the balance could be rolled over.

MOTION: Carter moved to authorize the Treasurer to borrow $88,206 when the time comes to pay for the grader and to put this on a one year note; seconded by Coler. **VOTE:** Carter-aye, Coler-aye, Leukhardt-aye. Passed 3-0-0

Town Hall & Fire Hall expenses: There was $10,000 allocated for Town Hall and Fire Hall, and less than $3,000 is left in the account. Painting of the two buildings was drawn from the TH/FH capital account for about $4,200. Historically, painting has usually been paid out of the Fred Cross Fund. Perhaps a transfer of the painting expenditure to the Fred Cross Fund can be made in the future.
Brian Clark reported that part of the Green Communities grant involves replacing the Fire Hall office heater with a heat pump (several thousand dollars). This will require an upgrade from the current 100 amp service to 200 amp service. An estimate from Rob Poissant is pending and Mary F-G will call Rob tomorrow to ask him to complete the estimate and schedule the work.

Elevator: Ted Murray asked FRCOG to add the 4 lifts in town to the master maintenance contract., and has spoken to Eagle Elevator as well. Andrea Woods of FRCOG agreed to add Ashfield to the next contract

Unfunded Pension Liabilities and Unfunded Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB): Ted Murray has put in a call to Tom Scanlon to get some advice about dealing with this. Ted reports that some towns are establishing trust funds for this purpose. There was some discussion of this.

Proposed Schedule for Putting Next Year's Budget Together: Carter proposes that the Select Board meet every other week and when the budget meetings start, that the budget meetings occur on the off weeks . This is proposed to start on Monday, February 3, 2014 for the budget and every other week thereafter.

Vocational Ed Advisory Committee: David Newell reported that this committee will be meeting tomorrow and they are dealing with increased rates for Franklin Tech from 80% to 160% possibly. Newell will keep the Select Board informed.

Fire Chief:
Community Information Challenge grant: FRCOG is working on this grant. Fire Chief, Del Haskins, is in favor of the grant that is aimed at area fire departments to work together, although he has some concerns about the cost of filing reports if the grant is received. He is currently paying $510 per year for reporting. The value of joining with the 10 other towns that have signed on is that mutual aid would be automatic and, according to Bill Perlman, could enable the towns to aggregate purchases, etc. There was some discussion about whether this is a step toward regionalizing fire departments. If not enough towns sign up for the grant, FRCOG will not apply. Expressing an interest does not obligate Ashfield.

MOTION: Coler moved that Ashfield express interest as a town in the Community Information Challenge grant and endorse the application; seconded by Leukhardt. **VOTE:** Carter-aye, Coler-aye, Leukhardt-aye. Passed 3-0-0

Brush Truck: Haskins reported that the state came today to look at the brush truck. If a new brush truck is acquired through a federal grant, the old brush truck must be returned to the state. There is also a possibility of selling the old military grader and air compressor. There was some discussion about whether the Fire Hall will still be adequate in 10 to 15 years, since new trucks are bigger, etc. Haskins feels that the Fire Hall will not be adequate in 10 to 15 years.

Christopher Gray (ISP Proposal):
Christopher Gray presented a proposal requesting permission to lease space in the Town Hall to allow connection to the Mass Broadband 123 network. He proposes placement of as many as 10, but more likely 5 antennae up in the steeple. This would allow residents in the downtown and nearby surrounding areas to subscribe to internet service. The Town Hall is a preferred location because it is already connected to the Mass Broadband 123 network (Fire Department, Library and Sanderson are also connected, but none of these buildings is high enough). Gray proposes leasing space in exchange for providing internet service to the Town Hall. Select Board requested that Gray present his proposal formally to the Technology Committee while commending him for his entrepreneurship. **(Document 8)**

Old Business:
Personnel Policies: Leukhardt gave out binders of the draft proposed Personnel Policies **(Document 9)**, and suggests that the Board review, make comments, etc. and send back to the Personnel Committee, then possibly have them sent on to Town Counsel or Kopelmann & Paige for review before approval. Coler recommended having an electronic version so that it can constantly be updated and adding a version number to this draft. Coler recommended deferring discussion of how to schedule a review of the policies until the December 2, 2013 meeting.

New Business:
Hampshire Power Bid invitation: Ashfield had a profit sharing contract that is coming to an end in December. Two alternatives are available, fixed price and the higher risk option. The fixed price contract is supposed to be signed by 11/22/2013. Carter requested that Mary F-G contact Hampshire for more information, while the Select Board agrees that they want to be included in the fixed price program.

2014 Holiday Schedule: The schedule for 13 paid holidays in 2014 is outlined **(Document 9)**.
MOTION: Coler moved to accept the 2014 paid holiday schedule; seconded by Leukhardt. **VOTE:** Carter-aye, Coler-aye, Leukhardt-aye. Passed 3-0-0.

FRCOG Invitation to Bid, HR consultant: **(Document 10)** Discussion of HR consultant, with Carter asking Mary F-G for a recommendation, and she stated that she's not sure how much Ashfield would use the service. Coler expressed his support for this because the HR consultant would provide professional services, and ties to neighboring towns. Ashfield would just be involved in the Request for Proposal at this time.
MOTION: Coler moved that the Select Board agree to be involved in the FRCOG process/RFP for acquiring a regional HR consultant; seconded by Leukhardt. **VOTE:** Carter-aye, Coler-aye, Leukhardt-aye. Passed 3-0-0.

Liaison Reports:
Ron Coler: Coler consulted with Town Counsel about the maintenance of the public way to Field Field and Counsel advises that it is likely that the town has an obligation to maintain the retention wall. Coler gave a copy of the proposal for maintainence of the retention wall to Alden Gray so that he can present it to the Trustees of the Field. There was some discussion of tree removal regarding the wall. Town Counsel is working on the Ashfield Lake issue and Coler expects to hear back from Counsel on the mowing easements, article for town meeting re. said easement, etc.

Tom Carter: In the interest of full disclosure, Carter reported that he has spoken to Tom Poissant of the Highway Department regarding a collapsing culvert near the farm that Carter's son is renting on the road that extends out by Wauban Farms which is little used. Carter did not want this to be construed as a conflict of interest.

Mail:
Letter from Judy Haupt: This is a request for the Select Board to write a letter of complaint to WMECO re. moving of their office from Greenfield to Hadley. There was discussion of whether or not to write such a letter, with Carter and Coler preferring a letter of "concern" not "complaint". Coler suggests a copy of such a letter be sent to the Dept. of Public Utilities.
MOTION: Carter moved that Mary Fitz-Gibbon write a letter of "concern" to WMECO regarding their move from Greenfield to Hadley; Coler seconded. **VOTE:** Carter-aye, Coler-aye, Leukhardt-aye. Passed 3-0-0.

Letter from MA Department of Environmental Protection: notification that DEP has awarded Ashfield $500 for "targeted small scale initiative"

Letter from Attorney General's office: copy of letter sent by AG's office to Kachina Yuryan regarding her Open Meeting Law complaint. The AG considers the matter closed at this time.

Four letters from Suzanne Corbett: 2 addressed to Select Board, 2 addressed to Keeper of the Records. One was in reference to the meeting in which the Select Board sent a letter to the AG's office re. records requests and the letter that Carter sent to the AG's office regarding the fact that the town would not be providing

records to the public when repeated requests for the same thing have been requested. The second letter is in regard to "invasion of privacy" and addressed to all committees of the town. Mary F-G will make copies of the relevant letters for the relevant Boards. There was some discussion about the letter that was sent to the AG's office by Tom Carter on behalf of the Select Board. Carter read the letter, dated August 1, 2013, which he sent to the AG's office and Leukhardt stated that the draft of this letter should have come before the full Board before he sent it to the AG's office.
Mary F-G will prepare responses to Corbett's letters.

Notice on Workshop on Aging Population, December 12, 2013

Notice of Hampshire Co. Select Board Association meeting, December 5, 2013

Letter from Dept. of Transportation: payment voucher re. $250,264 reimbursement

Other Items:

Carter reports that Alan Rice asked him if he needs to request permission to take pictures from the Town Hall steeple for the Historical Society calendar. Carter directed Rice to speak with Stuart Harris or Wayne Gardner about gaining access.

FEMA: Carter reported that he is trying to set up an appointment with Laura Blakesley, Tom Poissant and Ted Murray to discuss FEMA and Irene reimbursement, how much reimbursement we have received, how much more we are expecting to receive, because there is a note coming due.

Sewer Commission truck: Leukhardt asked if Carter had talked about this with Nancy Hoff. Carter talked with Tom Poissant and a Highway Dept. truck is now being left at the WWTF for their use.

MOTION: Coler moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Leukhardt. **VOTE:** Carter-aye, Coler-aye, Leukhardt-aye. Passed 3-0-0.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Susan Clark

Document List:

1. Assessment/Classification Report FY 2014
2. Community Development Block Grant Program
3. Payroll Warrant
4. Vendor Warrant
5. Amended Minutes of 10/21/2013 meeting
6. Agenda of 11/18/2013 Select Board meeting
7. Highway Dept. letter of recommendation re. Todd Senecal

8. Christopher Gray letter re. ISP proposal
9. Proposed 2014 paid holiday schedule
10. FRCOG invitation to bid, HR consultant
11. Letter from Judy Haupt asking the SB to wright a letter to WMECO regarding the move to Hadley.
12. Letter from MA Department of Environmental Protection: notification that DEP has awarded Ashfield $500 for "targeted small scale initiative"
    Letter from Attorney General's office regarding Kachina Yuryan's OML Complaint. AG considers this matter closed.
13. Four letters from Suzanne Corbett 2 Addressed to the SB, 2 addressed to the keeper of the records.
14. Notice on Workshop on Aging Population, December 12, 2013
15. Notice of Hampshire Co. Select Board Association meeting, December 5, 2013
16. Letter from Dept. of Transportation: payment voucher re. $250,264 reimbursement
17. Copy of amended SB Minutes of November 18,2013

Note: These minutes were discussed, amended, and approved at the Select Board meeting dated 12/16/2013 and filed in the folder of the actual date of the said minutes.

APPROVED AS AMENDED ON 12/16/2013 3-0-0