

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Mr. Weiss at 6:34 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Weiss, Brewer, Greeney, Awad

Kusner absent

Shaffer, Byam, MacInnis, Mooring, Saul, Gray

Recorder: Weston

OPENING REMARKS/PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Vince O'Conner stated that he tried to contact Town Clerk's Office for paperwork today and he wanted to lodge a complaint about the offices being closed due to inclement weather. He said employees were paid not to work and the money could have been used to fund programs that have been cut. He felt Town offices should have been open in the afternoon.

Ms. Greeney requested that the Town Manager clarify the snow closing policy. Mr. Shaffer stated that the reason for closing has to do with keeping vehicles off the streets if it appears that the snow event is expected to be unsafe for employees to get to work. He further stated that he does not intend to call a snow day frivolously, and that a decision must be made very early in the morning based on weather reports and discussion with Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works, regarding the road conditions as they exist at that time.

SELECT BOARD'S ACTION

PVTA Presentation – Bus Enclosures, Trans Receptacles, Snow & Van Service

PVTA Administrator MacInnis is visiting cities and towns, to introduce herself. She thanked the Board for appointing Anne as the Select Board representative; she is very hard working and knowledgeable. She introduced Al Byam, the fixed route service-operator for UMASS transit. Their overall goal is to increase ridership. Ms. MacInnis discussed bus stop amenities and requested that the Town Manager send her a priority list that she would try to accommodate. Further discussion included:

- Snow removal at bus stops – bus shelters are maintained, not shoveled. In the twenty four communities PVTA services, Ms. MacInnis doesn't know of any that request that stops be shoveled out. Some suggested options were public service announcements to encourage abutters to help and contacting the local sheriff for assistance from community services. Mr. Byam would be willing to assemble a group to do outlying areas if the Town will handle in Town.
- Hired a para transit services position to oversee fixed route and para transit services. A detailed transition plan and software package has been developed for handling complaints.
- PVTA has recently prepared a rider guide to send to existing customers and scheduled improvement meetings to encourage more ridership.
- PVTA is working diligently with the State to get forward funding instead of payment in arrears. The Secretary of Transportation has Mass Transit experience and is a supporter.

Mr. Weiss suggested that the Public Transportation Committee develop a priority list for PVTA.

Ms. Greeney emphasized that snow removal and amenities are very important, giving a sense of comfort and safety to encourage more ridership. Mr. Byam will continue to see if he, Public Works Superintendent Guilford Mooring and Ms. MacInnis can find resources to address the snow and trash removal. Ms. Greeney would like a report back to Select Board in the near future.

Ms. Awad commended Ms. MacInnis on her hiring of a Marketing Director which helped encourage ridership.

Vincent O'Conner asked Ms. MacInnis what the cost to the Town would be to become a fare free community.

DPW Issues – Traffic Calming – Lincoln & Strong Avenue, Canterbury Lane & Applewood.

There was discussion presented by Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works, about the information from the traffic calming experiment on Lincoln Avenue. A report will be given to Mr. Shaffer by the end of the month. Mr. Mooring indicated there is a need for a traffic procedure policy in place to handle the many requests for traffic calming measures.

The need for another study for the Strong and East Pleasant Street intersection was discussed although a previous study indicated that a traffic light was not needed. Mr. Weiss suggested a flashing light, Mr. Mooring said it was confusing to people.

The request for a street light at Canterbury Lane and Applewood was discussed. Mr. Weiss would like a recommendation from DPW; Mr. Mooring will work on the cost with WMECO and will report back to the Board.

Ms. Greeney commended the DPW's traffic calming study for Lincoln & Strong Avenue. Guilford commended Town Engineer Jason Skeels and UMass Traffic and Transportation students for working hard on the study.

DPW Issues – Fearing Street Streetlight

Mr. Mooring recommended that a stop sign replace the light at Fearing Street which currently is a flashing light since a lightning strike disabled the light several years ago. There have not been any problems since that time. A PVT A Study confirmed that the light doesn't meet the need. The light was originally put in the 70's because of complaints, no other information is available.

VOTED unanimously (4-0) to remove the streetlight on Fearing Street and replace it with a stop sign.

DPW Issues – Atkins Intersection

Mr. Mooring said that the Atkins Intersection is at the 25% stage having been through an intense design phase. He is now waiting for MassHighway to schedule a hearing. The Select Board need to support the project and encourage its conclusion by writing a letter to MassHighway. Ms. Awad requested that the Mr. Shaffer help draft a letter. She is behind this project and anything the Select Board can do to get it done would be appreciated. Mr. Mooring gave out the Public Works Committee recommendations from July 12, 2007. Some of the safety features requested from Atkins are that provide customer parking on the east side in order to prevent people crossing the road and to ensure that between the roundabouts there be no curb cuts as a safety issue.

DPW Issues – University Drive Reconfiguration

Mr. Mooring discussed the analysis of the University Drive configuration from Route 9 to Amity Street. He said that two proposals are envisioned: A boulevard (a treed island) or a three lane road. Business owners and public support was more for the three-lane highway was preferred. Mr. Mooring would like some direction how to proceed. The Select Board would like time to analyze the handout from Mr. Mooring and have him come back to discuss the proposals further.

Rob Crowner, a member of the Public Works Committee, expressed his minority opinion is that the end section should wait until the middle section work is decided.

DPW Issues – North Pleasant Street Downtown Reconstruction

Mr. Mooring said that plans for the downtown sidewalk were completed and some construction has started. When the weather breaks, DPW plans to resume paving. He will return with plans for the last section of North Pleasant Street at a later time.

DPW Issues - Sidewalk Snow Plowing

Ms. Greeney questioned how much it would cost to plow all sidewalks (61 miles) based on the estimate of the cost for half of the sidewalks at about \$2,100 per storm. Sidewalks are very hard for pedestrian travel when they are not shoveled which is required per the Town Bylaws. The original plan was to plow all sidewalks that DPW has to travel to reach the sidewalks they are required to plow. The DPW would need two more pieces of equipment at about \$90,000 for each to maintain all the sidewalks in addition to one already one planned for replacement. They would also need additional seasonal or permanent staff.

Ms. Greeney would like to have the Select Board support having all the sidewalks plowed, and would appreciate Mr. Mooring's suggestions of ways to do so at a reduced price. Mr. Mooring said the figures would need discussion and time to update from the original figures. She wants the Select Board to work with the staff to make sidewalk plowing part of the budget process for FY 2009.

Ms. Awad said the current plowing policy of 50% of the sidewalks hasn't satisfied people and we do not have the resources to plow all of them. Ms. Brewer stated that while she supports the motion, we are in difficult times to make choices such as these. Mr. Shaffer said that DPW does a very good job plowing, it's a matter of priorities, and whether the resources will be appropriated. We can do it, but is the community behind it and willing to fund it?

State of the Climate Message

Ms. Awad presented the Board with a request from ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability USA., to support their invitation to its members and mayors nationwide to endorse their State of the Climate statement.

VOTED unanimously (4-0) to support the State of Climate message to be issued in conjunction with President Bush's State of the Union Address on January 28, 2008.

Bylaw Changes – False Alarms & Retaining Funds Locally

No action taken.

Special Municipal Employee Status

VOTED unanimously (4-0) to grant Special Municipal Employee Status to the Agricultural Commission.

Town Manager Report – Winter Parking

Discussion of what individuals who rent apartment units can do when there isn't a place to park on street parking is prohibited in the winter. It was suggested that individuals park in the basement of the parking garage subject to the regulations of the parking garage.

Mr. Weiss raised the question about the bylaws attached to the rental units' Special Permit, Mr. Shaffer replied that he is in the process of researching and will report back to the Board.

Special Town Meeting – FY 09 Budget & Future Override Consideration, CPA Funds

Mr. Weiss reported that at the Budget Coordinating Group (BCG) meeting they discussed having a Special Town Meeting to enlarge the discussion and public input about the FY 2009 budget. He discussed his concerns that the list of questions on the proposed articles has evolved from the original, and the BCG has not met to continue discussion. The BCG meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 17, 2008 for a decision and will write the language if they decide to have a Special Town Meeting.

Ms. Awad is not comfortable with asking Town Meeting to come up with decisions that the Select Board should be making. She questioned whether town meeting should be making decisions about the development of the budget when they have a crucial role in approving it. Ms. Awad feels that to protect the Town Manager's role, he should create the budget and present it to the Select Board and the Finance Committee for their review and recommendations to Town Meeting. Mr. Weiss said this is a more general discussion about what direction we want to go. It is more to get a sense of what town meeting members would like in the budget and may eliminate some lengthy debate at Annual Town Meeting.

Ms. Greeney thanked the BCG for their efforts to find a balance in this budget process, she appreciates their hard work. She questioned that, if implemented, are they prepared to follow this process every year? Ms. Brewer commented that surveys and forums are not working anymore, she sees this method as purely advisory; a new idea; and it seems reasonable to go forward with a Special Town Meeting for a discussion platform. Ms. Greeney pointed out that we have the October, 2007 Budget Priority Survey that might be able to answer the many questions that the BCG is asking. She feels that a Town Meeting should be for decision making, not expressing opinions, and she questioned what the role of the Select Board would be if Town Meeting made suggestions to make changes. Mr. Weiss pointed out that this process evolved from needing a forum to get the public's preferences and opinions, not to have the Select Board be told what they need to do.

Ms. Awad thinks that this way of having a public meeting is not according to the Town Government Act. Ms. Awad stated that the elephant in the room is really the override and the hideous situation we are in. We did a remarkable job with the budget process last year and she feels that the Select Board should get behind the idea of a forum and work hard to make it successful and follow through on the ideas expressed. She would like to see creative ways to encourage attendance at forums. Mr. Weiss said that he will bring these opinions to the BCG.

There was further discussion regarding the Community Preservation Act (CPA) article and its timing relative to getting the vote for an increase on the spring ballot. Mr. Weiss expressed his opinion that the CPA article timing is not good for this proposed special town meeting, it could come up at spring Annual Town Meeting and get on the ballot in the fall. Greeney has several reservations; she would like a good discussion before we go forward on this article. Ms. Awad recommends increasing CPA funds to 3% in a measured way. She supported a ballot question in the fall.

Carol Gray wants the Select Board to get more information and encouraged them to ask several committees & the Town Manager to think about capital projects that could fall under CPA funds.

Town Manager Goals

Four Select Board members submitted their list of goals for the Town Manager. There was a brief discussion about community participation and a public discussion that would take place at a future Select Board meeting.

Approve Minutes

No action taken

LICENSES AND PERMITS

Special One Day All Alcohol License – Amherst College

VOTED Weiss, Brewer, Awad, voted “Aye”, Greeney abstained, to approve the Special All Alcohol License for Amherst College for March 1, 2008 from 9:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. for a casino night at Valentine Hall.

Common Victualler’s License – LPJ Donuts, Inc.

VOTED unanimously (4-0) to approve the Common Victualler’s License for LPJ Donuts, Inc. d/b/a Dunkin Donuts, 229 University Drive, Manager Catherine Roberts.

ADJOURNMENT

VOTED unanimously (4-0) to adjourn the open meeting at 9:37 p.m.