

Minutes of April 16, 2008

Meeting of the Ashburnham Municipal Light Plant

Present Commissioners: George Ainsleigh, Richard Ahlin

Stan Herriott Manager

Commissioner: Kevin Lashua Arrived at 6:20 p.m.

The Meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m.

Chairman Ainsleigh called for approval of the agenda. The motion was made by Commissioner Ahlin and seconded by Commissioner Ainsleigh. The vote was unanimous.

Chairman Ainsleigh called for a motion to approve the Minutes of the March 19<sup>th</sup> 2008 meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Ahlin and seconded by Commissioner Ainsleigh. The vote was unanimous. Secretary Ahlin signed the Minutes of the March 19<sup>th</sup> 2008 meeting.

Manager Herriott reviewed the budget through March he noted that receipts were tracking well below the projections and expenses exceeded receipts by about \$63,000.00. The Manager went on to say that sales were near expectations but collections were down considerably. Manager Herriott went on to say he expected collections to increase because we are now out of the winter moratorium and we are actively shutting people off and collecting monies that are owed to the Ashburnham Light Company.

Manager Herriott stated we purchased our entire pole supply for the year in the first quarter so they would air out before the weather was good and people might not notice any odor from them. It did not seem to work out so well because the neighbor has already complained about the smell.

Manager Herriott included in the agenda two letters for the Commissioners to consider at a future meeting one on the post retirement healthcare to be sent to the Selectmen. The second letter was designed to consider a way to quantify the Light Department's in lieu of tax payment. The Commissioners said they would take them under advisement. The Commissioners also asked the Manager to review the numbers and adjust them to reflect the current tax structure.

Chairman Ainsleigh brought up the discussion that we needed to vote on the in lieu of tax payment for the year before the Town meeting. After some discussion Chairman Ainsleigh made a motion it was seconded by Secretary Ahlin and the vote was unanimous to once again pay to the Town \$40,000.00. Chairman Ainsleigh said that he would attend the Town Meeting and make the motion.

Secretary Ahlin brought up the mowing tractor bids for the mowing tractor the Light Department was buying for the Town. The Manager said the bid had been received and we were processing the check through the warrant. Secretary Ahlin inquired about the mower head as to whether or not the highway department had purchased the other mowing head. The Manager said to his knowledge the highway department had not. Both Secretary Ahlin and Chairman Ainsleigh felt that we should have the other mower installed before the mower was delivered and not to wait for the Highway Dept. to buy it. They also felt that we should store the tractor here so we could keep track of the machine. They directed the Manager to see that this gets done and report back to them as soon as possible. The Manager said he would.

After that discussion Secretary Ahlin made a motion to accept the Padula Brother bid for the tractor at \$60,000.00. The motion was seconded by Chairman Ainsleigh the vote was unanimous. Commissioner Lashua arrived and entered the discussion and the other Commissioners reviewed what had been said. Commissioner Lashua felt that Don Ouellette the Highway Director should have never made the promise to buy the additional mower if he did not have the monies and he felt that we should have been discussing this with Steve Nims and not with Don Ouellette. He agreed the purchase of the additional mower should be done prior to getting the tractor and the tractor should be stored here at the Light Department. The Manager said that he would move forward in that direction.

Manager Herriott submitted his expenses for the month which were approved.

The discussion was opened on the employee benefits package after discussion the following was offered as a solution, and the Manager was to communicate with the employees of these changes in benefits;

## Employee Benefit Requests for 2008-2010

<b>Employee Requests &amp; Company Responses</b>	<b>Possible Solutions</b>
Health Insurance	Paid medical upon retirement at the present rate of 75% being paid by AMLP same as school system.
Company Response	<p>The company agrees that this is a benefit that we would like to provide although quite costly. But the Light Department by statue cannot provide this benefit unless the town votes to provide this for the Town as a whole. (See attached letter). Also there are some pending changes in the healthcare that have been agreed to by the teachers and will need to be considered by the employees in the town of Ashburnham and Westminster since we are part of the same group. The changes are as follows:</p> <p>Increase in co-pay from \$5.00 to \$15.00 per visit.</p> <p>A co-pay of \$100.00 for ER room visits, MRI's, PET scans, CAT Scans by adopting these we will avoid a 4% increase in healthcare expense next year.</p> <p>There is also a possibility of adopting a flexible spending account for employees. This account would allow an employee to put aside pre tax dollars to be spent on healthcare throughout the year.</p>
Wage/Cost of living Increase	<p>A. Effective July 2008 Cost of living increase 4% + wage increase of 3%</p> <p>B. Effective July 2009 Cost of living increase 3% wage increase 3%</p> <p>(Consumer price index rose 4.1% in 2007)</p>
Company Response	<p>The Commissioners have agreed to an across the board raise as follows.</p> <p>July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2009 (4%) July 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2010</p>

	3.5%
Lineman's Standby/On Call Pay	<p>A. Increase standby from \$300.00 a week to 16 hours of straight time at individual's rate. Holiday pay to remain the same at \$100.00 per holiday.</p> <p>B. Restore Sunday call into double time rate</p> <p>C. Standby for second person to be available during major holidays at one half the rate of the regular standby pay.</p>
Company Response	<p>The Commissioners felt that all employees are inconvenienced equally by being on standby. So they did not want to apply and hourly rate to standby. They agreed to \$100.00 increase to stand-by pay so a normal week would be \$400.00 and week with a holiday will be \$500.00.</p> <p>No change in the double time.</p> <p>No additional pay for an additional person on standby. The Commissioners felt that this has not been an issue. It would also put and additional burden on employees by having to be on call outside of the normal rotation.</p>
Sick Time Incentive	<p>A. Increase allowed sick time to 5 days to be eligible for attendance award.</p>
Company Response	<p>As a result of the last benefit adjustments where the company agreed to the buy back of sick time, and to begin providing long term disability for our employees. The company feels that this is a benefit to each and every employee and has added considerable cost for the insurance. The object of the 4 day limit is to keep employees on the job to the greatest extent possible and to reward them with a weeks pay for making that extra effort. The company is not willing to make any changes to this area.</p>
Lineman's Work Hours	<p>Permanently change Lineman work hours to 7:00 to 3:00 year round</p>
Company Response	<p>The company position remains unchanged on this issue. In that it is in the best interest of both the employee and the company, to allow employees to return to the building to have their lunch period in a more comfortable environment during the harsh winter months. It is also more productive and saves energy by employees remaining on the job site and working a straight 8 hours when construction demands are the highest.</p> <p>1. Outside workers: Would work a straight eight hours during daylight savings time, and would be required to bring their lunch and eat on the job site.</p> <p>Outside workers: At the expiration of daylight saving time in the Fall,</p>

	2. and until the next spring would work 7:00 am to 3:30 pm. With a half hour lunch break to be taken at the station.
Lineworkers Clothing	A. Add two F.R. hooded sweatshirts per person to uniform package.
Company Response	The Company agreed to provide this additional specialized clothing.

Under old Business:

The Manager reported that the Downtown Celebration Day was still moving forward and that things seemed to be falling into place.

The Manager said the bids on the poles and light fixtures for the Downtown Project were in and that he would be reviewing them soon and would contact the Commissioners as to his recommendation. He mentioned that the bids ranged from \$27,000.00 to \$37,000.00 dollars.

The Manager reported on the Berkshire Wind Project, that all but one system voted to enter the Co-op, the Board of Directors was elected and the Co-op would be establishing the necessary paper work needed by the state. The financing was moving forward, first with 8 million in a bank note and then the remainder of the 40 plus million for the entire project. The first 8 million would be for the purchase of the project and the deposit to GE to get in the manufacturing line for the wind turbines.

The Town wind project was also reported on, the preferred site that UMASS engineers liked was Blood Hill the summit of which is in Ashby and controlled by the Ashby Conservation Committee. In a letter received this week they stated that they had no interest in even discussing a wind turbine on Blood Hill. The Manager reported he would work with UMASS to try to identify another location.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Ahlin and seconded by Commissioner Lashua to adjourn. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Ahlin

Secretary