

**ASHFORD BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING
Ashford Town Hall, Room 104
5 Town Hall Road, Ashford, CT 06278
March 10, 2016**

Present: Cathryn Silver-Smith (Chairperson), Susan Eastwood (Clerk), Judi Austin, Chuck Funk, Merrill Simpson, Gail Zaicek, Jesse Burnham (alt.), Angie DeSanto (alt.), Carl Pfalzgraf (alt.), Mike Zambo (Selectman and Ex-Officio), Francine Hodovan (Recording Secretary).

Guests: Wayne Fletcher (AVFD Chief, Linda Gagne (Tax Collector), Sheila Grady (Ashford Senior Center Program Coordinator), Kara Fishman (Assessor), Steve Morytko (Ashford Conservation Commission member)

1. **Call to Order:** Chairperson Cathryn Silver-Smith called the Regular Meeting of the Ashford Board of Finance to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. **Seating of Alternates:** None.
3. **Approve Minutes of Regular Meeting of March 3, 2016:**
MS. ZAICEK MOVED AND MS. AUSTIN SECONDED A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 3, 2016 BOF REGULAR MEETING WITH THE FOLLOWING CORRECTIONS. THE MOTION PASSED WITH EVERYONE VOTING AFFIRMATIVELY, EXCEPT MR. SIMPSON, WHO ABSTAINED.
 - Item 5. Communications: Correct the spelling of the word “uder”, so that the last line reads, “This will be covered **under** agenda Item 7d.”
 - Item 9. Remarks for the Good of the Board: Should read “He stated that there was a lot of discussion on the **car tax plan**, and about how having a lot of **non-profit** organizations in a town affects its budget.
4. **Hear From Public:** None.
5. **Communications:**
 - FOI Concern - Ashford BOE Minutes: Awaiting BOE action.
Issue Summary: BOE minutes filed with Town Clerk and posted on Town Website do not match minutes retained at the School and posted on School website. Also, changes made to minutes are not clearly communicated to the public.
 - Draft versions of BOE minutes are:
 - Filed with the Town Clerk
 - Distributed via email to the First Selectman, BOF Chair and Town Webmaster
 - Uploaded to the School Website by the School
 - Uploaded to the Town Website by the Town Webmaster
 - Reviewed and formally approved by board motion during a subsequent BOE meeting
 - It was discovered recently that:
 - BOE motions to approve minutes do not indicate what changes were made to the original minutes
 - The changes/approved minutes are not filed with the Town Clerk
 - The changes/approved minutes are not distributed to any of the town officials who received the original draft minutes, including the Town Webmaster. As a result they are not uploaded to the Town Website
 - Beginning with the minutes from the July 16, 2015 BOE meeting, the School began replacing draft minutes (labeled “Minutes Unapproved”) on the School Website with revised minutes (labeled “Minutes”) with no indication of the changes made.

- The following are notes from the Town Clerk’s conversation with Tom Hennick, State FOI Commission, and communicated to the BOE Chair and School administration on March 1.
 - The first set of minutes (“Uncorrected” watermark) is considered a “PUBLIC RECORD,” and must be retained, even if the BOE takes it down off their website
 - The BOE must keep both sets of minutes in their primary filing location
 - Both sets of minutes must be filed consistently (same content) with Town Clerk and their own primary filing location. (Website not enforced by FOIC)
 - **BEST PRACTICE:** Do the minutes within 7 days of a meeting. At the NEXT meeting, make any changes or corrections to those minutes. The minutes from that second meeting reflects the changes made to the minutes of the first meeting. “The Board approved the following corrections....” Type the changes in bold and compare them to the original, so that people can clearly see what changed
- Financial Policies and Procedures Manual: No response/update has been received from Maureen Barber since February 3. Ms. Barbr stated in her February email that she would have the draft report ready for BOF review on February 16.
- Request for Information – Joan Bowley: Earlier this evening Ms. Silver-Smith noticed a February 28 email in her personal email account from Ms. Bowley requesting a breakdown and status update for all Town’s Capital Projects. Ms. Silver-Smith will follow-up with Ms. Bowley.

6. Unfinished Business: None.

7. New Business:

a. Selectman’s Update:

- Mr. Zambo stated that he also has not heard from Ms. Barber. He and the Selectmen have discussed sending a certified letter to her in the hopes of receiving a response. If there is none, they will engage Town Counsel.
- The Town has received an insurance check from CIRMA to repair our 2008 International dump truck for the amount of \$5,846.50
- The Town received a check for \$36,770.00 to close out a SYEAP grant awarded in 2008
- Ashford was not awarded a STEAP grant in this year’s first round of awards
- The bus donated to Ashford by WTRD has been picked up, passed inspection, and will be registered this Friday. Next week Mr. Zambo will be meeting with Mathews Bus at the Department of Transportation to complete the order for the new Senior bus that is being largely purchased with State grant monies

b. FY 2017 Budget Requests requiring additional information:

- **Library Board:** Deferred until March 17 BOF meeting
- **Senior Center:**
Senior Center Program Director Shelia Grady outlined some of the contentions between groups and preconceived judgments many seniors associate with our Center, many of which were communicated previously to the Selectmen and Board of Finance members by seniors who no longer participate in Senior Center activities and events. Ms. Grady noted that the Center is a community focal point on aging where older persons come together for services and activities which are socially enriching, enhance their dignity and encourage involvement in the community. Programs should consist of a variety of services and activities in such areas of education, creative arts, recreation and advocacy. She reviewed her role and the steps she has already taken and those that she has planned to make the Center a more welcoming place with more activities for seniors. She works with the Commission on Aging (COA) and the Agent for the Elderly, and acts as a friendly advocate for seniors. She clarified that she does not work for the Ashford Senior Center Organization (ASCO club), rather she facilitates the scheduling of all Center activities and events, which includes those that are open to all seniors, COA events, ASCO club events, intergenerational activities such as Zumba and Tai Chi classes, and Center use for other community-based events.

Ms. Grady requested that a Town credit card be made available for her to use in purchase some items online when they are not available as cheaply by other means or are not available in our area (i.e., a ping pong table or a pool table). Currently she has to make those purchases with her personal credit card and apply for reimbursement from the Town. Ms. Silver-Smith stated that the BOF will be looking at credit card procedures in general for all departments and will keep this in mind when they are setting new policies.

Ms. Grady also stated that she is looking into putting in a bocce court. Ms. Austin suggested that she contact the Eagle Scouts who each have to do a community project and are always looking for ways to complete this badge. Ms. Austin also noted that Ms. Grady could ask via the Citizen for craft supplies and she can probably get all that she needs from donations from townspeople. Board members thanked Ms. Grady for attending to clarify her role and her efforts on behalf of seniors.

MS. EASTWOOD MOVED AND MR. FUNK SECONDED A MOTION TO ADD ITEM 7D - REQUEST FOR OPEN SPACE FUNDING TO THE AGENDA. THE MOTION PASSED WITH PASSED WITH EVERYONE VOTING AFFIRMATIVELY.

Tax Assessor:

Tax Assessor Kara Fishman clarified the \$2,500 included in her FY 2017 department request to pay for outside services to conduct physical inspection audits of some of the larger businesses and industries in town. She wants to ensure that all business machinery and other personal property is being properly declared by businesses, and presented a summary of additional taxes recovered by the Town of Sterling, CT as the result of physical audits. A book audit, which is based on the depreciation schedule the business owner sends to the IRS, costs about \$500. A physical audit costs about \$850.

Ms. Fishman stated that, when businesses learn that physical audits are being conducted they will be more likely to declare the correct value of all property. Mr. Pfalzgraf stated that he would consider it an affront if someone were to show up as his home to audit his personal property because it would indicate that the Town didn't trust him to tell the truth after all the years he's lived and worked in Ashford, and served on Town boards, and that this probably would not go over very well with other businesses in town either. He also stated that if the Tax Assessor were to come to him after the fact and request back taxes up to three years, as Ms. Fishman stated they could, that he would not pay them. It was noted that the Town does not have big industry and that considerable efforts are being made to retain current businesses and to encourage new businesses to come to Ashford. Ms. Silver-Smith suggested that the Ms. Fishman send a checklist that she described to the businesses to remind them of what needs to be accounted for.

The BOF will consider this request during next week's budget deliberations.

MS. ZAICHEK MOVED AND MR. FUNK SECONDED A MOTION TO MOVE AGENDA ITEM 7D - REQUEST FOR OPEN SPACE FUNDING AHEAD OF ITEM 7C – FY 2017 BUDGET DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED WITH PASSED WITH EVERYONE VOTING AFFIRMATIVELY.

d. Request Funding for Open Space Fund:

Conservation Commission member Steve Morytko requested that the Town set aside an amount equal to .25% of the annual General Fund (General Government, Ashford School, Ashford's share of Region 19) budget each year in an Open Space Fund. Based on the current budget, the amount would be approximately \$35K.

Mr. Morytko stated that planned use of this fund would be fairly broad, but the intent is to preserve open space to maintain the quality of life in the town. This includes funding for land maintenance. He stated that Ashford is a large "drainage system, a watershed that feeds the Mansfield Hollow Dam reservoir." It was noted that there already is an Open Space Fund that was used to offset some of the Town cost in the purchase of Knowlton Farm and/or Horse Listeners Orchard development rights.

Mr. Morytko stated that the Conservation Commission is looking into a number of areas to preserve, including property that is adjacent to already protected property, wildlife corridors, areas for species

preservation, etc. He stated that no one on the Conservation Commission is advocating buying up town land.

Mr. Zambo stated that there is merit in the Conservation Commission request, but cautioned that every year has a different set of circumstances as far as budgeting goes. Ms. Eastwood asked if the Conservation Commission had looked at other towns for models, for example, the town of Willington that receives donations both public and private, government grants and loans for open space preservation.

Ms. Silver-Smith suggested that board members familiarize themselves with the Ashford's 2015 Open Space Plan (<http://www.ashfordtownhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/ASHFORD-Open-Space-Planrev20150608v20r.pdf>) and 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development (http://www.ashfordtownhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Ashford_POCD_2015_Final_11116.pdf) before continuing discussion of this request.

Mr. Zambo, Ms. Fishman and Ms. Grady left the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

c. FY 2017 Budget Discussion:

Mr. Pfalzgraf stated that he is against the Tax Assessor spending \$2,500 on audits.

Mr. Pfalzgraf would like the part time salaries on the Selectmen's Budget spelled out, for example, one line for Part Time Salary-Roving Secretary and a second line for Part-Time Salary-Finance Department Clerk so that it is more clear how salaries are being distributed, and that they be shown this way from year to year.

Ms. Silver-Smith stated that the board needs MBR figures before moving forward with the budget for the BOE. She will follow up with the BOE to get that information as soon as possible.

It was noted that the \$1,000 budget request for the upkeep of the Ashford Academy is found under Ashford Historical Society 110-57000-54210-000 Historical Building Repairs.

8. Agenda Items for Next Meeting:

- Library Board regarding facilities planning
- Board Action – Proposed FY 2017 Budget (General Government, Ashford School, Region 19/Ashford, Capital Improvements)

9. Remarks for the Good of the Board: None.

10. Adjournment:

MS. ZAICEK MOVED AND MR. FUNK SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MARCH 10, 2016 REGULAR MEETING OF THE ASHFORD BOARD OF FINANCE. THE MOTION PASSED WITH EVERYONE VOTING AFFIRMATIVELY.

The Ashford Board of Finance Regular Meeting adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathryn Silver-Smith (for BOF Clerk)