

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Ms. O’Keeffe at 6:31 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Alisa Brewer, Aaron Hayden, Diana Stein, Gerry Weiss, Stephanie O’Keeffe

Absent: None

Town Manager Larry Shaffer

Town Staff: Captain Jennifer Gundersen, Town Clerk Sandra Burgess, Conservation and Development

Director David Ziomek, Planning Director Jonathan Tucker

Members of the Public: David Mills, Reza Rahmani

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one from the public was present to offer comment.

SELECT BOARD'S ACTION

Swearing in Police Captain Jennifer Gundersen

Burgess administered the oath to Gundersen. Shaffer congratulated Gundersen and introduced her parents. He acknowledged Chief Livingstone and former Chief Scherpa, and the large contingent of Amherst Police Officers in attendance.

Action: The Select Board hosted the swearing-in ceremony and offered congratulations.

Upcoming Select Board Meeting Dates

It was confirmed that the next meeting date would be November 23rd, and that there would be no meeting November 16th. It was decided to change the December meeting dates to the 7th and 14th, instead of the 7th and 21st, as originally approved.

Action: By consensus, the November and December meeting dates were approved as described.

Approval of Minutes

VOTED: 3 in favor, 2 abstaining (Brewer, Weiss) to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2009 Select Board meeting as amended.

VOTED: 3 in favor, 2 abstaining (Brewer, Hayden) to approve the minutes of the October 6, 2008 minutes. (2008 is accurate; these minutes were overdue)

VOTED: 4 in favor, 1 abstaining (Brewer) to approve the minutes of the November 24, 2008 minutes as amended. (2008 is accurate; these minutes were overdue)

Grant Update Presentation

Ziomek and Tucker discussed grants pending and approved, as described in the document “Conservation & Development Project Milestones and Funding Opportunities, October 2008 – Present” dated November 2009. Grant categories were explained as those which yielded a product as an outcome; those which enabled eligibility for a service; and those which paid for staffing. There was questions and discussion about whether grants expanded the work and responsibilities of staff in a time of diminished

resources by creating an “opportunity” to do certain projects because of available funding, or whether the grants primarily off-set costs of regular work. The answer was “both.” Philosophy guiding grant pursuit included consistency with the near-finished Master Plan and community values, support of economic development, and the ability to fund programs and services outside of the general fund. Ziomek emphasized that the grants represent collaboration across – and benefits to – many departments and sectors of Town government, not just Planning and Conservation.

Action: By consensus, the suggestion that the document provided be a model for periodic updates was approved, and it was recommended that the same document be posted on the Town web site, so the public will have more information about the efforts and success of staff to secure non-taxation funding.

Discussion: Questions for Department Heads

Consideration was given to if, how and when the Select Board should ask questions of Department Heads to help inform our input and feedback about the budget. With Department Heads preparing budgets reduced by 10% from level services projections, it was agreed that we should wait and see the results of those departmental budget proposals first. It was noted that cuts that represent significant changes to programs and services involve policy decisions, for which the Select Board should provide guidance. Shaffer expects to be able to provide preliminary information at a December meeting.

Action: Consensus agreement to proceed as described.

Budget Coordinating Group Update

Summary points from the recent BCG meeting were read and explained (per the document “Amherst Budget Coordinating Group Summary Points – November 5, 2009”.) The Finance Committee guidelines were discussed briefly, and the BCG’s statement in support of the information requested in the guidelines was emphasized as being necessary to inform the decisions necessary to create recommendations for an override. Additional details about the BCG meeting schedule and the December 5th Four Towns Meeting were noted.

No action taken.

Liaison and Representative/Other Reports

Puerto Rican Day: Weiss reported on the ceremony and flag-raising that afternoon (11/9) and how discussion had focused on the history of the day as well as redistricting concerns among the local Latino population

Committee on Homelessness: Weiss reported that discussions for emergency winter shelter are ongoing, and that he is cautiously optimistic that arrangements may be in place by the end of the month. Efforts also continue regarding permanent housing issues.

Energy Task Force: Stein reported that the Town’s carbon dioxide inventory report will soon be released. A calculator on the Town web site lets individuals measure their carbon footprints, and home energy audits are available through Western Mass Saves. Additionally, Amherst is working to attain “Green Community” status, thus earning eligibility for \$10 million of grant money.

Hampshire County Selectmen’s Association: Brewer and O’Keefe reported on the November 5th meeting, also attended by Stein, organized by the Hampshire Council of Governments. Key points included resurrecting a dormant organization by reinstating quarterly meetings; the ability to share municipal problems and solutions; and advocating for the region as a group and with an increased leadership presence within the Massachusetts Municipal Association. It was noted that presentations on services offered through Hampshire COG and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission suggested that discussions of why Amherst is or is not taking advantage of those could be informative.

Senate Candidate Forum: Brewer thanked the League of Women Voters and UMass for collaborating on a Senate candidate forum held on campus November 8th.

Committee Procedure Update: Stein said the new Citizen Activity Form was close to going live on the web, and only awaiting a link for the new Conflict of Interest training information.

No action taken.

Post-Town Meeting Review

The speed and efficiency of the recent Town Meeting was noted with appreciation. Stein said that a trend of shorter Town Meetings could encourage more young people with families to run for the seats. Weiss said that a forum dealing with issues related to Article 14 – resettling cleared Guantanamo detainees – would be held November 19th in Northampton, and would include international participation.

No action taken.

Chair’s Report

O’Keeffe reported on the following topics:

- Meeting with Brandon Harris of the UMass Student Government Association a couple weeks ago, to build communication; two potential projects discussed: a sober driver program to reduce nuisance behavior caused by students returning from parties and bars, and a Town-Gown panel to help mediate problems between student renters and neighbors.
- Offering remarks at a recent ceremony designating the Jones Library as a National Literary Landmark
- Offering remarks at the recent SAFE graduation for fourth graders

No action taken.

Calendar Preview

Other upcoming events were noted: 11/10 Veterans Day ceremony at UMass, 11/11 Veterans Day ceremony downtown; 11/13 UMass Police Department groundbreaking; 11/16 CDBG meeting, which may be relocated to the Town Room for televised coverage

No action taken.

LICENSES AND PERMITS

New Taxi Driver/Chauffeur License – David Mills

VOTED unanimously to approve the New Taxi Driver/Chauffeur License for David Mills, 312 Amherst Street Apartment #12, Granby, MA 01033.

New Common Victualler’s License – Moti

VOTED unanimously to approve the new Common Victualler’s License for Moti, 25 North Pleasant Street, Amherst, MA. Manager: Reza Rahmani.

TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

The Town Manager reported on the following:

- The free 15-minute parking spaces: no complaints, no abuse of the spaces, appreciated by the merchants; a survey to measure usage and turnover would be desirable
- The recent reported armed robbery is still under investigation and is not considered to be something the general public needs to be worried about
- A mass vaccination clinic coordinated by the Town and UMass Health Services for H1N1 flu will be held Wednesday, November 11th at the Middle School to dispense 2,000 doses of the vaccine to highest priority target groups: persons 17 and under, pregnant women and those living with infants younger than 6 months; a hotline has been set up for more information and messages will go out via the Town’s and School’s phone notification systems; a press release about this has been issued and was read aloud
- Travelling to Boston earlier in the day with Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director John Musante, Comptroller Sonia Aldrich and the Town’s Financial Advisor to make a presentation to

Standard & Poor's regarding the Town's bond rating; it went well, and a determination is expected next week

- Per budget news: Department Heads have been asked to provide budgets for FY11 reduced by 10% from a projected level services budget; he will then conduct budget meetings with each one in November and December, to consider options for enhancing revenues, collaborating for service delivery or reducing expenditures; ultimately, a prioritized cut list will be created

No action taken.

CLOSING DISCUSSION

Weiss and O'Keeffe noted the need for follow-up on outstanding road issues, including: Sand Hill Rd., utility easements at the Governor's Drive/Eastman Lane/North Pleasant St. intersection; reconfiguration of the Spring St. parking lot; status of the Pomeroy Village project.

Stein noted Amherst's history at the forefront of banning restaurant and bar smoking and noted positive statistics on local smoking rates, provided at the Hampshire COG meeting.

ADJOURNMENT TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

By roll call – Hayden, Stein, Brewer, Weiss and O'Keeffe all voting "Aye" – it was voted to adjourn to executive session at 8:53 p.m. for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining, and to not reconvene the open meeting following executive session.

-- Respectfully submitted by Stephanie O'Keeffe

Approved at the November 23, 2009 Select Board meeting.