

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Working Session
Minutes of May 18, 2009

Chairman Martha Morrison called the meeting to order at 4:33PM. Board members present in addition to Chairman Morrison were Richard Gandt, Nancy Luther, Karen Dow and Laura Powers. Of the Selectmen's staff, Town Administrator Virginia Wilder and Board Secretary Donna Rich were in attendance.

Chairman Morrison began by stating that she would like to discuss Goals and Objectives for 2009-2010.

Board of Selectmen Policies & Procedures: Chairman Morrison asked that Selectman Gandt forward his previously distributed comments on the Policies and Procedures to the Board because there are new members. Ms. Wilder stated that the base document used in the development of the Policies and Procedures was written by a gentleman who is now the Administrator of Ashland and edited by John McArdle, the then chairman of the Board, two years ago. Chairman Morrison would like members to communicate to her what they don't like about the document, what might be missing and what purpose this document would have for future Boards of Selectmen. It was agreed to post a Working Session for July 13, 2009 at 4:30PM to discuss the document and the Board's conclusions.

Review Insurance and Retirement:

- GIC and MIIA: Ms. Wilder explained that the Town hired Cook & Company to perform an analysis of the Group Insurance Commission (GIC). At the time it was determined that MIIA offers similar programs and the Town could save approximately \$120,000.
- Angell Pension Group: Chairman Morrison asked that the Board be educated on the exposure of the Town regarding the pension liability. Angell Pension Group is willing to give a presentation and it was agreed that they should be invited to do so. Ms. Wilder will check for meeting availability.
- Insurance issues as they related to private non-profit operations on Town owned land such as Topsfield Athletic Association, Hood's Pond, Topsfield Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization, and Friends of the Library were discussed. There was a general discussion regarding the exposure the Town has presently. It is unclear if the Town carries insurance for the named groups. Ms. Wilder will investigate this issue and report to the Board at the July 13th Working Session.

Form Energy/Green Community Committee: Chairman Morrison presented a draft of a charter for the Board to review and she asked for comments to be forwarded to her. There was a discussion regarding the number of members. If anyone has names of willing volunteers they should forward them to Ms. Wilder. Chairman Morrison noted that there are grant monies being made available to communities that have a Green Communities Committee.

Manage Rail Trail Development: Chairman Morrison congratulated Selectman Gandt for the great job he is doing overseeing the Topsfield Linear Common rail trail project. Selectman Gandt reported that the compacting of the trail occurred on Friday and seems good. Issues of concern discussed are as follows:

1. Encroachment issues: there was discussion regarding structures encroaching on the trail along Phase 1, segment C. Selectmen Gandt is addressing two such encroachments, Paul Fontaine and potentially Judith Onanian. Selectman Luther reported that Whimsey House has a safety issue that the Rail Trail Committee will have to resolve. Selectman Gandt is aware that and noted that guardrails are to be installed between the Park Street Parking area and the new Rail Trail.
2. Screening issues: letters from Mike D'Amario and Michelle Walker were discussed. Chairman Morrison thought that utilizing natural, native shrubs donated by citizens might be a solution. Dan Peabody of Eastgate Garden Design and Andrew Keyes should be consulted as to species and where they could be located for possible re-planting at no cost to the Town or Trail.

Moving shrubs would need to occur in the fall, and by then a plan would be in place to explain the Town's approach to the abutters. Michelle Walker is obtaining price quotes to fence in her yard and was under the impression that the Town would assist financially with the cost. A response will be required, as no Town funds are to be expended on the project.

3. Fairgrounds segment: Selectman Gandt and Ms. Wilder met with Jim O'Brien, manager of the Fair Grounds. The Essex Agricultural Society has offered to install, at their cost, that section of the trail that travels through the Fair Grounds. There are obstacles along this section of the trail that need resolution. It was strongly suggested that each Board member walk the section of the trail by entering the Route 97 gate entrance to view what is presently there. The Fair has used a section of the MBTA property for storing materials over the years. Further discussion on this issue is needed once the Board members have viewed the site.

Review Mutual Aid Agreement Practices and RECC: Selectman Gandt noted that the RECC agreement should be completed in FY2010. Selectman Gandt also commented that Agreements should be reviewed by all communities before signatures are requested. Resolve Town Road Acceptance Issues: Chairman Morrison informed the board that there are many roads that aren't officially accepted by the state, due to a variety of reasons. This issue may cost the Town in lost Chapter 90 funds and should be reviewed to find a solution.

K&P Legal Review & Open Meeting Session for Boards: Ms. Wilder reported that Lauren Goldberg, legal counsel, has offered to meet with the Board to review the Town's outstanding legal issues. Chairman Morrison requested Ms. Wilder arrange a review in the fall during an executive session.

Improve Communications: Chairman Morrison informed the Board that it is very important that everyone keep informed of major issues that are happening in the Town. The liaison for individual committees/boards/commissions should report if there is anything of great importance. The Board should encourage updating of the web for their liaison assignments. It was suggested that everyone view the Salem, MA web site as an example of what the Town might do.

Build Capacity in Volunteerism and Public Service: Chairman Morrison spoke briefly regarding inspiring people with concerns to run for office or be appointed to a board, and recruiting individuals with specific talents/training/ability for boards.

Prepare for additional cuts in State Aid and actively pursue new revenue streams: There was discussion regarding where potential savings to the Town could be found and potential revenue growth. Some of the items discussed were: street lights, Pay-as-you-go composting, Trash stickers, and building permit fees. Further details are needed on these items and will be presented to the Board for approval.

Contract Negotiations: Ms. Wilder stated that there will be seven contracts to negotiate in FY2010. Selectman Gandt made a suggestion that the Board meet in August to establish a strategy for moving forward in the fall, prior the beginning of the budget season.

Investigate the Formation of a Recreation Department: It was agreed that this objective would be tabled for the time being.

Re-ignite efforts to create a consolidated DPW: It was agreed that this objective would be tabled for the time being.

Financial Reporting: Board Secretary Donna Rich, reported that the Town Accountant has requested submission of quarterly financial reports electronically in an effort to reduce paper. It was agreed to move forward with the request. Chairman Morrison posed the question of what the Town would do if further 9C cuts were to occur. Ms. Wilder noted that there is not much "wiggle" room in any budget and personnel would need to be reduced.

Town Hall Renovations: It was agreed that this objective would be tabled for the time being.

Department Liaisons: Chairman Morrison would like the Board members to email her their requests as to liaison assignments. Assignments will be discussed at the next Board meeting.

Annual Appointments: The Board agreed to move forward with contacting individuals that are up for re-appointment. The staff will initiate the process.

Topsfield Fair-Fiesta Shows: Ms. Wilder announced that the Fair Grounds has been approached by Fiesta Shows to have the “Enchanted Village” on the Fair Grounds property from Thanksgiving through Christmas. The Fair would like to know how the Board feels about this proposal. The Board has concerns and Ms. Wilder will request more details in writing from the Fair.

Ron Bishop: Ms. Wilder provided an update that Mr. Bishop will be retiring as of July 1, 2009 and the Finance Committee has been put on notice of the Reserve Fund Transfer amount that will be requested. It is expected to be about \$22,000.

Furry Vengeance: Ms. Wilder informed the Board that Summit Productions is in the process of finalizing a location for a new “green comedy” film involving trained animals. The Board requested that Mr. Dewey come in and present more details of the plan. Chairman Morrison would like Topsfield’s Animal Inspector to be made aware of the proposal.

Grant Agreements with non-profits: Ms. Wilder presented a document prepared by Town Counsel for the Board’s review and consideration.

Selectman Dow made motion to adjourn at 7:12PM, seconded by Selectman Gandt, so voted: 5-0.

Warrants: The Selectmen signed and approved warrants in the amount of \$ **1,074,160.08**. The breakdown is as follows:

Warrant FY09:	
093T	\$ 82,709.17
093	\$ 210,914.79
094	\$ 780,536.12

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Rich, Secretary
Selectmen’s Office

Approved as amended at the June 8, 2009 Board of Selectmen’s meeting.