

Board of Selectmen 2010 Annual Report



Ron Reed, Ed Vitone and Maggie Whitney.

To the Citizens of Ashburnham:

Following the April 27, 2009 Town Election, the Board of Selectmen met and organized electing Edward J. Vitone, Jr., Chairman; Margaret Whitney, Clerk, and Ronald W. Reed, member, the newly elected person to the Board of Selectmen.

The Board continues to work closely with Town Administrator, Douglas Briggs. From day one on the job, Mr. Briggs' leadership, even-keeled management style, fiscal responsibility and vision, has resulted in over \$3 million dollars savings today. In addition, his open-door policy and transparency has created a positive environment for the Town of Ashburnham.

The Board is grateful for Assistant to the Town Administrator Sylvia Turcotte for her hard work and professionalism. She is always ready to give us a helping hand.

During the past year the Board has:

- Continued with the Board of Selectmen "Code of Conduct".
- Continued with the Board of Selectmen "Tracking Action System".
- Monitored the established goals and objectives for the Town Administrator.
- Continued to hold Board of Selectmen meetings at the Public Safety Building (PSB) which has proved to be working extremely well.
- Updated the 1986 "Act-Establishing a Selectmen-Administrator Form of Government" as well as the Town's General Bylaws and was successfully voted at the Annual Town Meeting on May 8, 2010.
- Continued to review capital needs and updating the five-year plan with the Capital Planning Committee.

- Continued to work with the IT Advisory Board to update computer policy and review inventory of systems.
- Continued to work with the Tax Base Study Committee to find ways to bring in revenue for the Town.
- Implemented new Board of Selectmen policies: Donations & Gifts; Acceptance of Grants; and Use of Town Property.
- Continued to receive Department Head Monthly Reports.
- Worked with the Bresnahan Scout Committee to receive Town approval to designate the former Caouette site as the new location for the Scout House.
- Voted to pursue a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to renovate the Veteran's Memorial School which houses the Council on Aging.
- Continue to work with Accountant and Assessors to sell foreclosed/town-owned land to return these properties to the tax roll and generate revenue.
- Permanently placed the Water Trough behind Town Hall with work done by the Highway Department. Robert and Florence Saccone, former owners of the Victorian House Restaurant donated a plaque to signify the importance of the trough.
- Continued to work on "Wind Energy" initiative.
- Continue to have Selectman representative on the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC).
- Appointed an Ashburnham 250th Committee to work on the upcoming Town's Anniversary which will be celebrated in the year 2015.
- Completed the Ethics Training required by the State of Massachusetts.
- Continued to work in a transparent manner to distribute information via the Town's website.

The fiscal year of 2010-2011 was another economically difficult year. The Town continues to receive reduced state aid.

We are expecting continued financial pressure as we work on the FY12 budget. Our state aid has been cut by 7% and the Department Heads have been asked to cut their budget by 5%. The Departments continue to do more with less and the Board realizes how painful the budget process is for the Department Heads, Boards, Committees and Commissions and we appreciate the endless hours they spend trying to be creative with financing and delivering governmental services with significantly reduced funding.

Chairman Ed Vitone attended the February 16, 2011 Ashby Board of Selectmen meeting to discuss the possibility of sharing our Town Administrator Douglas Briggs. At the Ashburnham Board of Selectmen meeting on February 22, 2011, the Board voted unanimously to send a formal letter to the Ashby Board of Selectmen reiterating the possibility of sharing Ashburnham's Town Administrator. The letter stated as follows:

"The Board believes that towns such as Ashby and Ashburnham will continue to face significant economic pressure in the foreseeable future and that regionalization is one of the few untapped opportunities to help us meet such challenges.

Recognizing that Ashby is considering engaging an Interim Town Administrator (TA) we believe that this presents an ideal opportunity for the two towns to “test drive” a shared position for a three month period. If agreeable to your Board, Ashburnham would make its Town Administrator, Doug Briggs, available to serve as Ashby’s Interim TA on a part-time basis. Just as is the case with the Town Accountant and Assessors positions that both Ashby and Ashburnham share, from a management perspective, each Board would supervise the activities of the TA for its town only. The two towns would enter into a three-month inter-municipal agreement to reimburse Ashburnham for Doug’s services. The specific details to be defined pending a decision to move forward.

As stated in the meeting, Ashburnham’s interest in a shared TA position is contingent upon the potential for a broader cooperation between the two towns where costs can be lowered and services to our citizens improved. In this regard, we suggest that we jointly task Mr. Briggs to quantify the regionalization opportunities that may exist. This assessment would be completed within the three-month interim assignment. In recognition of this study, both towns would agree to postpone regionalization discussion with other communities until a joint evaluation of the recommendations has been completed.” The Ashby Board of Selectmen Chairman Peter McMurray and members Joseph Casey and Dan Meunier has taken the request under advisement.

The Board expresses their gratitude to the Department Heads, Town Boards, Committees and Commissions for their accomplishments during the year. Please take the time to read their individual reports. It should be remembered that these Boards, Committees and Commissions are composed of volunteers who give many long hours of their free time to work on issues and projects that benefit the Town of Ashburnham. The Board acknowledges with thanks, the cooperation we have received from our Town Officials, Town Employees and the Townspeople.

“There is but one straight course, and that is to seek truth and pursue it steadily.” – George Washington

Respectfully submitted,
Margaret Whitney, for the Board of Selectmen

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Edward T. Vitone, Jr., Chair
Margaret Whitney, Clerk
Ronald W. Reed, Member