



# TOWN OF ADAMS

## BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017 – 7:00 PM  
ADAMS TOWN HALL, 1<sup>st</sup> FLOOR, ADAMS, MA 01220

On the above date the **Board of Selectmen** and held a meeting at the **Adams Town Hall** at 7:00 p.m. **Chairman Jeffrey Snoonian** presided the meeting. Present were **Vice Chairman, Arthur Harrington, Members Joseph Nowak, John Duval and Richard Blanchard.** Also in attendance was **Town Administrator Tony Mazzucco.** *Town Counsel, Ed St. John III was absent.*

*The Select Board Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.*

### READING OF MINUTES

*There were no Meeting Minutes submitted for this meeting.*

### PUBLIC COMMENT

**Francie Anne Riley** gave information about the *Bag Share Program* initiated by Leni and Mike Fried. Leftover and discarded feed and grain bags are being recreated into handle bags, using irrigation drip tape for the handles. The program intends to make 8400 bags; one bag per person in town. Workshops on *Bag Share* creation will be held at the old *Firehouse Café*. Teams challenging each other to make bags may join the campaign free of charge for everyone in town for one bag per person. Information may be found on the *Adams Informed* or *The Bag Share* Facebook pages.

**Chairman Snoonian** volunteered the *Board of Selectmen* to create 120 bags. It takes approximately 10 minutes to create a bag and 100 bags can be created in a couple hours with 5 people.

### *Age Friendly Strategic Plan*

**Erica Girgenti**, Director of the Adams Senior Center announced there will be a community meeting at the Adams Visitors Center on Monday, March 20, 2017 from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. to review the draft of the strategic plan for the Age Friendly Berkshires report. Great Barrington and Pittsfield Senior Centers will also be hosting meetings to review the draft.

### *Downtown Corridor Meeting*

**Bill Kolis** announced there will be a *Downtown Corridor* meeting on Thursday, February 23, 2017 at the Adams Visitors Center. At 5:00 p.m. a social hour will take place followed by a review of information and 2017 possibilities at 6:30 p.m. Area businesses have been invited and updates will be given from the Town Administrator and also regarding the scenic train. All are invited to this community forum.

### PUBLIC HEARING

### *Community Development Block Grant Public Hearing, 7:10 p.m.*

**Chairman Snoonian** gave a brief overview of the reason for the Public Hearing and introduced *Community Development Director Donna Cesan.*

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*Motion made by Vice Chairman Harrington to open public hearing for CDBG Block Grant*

*Second by Member Blanchard*

*Unanimous vote*

*Motion passed*

**Director Cesan** gave overview of the Community Development Block Grant parameters for this season and briefly reviewed the change to the fund structure. The maximum amount to apply for is \$800,000 and the deadline is March 10, 2017. She stated that the purpose of the public hearing is to both solicit public input and to obtain the Board of Selectmen's approval of the program activities proposed for the Town's 2017 CDBG application. She gave a short synopsis of the Community Development strategy which is required for the application and detailed the two proposed program activities for the 2017 application. She advised that both projects are consistent with recommendations outlined in the Community Development Strategy and the Downtown Plan, for a total Community Development Block Grant request of \$800,000.

### ***Adams Visitors Center Parking Improvement Project***

The first is construction for the Adams Visitors Center Parking Improvement Project, which will improve blighted pavement, curbing and sidewalks in the Route 8 target area. The project will improve approximately 58,600 square feet of blighted pavement in the parking area along with approximately 1,750 linear feet of blighted curbing and 2,200 linear feet of blighted sidewalks. The project will address access and drainage issues, cracked pavement, and overgrown trees, and provide a newly paved surface, handicap accessible sidewalks and a new drainage system. Features include benches, trash receptacles, deep sunk catch basins, and raingardens in the perimeters of the lot. The funding implementation was outlined, staff proposed \$600,625 in funds directed to project construction with another \$71,655 in program delivery (associated costs to carry out the project including staff salaries). If funded, the project could be put out to bid and work started in the fall with final work and landscaping extending to spring of 2018. It was noted that this is ideal timing in conjunction with the Town's *MassWorks* project, and the newly constructed parking facility would be able to be completed by the beginning of Berkshire Scenic Railway's first full season of operating the Hoosac Valley Service tourist trains – downtown-to-downtown.

### ***Hoosac Valley Coal and Grain Design Project***

The second is a proposed design of the former Hoosac Valley Coal and Grain property into a new public park. This is a key opportunity site along the new segment of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, which also parallels the train tracks. Berkshire Scenic Railway would incorporate this into their interpretive narration along the route. Upgrading the property would add value to the surrounding neighborhood. Proposed is \$50,000 in grant funds which will allow the Town to hire an engineering consultant to design the proposed upgrades and prepare bid-ready construction documents, with another \$23,145 in program delivery.

Board Member discussion ensued and the proposed design plan has been worked on for about 9 months with DPW staff and other stakeholders, and has the best potential use of funds for the community. Additional public input will be solicited for the fine tuning process. Parking kiosks and plug-ins were discussed as future possibilities. The Memorial School was briefly touched on as a possible option for school consolidation choices, but is not a viable project for funding without a firm commitment for use





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of the building. The condition of the piping under the parking lot project was considered and found at this time to need only minor repairs that the Town can complete at this time. The Adams Internists parking lot use was also examined for its needs and this design will provide better parking to accommodate everyone. Solar panels were considered but found to need significant maintenance. Electricity plugins and a permanent fire pit were encouraged. The impact of the construction of the Visitors Center parking lot on events was discussed and extra parking along Depot Street will be gained. Events will be considered in the timing of the project.

*The public was invited to give input and offer comments regarding the projects.*

**Erica Girgenti**, Senior Center Director strongly encouraged the project because of challenges with the entrance and exit of the parking lot, the overgrown trees and the center islands creating sand and salt buildup causing trip hazards for seniors. She said the design has an overall benefit and this design features the safety of pull-through parking. She explained this design includes beautification around the river so people can enjoy the space.

**George Haddad** agreed that the project along with the Adams Station "pocket park" across Hoosac Street is extremely important because once the Scenic Train and Ashuwillticook Rail Trail are completed this is the first impression people will get and the new parking facility will be important when trying to sell the community. He noted that one of the future problems with the community for expanding businesses is a parking issue and to create businesses the Town needs adequate places to park.

**George LeMaitre** noted that this Visitors Center Parking Project dovetails with the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail and from a tourist focus having available parking at the head of the Rail Trail is great thing and the whole larger project is working nicely.

**Richard Tavelli** of the *Downtown Adams Group* advised he looked strategically at the downtown to consider how it can grow. He endorsed the Visitors Center Parking Project because people come to Adams by vehicle and the project ties in with attracting customers. He noted that signage going with the project will be a key factor and recommended a more comprehensive view to be enunciated. He explained the *Downtown Development Plan* from 2003 has very detailed recommendations for parking and to seek funds to benefit the approach and movement of incoming traffic to the downtown. He explained it would enhance traffic to make opportunities for shops and boutiques, art tourism and to display wares, buy goods and services for art crafting. He said the plan recommended the business district for housing of all incomes and the Jones Block and Mausert Block will have very attractive housing which will open up that area. He told the Board that the Mill Children Exhibit is a cultural entity and that other cultural attractions are coming to the area and he hopes to encourage more.

**Town Administrator Mazzucco** emphasized that the proposed project represents an infrastructure enhancement of the busiest parking lot in the area. It will have small stormwater enhancements, more of which the Town will be facing in the next couple years. He pointed out that as the downtown expands this project will serve the Town well by making big investments with funds the state is investing elsewhere in the area.





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*Motion made by Member Blanchard to close the Public Hearing*

*Second by Vice Chairman Harrington*

*Unanimous vote*

*Motion passed*

*Motion made by Vice Chairman Harrington to approve the CDBG application submission as presented for the maximum grant amount of \$800,000*

*Second by Member Duval*

*Unanimous vote*

*Motion passed*

### NEW BUSINESS

#### *MARS Discussion – ACRSD Superintendent Putnam*

**Adams-Cheshire Regional School Superintendent Putnam** advised he has worked with Stephen Hemman from *MARS* previously. He briefly reviewed the history of regional schools and Chapter 71 to help regional school districts with assistance for transportation. The options available for the School District were explained. The agreement would have to be amended if the regionalized school district is dissolved and must be approved by the Department of Education. It would be up to each town how they provide education in their community. Municipalities are not eligible for regional transportation and taking care of retirees in the district is a complex situation to determine who provides the retirement benefits to them. This process would take a minimum of two to three years. It could be amended to have two Kindergarten through Fifth Grade districts, and have three legal organizations. Each would have a superintendent, and there would be individual contracts with each group and responsibilities for three sets of insurance. Retiree benefits would still be an issue to work out, and there would be a loss of regional transportation for Adams and Cheshire. It would have to begin December 2017. It could remain Kindergarten through Grade Twelve with separate budgets so Adams pays for Adams and Cheshire pays for the Pre-Kindergarten through Grade Five budget. Each town would be responsible to submit information to the Regional School Committee to put forth three budgets.

**Board Members** expressed frustration with Chapter 70 funding remaining flat since 60% of the budget is based on Chapter 70 funds. Adams has been held harmless but paid additional funding to meet the difference. The current budget has a \$300,000 shortfall and the Collins Center recommendations add an additional \$600,000. Superintendent Putnam was thanked for his energy and exhilaration in this very important first project he has undertaken.

**Superintendent Putnam** expressed a desire to find cost reductions and revenues by closing a school. After evaluating public documents from the audit evaluation he was weighing the cost savings of closing one elementary school and assessing the costs to make either building ready in comparison with the cost to keep both running. Projections were reviewed for Chapter 70 funding and other possible revenues. The reimbursement eligibility for students being transported from one school to the other is a financial consideration, but savings would be delayed until Fiscal Year 2019. Changing health plans next year is an option to produce approximately \$750,000 in savings. He briefly outlined the tours of the buildings.



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**Chairman Snoonian** noted there will be a vote which could include not closing either school. In the same period of time the state had a funding increase of 5.4% increase while the increase from local funding was compared at 52.8%. If C.T. Plunkett closes there will be another layer of costs to shutter this additional school which cannot be foisted on taxpayers and budgets further shorted with the children right in the middle.

Thursday, February 23, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. at the C.T. Plunkett Auditorium there will be a public forum. Monday, February 27, 2017 the Superintendent will be making a recommendation to the School Committee, which deliberates and debates at meetings on March 2, 2017, March 9, 2017 and has a final vote on March 13, 2017 at Hoosac Valley High School Library.

### SUBCOMMITTEE / LIAISON REPORTS

#### *Adams Arts Advisory Board*

**Member Nowak** advised he attended the *Adams Arts Advisory Board* meeting and congratulated them for the award they received. He noted they are doing great work in the community.

#### *Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS)*

**Chairman Snoonian** reiterated that he had attended the information session with the representative from MARS.

#### *Berkshire Bike Path*

Vice Chairman Harrington met with Marge Cohen of the Berkshire Bike Path and discussed having a May ribbon cutting event for the new portion of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail.

### DEPARTMENT REPORTS

#### *Town Administrator's Report*

*There was no report by the Town Administrator given at this meeting.*

#### *Town Counsel Report*

*There was no report by Town Counsel St. John III given at this meeting.*

### ANNOUNCEMENTS & GOOD OF THE ORDER

#### *Adams-Cheshire Regional School District Public Forum*

**Chairman Snoonian** announced there will be a *School Information Public Forum* tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. at C.T. Plunkett School Auditorium.

#### *Downtown Development Business Meeting*

**Chairman Snoonian** announced that there will be a Downtown Business Development meeting at the Adams Visitors Center tomorrow evening at 5:00 p.m.





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### *North Adams Downtown Improvement*

**Member Nowak** advised he is sorry to see that North Adams did not get enough votes to receive funding to improve the downtown but congratulated the people of North Adams for their spirit.

### *Clean Up After Dogs*

**Member Nowak** advised citizens to clean up after dog defecation on the sidewalks, which is prevalent.

### *School System*

**Bill Kolis**, a citizen, advised he was looking at buying property and when looking up Trulia there is a grade given to the school system. He pointed out there is an amazing property stock and opportunities for young families but if the school system has a "C-Minus" rating they will not look at twice at moving here. He gave his opinion that the answer is not to close a school because the rating will improve when the school system is better. He implored the Board to start thinking long term and outside the box or there won't be a police or fire department or other services.

### *Downtown Buildings*

**Member Nowak** noted that Adams has a great downtown but there is a building that has been in a process of being renovated for a long time but very little is being done. He pointed out that this is out of the Town's hands, and doesn't help the finances of the community.

### ADJOURNMENT

*Motion made by Member Blanchard to adjourn*

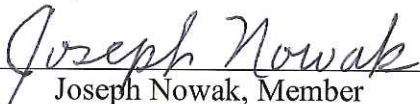
*Second by Member Harrington*

*Unanimous Vote*


*Motion passed*

*The Board of Selectmen Meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,  
Recording Secretary

  
Joseph Nowak, Member

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Richard Blanchard, Member

  
John Duval, Member

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Arthur Harrington, Vice Chairman

  
Jeffrey Snoonian, Chairman