

**ACUSHNET BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, September 10, 2019**

Selectman Gaspar motioned to approve the Consent Agenda, David Desroches seconded and all in favor.

MEETING MAIL

LETTER OF INTEREST FROM J.J. PEREIRA TO THE AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Received a letter of interest from Resident J.J. Pereira to the Agricultural Commission. Selectman, Cabral thanked Mr. Pereira for his interest and welcomed any other resident to do same to other boards. Board appointed Mr. Pereira as member of the Agricultural Commission until May 1, 2020. Selectman Gaspar motioned to approve, Selectman Desroches seconded, all were in favor.

ANNUAL WATERSHED RIDE-OCTOBER 6, 2019

The Board approved the 13th Annual Buzzards Bay Watershed Ride on October 6, 2019 as presented. Selectman Desroches motioned to approve, Selectman Gaspar seconded, all were in favor.

APPOINTMENTS

1. Darren Klein, Kopelman & Paige- Police Chief Replacement Discussion

The Board of Selectmen were told the should call for the Police Chief civil service list, as soon as possible, this was developed in accordance with the Town's delegation agreement and assessment center. Attorney Klein explained the Board has the option to pick 1 out of 4, but must have a sound and sufficient reason why the Board by-passed 1st & 2nd candidate, there is also an appeal process if needed for the officers. The Board asked if they could have Attorney Klein review the questions that they would like to ask during the interview. The Board also discussed time limits during the interview and flexibility on questions. The Board wanted to make this as professional as possible. Attorney Klein explained the traits that are important and how each question is answered based

upon Assessment Center, Interview, Job Performance, Education and other relevant experience. That is how the Selectmen should base their decision.

OLD BUSINESS

GOLF COMMITTEE EMPOWERMENT

Golf Committee regarding the Empowerment Policy Change. Committee needs more time to review. The Board Tabled. Selectman Gaspar motioned to approve, Selectman Desroches seconded, all were in favor.

REMOTE PARTICIPATION POLICY FOR SECOND READING & ADOPTION

Selectman Gaspar stressed to members of the Board of using this for unusual circumstances and geographic. Should give memo out to various boards. Selectman Desroches motion to approve to adopt the Remote Participation Policy as presented, Selectman Gaspar seconded, all were in favor.

PUBLIC PROTECTION CLASSIFICATION PROGRAM RESULTS

Fire Chief/EMS Director Kevin Gallagher giving info regarding the Insurance Services Offices known as ISO.

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) is an independent company that serves insurance companies by analyzing risk. The ISO conducts a survey of each community using a "Fire Suppression Rating" schedule that looks at emergency communications, water supply and the local fire department. This survey is used to assign a community a "Public Protection Classification". The number used ranges from 1 (the best) to 10 (not the best). That number is then used by individual insurance companies to assist in determining the rates you pay for property insurance.

The last ISO survey, conducted in 1999, resulted in Acushnet being assigned an ISO rating of 5 (placing the Town in the top 53% of communities nationwide). For a decade home owners insurance was driven, in part, by that number.

We have, as a town, made many enhancements in the last 10 years including improvements in our water distribution system (new water mains means more hydrants), a new police station with a communications system built to modern standards and a slew of improvements at the fire department including the purchase of our first ladder truck (for which we previously lost points) and the complete merger of Fire and EMS which resulted in cross trained personnel and shared apparatus.

The Fire Chief asked the ISO to come back to Acushnet and take a look at what we have done. The result is a reduction in our classification to a 4 (placing us now in the top 30% of communities nationwide). In fact, we are only 1.42 points from being a 3. This reduction in rating will go into effect on December 1, 2019. This reclassification success is the result of much work; by Boards of Selectmen, Finance Committees, departments and most importantly the voters of Town Meeting. The ISO provided us a detailed report which we will use as a roadmap moving forward. The goal in the next five years (the time of our next survey) is to find at least 1.5 additional points and get the Town to a 3.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

WATER/SEWER RATE SETTING APPROVAL

Kathy Silva – Department of Water/Sewer stated they did not increase the water rates last year in the undesignated fund balance, they have over \$1Million in water reserve. Added \$71,000 to the fund, if they do not change rates would add same. She suggested to increase water rates \$.40 per 120,000 gallons, \$6 in first tier. Regular water rates 1.5% absorbed in budget. Older generation uses less water, and could be \$2.00 per household. Over 65% of water users are at \$1.05 and going up. We have to build up our surplus, and want our water users to know we are working on our surplus. Board came up with plan to build surplus 100,000 – 200,000/yr. Selectman Gaspar was happy to move forward on infrastructure and deplete surplus guide. Also, get rid of oldest infrastructure, raising 1st tier. Board of Selectmen happy with the move, Selectman Desroches stated that this will bring up our reserve to 125,000 per year.

TOWN ADMINISTRATORS REPORT

STANDARD & POORS CREDIT RE-RATING UPDATE

Julie Hebert, Interim Town Administrator, stated that we have done a lot of work in making changes to finances. We have gone from an A+ to an A++. Agency has been monitoring us and reached out to us. They looked at us as a Town reformatted budget. What the Town is doing is very important with \$1 million in stabilization fund, looks favorably on us with OPEB recognized as well. Town worked to lower insurance from family to +1, a savings of \$140,000/yr. Adjusted liability to \$130,000. School Special Ed Fund is looking for safety net for not over extending budget. With the Towns increased credit rating the town could look to refinance, save tax payers money and the Town would have a better rate. Chairman Cabral gave Julie kudos for initiating a change in policies to receive this new rate change. The Board Discussed the Master Plan it is 10 years old need to discuss in coming months and to make sure to do it all at once. Mr. Young is

looking at grants for the plan. The train is coming into New Bedford and may impact Acushnet that could be a game changer to the plan.

No votes taken

Motion was made to adjourn:

Roger A. Cabral

Kevin Gaspar, Sr.



David Desroches, Member