

Amesbury Municipal Council Minutes
June 17, 2004, 7:00PM
Town Hall Auditorium

Pledge of Allegiance lead by Councilor Chandler

Roll Call: Christopher G. Lawrence, Mario J. Pinierio, Robert D. Woodsom, Roger Benson, James D. Chandler, Ann Connolly King, Esther F. Headley, Anne C. Larnard and Joseph W. McMilleon

PUBLIC HEARING

2004-23 Amend Amesbury Zoning Bylaw Section V.E.6.D.1. – Obtaining permits for single unit/lot housing developments – Mayor Hildt sponsor cont.

President McMilleon – reads 2004-23 into the record. Do we have recommendations from the planning and ordinance committees?

Councilor Larnard – I received a phone call right before the meeting from someone that said they have been trying to watch from home and that we do not speak into the mike and that they could not hear us. She also said that when people come up to the podium they tend to start walking away while they are still talking. She is requesting that people talk into the mike and stay at the podium until they finish speaking.

Councilor Lawrence – The recommendation from the ordinance committee is to approve the language recommended by the Planning Board with a correction of the word score be changed to the word scores. Also the planning board recommends adoption of 2004-23 with the changes as submitted.

President McMilleon – If there are no further comments from the public I will declare the hearing closed.

Councilor Pinierio – *I will make a motion that we accept 2004-23 as recommended by the ordinance committee.*

Councilor Chandler – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

2004-24 Amend Amesbury Zoning Bylaw Section V.E.6.A. – Mayor Hildt sponsor cont.

President McMilleon – reads 2004-24 into the record and declares the public hearing open.

Councilor Lawrence – The ordinance committee broke 2004-24 into two sections. Part I – It was motioned to recommend the existing amended language of V.E.6.A. as presented by the planning board. Part II – Recommended approval of the proposed V.E.4 with further recommendations that the wording 12 month period be changed to fiscal year in both paragraphs one and two.

Denis Nadeau – In part two where you are asking to change 12 month period to fiscal, I would ask you to change it to calendar year. The system I have now is designed for calendar year and I would have to change the entire program.

President McMilleon – Ok you want it on a calendar rather than fiscal year.

Councilor Lawrence – That is acceptable we discussed that the other night. We just wanted to know which 12 month period, fiscal or calendar.

President McMilleon – Are there any other comments? If not I will declare the public hearing closed.

Councilor Pinierio – I recommend changing fiscal year to calendar year in Part II paragraphs 1 and 2, I recommend approval of this.

Councilor Chandler – second

Roll Call Voted – Unanimous

2004-75 Administrative Order #04-1 Master Plan Implementation and Oversight Committee – Mayor Hildt sponsor

President McMilleon – reads 2004-75 into the record and declares the public hearing open.

Nipun Jain – The planning board provided the council with some recommendations with certain amendments. One of the amendments was in the first paragraphs under membership. They deleted the last line and included that under responsibilities which stated submit bi-annual progress reports to both the planning board and municipal council and issue a status report on master plan implementation for publication in the town annual report. That was more a responsibility item so they moved that from that paragraph under membership to responsibilities. Also they added the planning board. They want the status report to go to both planning board and municipal council. The other change was in the second paragraph under membership where they introduced that the planning board shall review the volunteer applications and make recommendations to the municipal council for formal appointment to this committee as they do for any member on the committees that work for the planning board or in association with the planning board. Under responsibilities #3 - review the town zoning bylaw and any future zoning changes to insure compatibility with the master plan vision goals strategies and actions, they recommended that that was a zoning exercise and that that should be done outside that committee and the committee can then review it later on so they asked that we delete it. #4 the words Utilize the results of the financial capacity decision making tool they introduced the words results rather than have the committee utilize the tool in its self given that there would be statistical information that would be required and there would be town staff that would be available to run the tool. I believe its in the interest to utilize the expertise and then have the results be used by the committee.

President McMilleon – Can you go back to #3. What was the rational for deleting #3?

Nipun Jain – The way it is worded, it looks like that the committee would have to review the current zoning bylaw and future zoning changes which is more under the planning office. They believe that that can be done at that level and then they can overview that. Since the member from the planning board from the staff would be available at the committee it would be better utilization of their time because they would be meeting just once a month. The other change was in #6 where it stated; review capital improvement plans and future town budget requests and provide recommendations those were the words added. The last change was under Immediate Actions; the last line they deleted the word, the committee shall establish and adopt. They deleted the words and adopt and added the words, the planning board shall review and approve the administrative procedures and any future revision prior to final adoption of those procedures by this committee. The reason why they did that was, the master plan is under the prevue of the planning board and Mass General Laws and they would like to overview those procedures.

President McMilleon – I will declare the public hearing closed.

Councilor Benson – I move for approval of 2004-75 as amended by the planning board.

Councilor Pinierio – second
Voted – 9 Yes – Unanimous

2004-61 FY05 Budget – Mayor Hildt sponsor

President McMilleon – reads 2004-61 into the record and opens the public hearing.

Joe Finn, 412 Main Street – I am here to reiterate that there are many people in town who are very weary of carrying the tax burden. Many of us are very willing to accept the best efforts of understaffed, under equipped and under spaced town departments and town facilities rather than continue the over burden as tax payers. The needs of a few need to be viewed within the context of the precarious financial situation. There are many people in town that have an extremely difficult financial row to hoe. We have reached the point, enough is enough. I urge you to do the right thing, we do not want another tax increase. We are willing to live with the ripple effects involved.

Josh Bradshaw, 374 Main Street – My concern is the taxes. I am asking you to make the tough decisions you have to make and try to lower the taxes. Every department has needs and I recognize that I just want you to pay particular attention to the fact that the taxes are excessive.

Christopher York, 13 Warren Ave. – There are plenty of people in town that are willing to live with less. There are a lot of citizens in this town that have lived without raises. I would ask the council to level fund the budget from last year.

Michelle Thone, 53 Hunt Rd. – My opinions are mine, my family members, closest neighbors and friends of this community. The taxpayers have had enough of being one of the highest taxed communities. The spend now pay later approach and imprudent management has left us with no stabilization fund. Amesbury needs to be affordable for all residents including the seniors. Show us you can reduce spending. Regarding the FY05 budget I am going to suggest two opportunities to “Hold the line on spending”. First, the Police budget; the grant for the school resource officer has ended. The program will end unless the SRO is hired by the town; eliminate it. Reduce the overtime expense by better management and fiscal accountability for this line item. Second, the DPW is asking to create another position. I am asking you not to fund this position. We have made our schools more efficient with the loss of 23 teachers. I am asking you to represent me tonight and bring these points to the table before you approve this budget.

Dan Millett, 69 Middle Road –Representing himself and seven other seniors in this community and reads a letter he sent to the Daily News in response to a letter written by Councilor Headley regarding MGL Chapter 59, Sec 5, clause 41A program. Wants the administration to reduce the tax levy by the amount of tax being put on hold under program 41A. 41A is not a solution for the overburdened taxpayer. Amesbury needs to be affordable for its seniors. I am asking the council to further reduce the budget and hold the line on spending and acquiring more debt until the taxpayers of this community see some tax relief.

David McClure, 24 Paige Farm Rd. – I am here to ask the council to send the budget back to the Mayor and demand a level funded budget. I would like to know how the additional items in the CIP not included in the Mayor’s FY05 budget ie, the \$225,000 police communication center, how is that to be funded if it is not in the budget. What is this councils plan to address these additional expenditures. Why are the schools, police, DPW and many other departments paying dues to the

Alliance. I would suggest to the council that they remove the funds the town pays to the Alliance and save one of the 7 teachers you are about to lay off. I would also like the council take Mr. Gerbers recommendation from his 5% reduced budget and eliminate the three assistant principal jobs totaling \$180,000 and help save an additional four more teachers.

Thomas Iacobucci, 10 Birchmeadow Rd. – I came to talk about projected revenues. Four years ago we had an \$800,000 shortfall halfway through the year. We had to go back to the budget and make additional cuts. I have paid attention to that item since. This years budget school choice out was included in the budget I didn't see school choice in. The state estimates we will receive \$571,240 in FY05, I couldn't find that listed anywhere in the budget. I also didn't find \$16,620 in library aide, or \$13,738 in school lunch aide that the state expects to pay. Roughly \$600,000 in local aide revenues under the states current cherry sheet estimates. Last year we over estimated state aide and this year it looks like we are under estimating state aide.

Hank Brennick, 10 Lake Attitash – Reads e-mail sent to councilors. We need tax relief please vote for a reduction in the budget.

Terrence Gleason, 15 Wells Ave. – Talks about the isolation and discrimination surrounding the Alliance against non members and ex-members. The Alliance is not representing the whole of Amesbury they are just promoting their own members not the whole town. The Alliance is not a traditional Chamber of Commerce. I object to the town council approving funding for the Alliance, by doing so you support the worse type of discrimination against business growth and the future of Amesbury.

Rachel Murray, 2 Moncrief St. – I would hope the council would address a few points tonight. I find it incredulous that a \$65,000 job is being created when we are laying off teachers. My second point is that a lot of items pass in the budget because you are up against the clock. You should get the budget and supporting documents in a timely fashion so if you want to send a budget item back or rethink something there is time to do that. My third point I was here last meeting when you elected people to the planning board. You asked about their qualification, work history and why they might want to serve on the board. I think you need to do that for the finance committee. Perhaps there is some expertise in the community with the right kinds of backgrounds that would be willing to serve. I have also noticed that when you have a financial question you always go to the CFO who I believe is appointed by the Mayor. If that CFO was appointed by the municipal council, I think it would broaden the scope and his office and knowledge would be more available to you as the finance committee and the municipal council. My fourth point is one that was in the audit stating that the town of Amesbury has no general accounting practices in place. I hope those things have been addressed. Lastly I want the budget to be level funded or less.

Corinne Chasse, 18 Greenwood St. – I am calling for my representatives to call for a level funded budget.

Jerry Dionne, 8 Huntington Ave. – The last time I spoke, I asked that someone start thinking outside the box. It is apparent that no one has. We were told that we had to layoff teachers; we couldn't touch administrators, now they want to add two more. We need a taxation style change; we can not continue to have the same old beat go on and on.

President McMilleon – I have asked people to refrain from applauding and I would ask people to comply with that.

Stan Schwartz, 105 Highland St. – In Amesbury people seem to disparage the administrators maybe because of their salaries. When we are able to bring students back into town that tuition out it is because of the efforts of the administrators. We are developing leadership and management systems that do that. It is important to look at way to collaborate, what is positive. We talked about sharing the cost of the resource officer from the school committee prospective we have been working with the Mayor's office to look at ways to improve efficiency, what positions can be shared. With out a certain level of leadership in the administration we will be worse off than we are now. No one wants to see teachers cut but we need a strong administration.

Paula Pellitier, 117 Market St. – I am a single person and have no one but myself to support myself. I can't afford more taxes.

Deb Provost, 69 Main St. – It is impossible to find affordable housing in Amesbury. I work hard to survive with no financial support, I survive solely by myself. There is a shortage of clean affordable housing.

William Ryan – I am on a fixed income. Water and Sewer rates are going up because of the new improvements. We are not paying on the 29 million high school yet, I hope you see that we need a break.

Chris York, 13 Warren Ave. – Where are the schools going to be if families can't afford to live in this town. I am asking you to level fund the budget.

Recess 8:05 – 8:20

Councilor Headley – The population of Amesbury has changed this past year a great deal. We have had many new homes and new people in town. Many expect the costs to remain the same as the year before. At last months finance committee meetings we cut where we thought we could and we did. We are now a little over a 1% increase in taxes if we approve what we approved at the finance committee. All year we have been open to comment. Usually it is two or three a night but, boy when it comes to the taxes. They don't complain all year but they show up here at budget time and the audience here tonight is very rude. The head of our committee has asked you several times not to clap and you are taking up a great deal of time in our meeting. We will be here late.

President McMilleon – Sir, I have asked you not to clap would you please leave the room. Discussion continues on whether or not Ben Johnson was in the room and he is asked again to leave. Lt. Gary Ingham approaches Ben Johnson and asks if he should be removed.

President McMilleon - Let me explain something here. The reason that I have asked people not to applaud is because that I know that what we are talking about tonight is a very controversial issue. This is a public meeting; I am not going to allow it to get out of hand. I have asked at least 3 or 4 times and Sir, you were in the room because I looked right at you. It is very clear now to you that I have asked you not to clap. I have asked people not to do that out of respect for everybody that is in this room and for the council. We are trying to have a serious discussion about taxes and the budget. I don't need people undermining that effort. The majority of the people of the people in this auditorium are complying with that. We are trying to have a mature, intelligent discussion about taxes. Please comply with the rules and regulations that we have set up here.

Councilor Lawrence – I would like to thank everyone for being here this evening. I want to stress my points on the budget and taxation issue. I think most people who voted for me know where I stand. I

think we do have a tax problem. There is a tax burden on the residents of Amesbury. I hope that the departments do their homework and try to save money. I will try to do the best I can to alleviate any financial problems or strains for the residents.

Councilor Chandler – While we approve this budget, known as the operating budget, I think we all have to be aware that there is a supplemental budget down the road. There are many other expenses that should be part of this budget because we will all go away thinking that we have held our budget to a minimal increase and find out down the line that we need many other things that are not on here. Police cruisers, police communication systems and some of these things are very important. While we may have some more money coming in because we have more tax revenues from new properties, wouldn't it be nice if some of that new revenue could go into a stabilization fund. Right now we are in a position that if something happens we don't have any option but to come to the taxpayers and look for an override. I think we should have a lot more room in our budget to take care of our problems without thinking of overrides. We talk about wonderful things that should happen like moving the DPW out of the lower millyard and opening that up for some good development but, there is nothing in this budget for that. I would just say we have to go into this knowing that there is going to be more money requested before this is all said and done.

Councilor King – When I was elected to the council I looked back to see Amesbury's financial past. When you look back Amesbury has always had issues with its tax rate and with its finances. When the department of revenue came in 2001 and did their evaluation of the town they spoke to poor management of the finances for the 2 – 3 years prior. They even spoke to the even 8 years prior to that when there were numerous town managers. There was virtually very little stable leadership in Amesbury. Through that time if you look at all the town reports you can see the chaos that Amesbury has been in for many years. We are not going to get out of that over night; it is going to take time. We need to take a breath, step back and look at our departments and plan for the future. Everyone has gone through a financial down turn in the past few years. Last year Amesbury was cut 1.8 million dollars from the state. I see us bit by bit creeping out; our departments are getting stronger, and our planning for the future is getting stronger. We do not have to do prop 2 ½ overrides, we have not been strapped that way. I totally agree that our taxes are high but, in order to correct a problem that has been long standing in this community we have to step back and plan. We can't do reactionary knee jerking cutting this and that, not addressing our infrastructure needs; which we can all agree when we look out in our community needs help. We have to step back and address the schools. I went to a department of revenue finance forum and they kept stressing the fact that we have to invest in our infrastructure. If not you end up going back and paying for that plus if you look out in the world in the department of revenue and the bond people that invest in our community so much is based on how people look at how we take care of our town. Also, we need to work as a team and do this. We are not making willy nilly decisions about the budget, we are not trying to increase the burden for people. We all live in this town; we all have had the hardship of the taxes going up. I can assure you that we have all done our homework on this and really put a lot of thought in this. We have to look to the future and we have to work our way out of this. We are already getting 159,000 property income from the carriage lofts condo's, we have the hat factory opening up, these are all projects that were planned. We took the time, we looked ahead to see what we can do best to supplement to help out in the community. I believe the past 3 years is the first time we have had stable leadership. It is the first time we have had a stable leader and financial leadership and we have started to get a good plan on where we are going. I would challenge anybody to go to the library, they are all there all the town reports; just read through. I ask that we all work together.

Councilor Benson – I also want to thank people for coming out tonight it is important to hear what people have to say and take it into account during this process. I would like to thank the Mayor and

the school committee both for submitting what I feel was giving it their all in terms of trying to hold the line. However, going into this I hope that the council will at least be open to challenge the recommendations of the finance committee, at least some of them and look for additional monies to reduce the budget by.

Councilor Larnard – I would like to specifically address some of the concerns that come up. One of them was a question about school choice money coming in. It was put in a different place but, it is there it is accounted for in the budget. I would like to thank everybody for coming out too. It is really great to see a lot of people here. I know a lot of people watch on TV and can't come out. I would also echo that if you look back over the last couple of years even though the taxes for many are still not affordable; the direction has been going that the taxes have been more controlled. For the first time since FY00 the town will end a fiscal year with a positive free cash balance with \$159,000. I see that as very significant. There are some positive things that are happening; it doesn't mean that we don't have a lot of work to do. It doesn't mean that there are still some stuff that we have to do and that people aren't having a hard time paying taxes. One thing that is frustrating is when you pit department against department. I heard a lot about cutting teachers and then we are adding a DPW position. I don't think we should be doing that. Each department has a job to do and I think the hardest part of our job is we have to look at the budget as a whole. We can't just consider the schools and just DPW. We have to look at the budget as a whole because it serves the whole town. I was out last night at a neighborhood meeting and the DPW Director, Brian Gilbert was willing to go and deal with years of frustration and anger with people in that neighborhood. I just see the DPW budget has been under funded for the past couple of years and I think we really need to invest in our infrastructure. This position that we are adding is going to save us money in the long run. Brian Gilbert came in and did a great job during the presentation. This was after we had several studies about how should we restructure the DPW department in this town. I do think there has been some outside the box thinking. I do think people care in this town; I think the department heads care and the people that work in this town. Merging the DPW and the way they are redoing the staffing shows outside the box thinking. What you are seeing on the school side and the town side working together and share different positions like MIS and some of the finances being shared. We are trying to create some efficiency to save some money. One of the things we are always looking at are the overtime of the police and fire departments. When we sat down and met with the fire department they said if you give us more staff you will save money because you will save on the overtime. We did that and lost some staff but, we are trying to get the fire department fully staffed. There is some talk in the school department about how we can share the school resources better as far as school buildings; how we can save money and create more efficiency. We have new department heads coming in and a new superintendent which is really going to be able to look at our school department with fresh energy and ideas to see how there can be more savings and better education for our kids. We have a new assessor and a new insurance company for the towns insurance which is saving us a lot of money. We have looked at building fees we have raised permit fees; we are bringing in more revenue. I don't think we can under staff and under equip departments in this town. You can cut things but I am not willing to say to department heads to run under staffed and under equipped.

Jerry Dion, Huntington Ave – We need to change taxation in Amesbury.

President McMilleon – There were some suggestions made about cutting administrators so you could restore teachers. The way the budget process works, and again I think that most of you probably understand this, is that we get the budget and the only think that we can do is cut. If we cut for example we can not cut police to restore teachers. We can't designate where the savings would go to. The other thing that is important is that all departments went through a very thorough process in order to look at their budget and they are the experts in their fields; they come up with their best

recommendations. We have had hearings over the last two weeks and some of you have been at those meetings. You have made comments and we have had open discussions. There was a long process; it was not a process that happened overnight in terms of the budget that we have before us tonight. It was the Mayor and the department heads sitting down and when the department heads went through a process they made their proposals and the Mayor made his final proposals and then we had hearings. It has been a lengthy process and a process where a lot of people can make comments and can have input. It is not a budget that is ever considered lightly. I think that is important for everybody to be aware of. Regardless which side of an issue that you fall on in regard to a particular department these are difficult questions and controversial questions and people get emotional about them and I understand that. It is important for everyone to be aware and realize that this is not an easy process and not a quick process and one taken lightly by any of the councilors or department heads or the community. If there are no other comments I will close the public hearing and go back into session. We have before us 2004-61. I am open to the councilors as to how you want to proceed. We can take the recommendations from the finance committee on those departments that didn't have any changes in them and approve them or we can go through individually every department.

Councilor Benson – I think we should go through department by department.

Councilor Pinierio – I will agree with that.

President McMilleon – I think we have a consensus we will go through department by department.

Councilor Pinierio – *Before we do that I would like to make a motion to the council that we level fund this FY05 budget the same as last year. I make that in the form of a motion.*

Councilor Chandler – *second*

Councilor Woodsom – You can't blanket vote the entire budget if there were changes within the departments. You can only blanket vote the departments that had changes, it is illegal.

Councilor Benson – If it is OK with Mario, to withdraw his motion and then if he so feels make that motion when we take up each department.

Councilor Pinierio – When we go through department if there is some thing that I want to suggest I can cut that line item.

Councilor Benson – Or if you want to move at the beginning that it be level funded.

Councilor Pinierio – OK, I withdraw that motion and accept to go through each department.

President McMilleon – We have a suggestion to go through each department. We will begin with Municipal Council.

Municipal Council \$71,100.00

Councilor Woodsom – recommendation of the finance committee was \$69,850

President McMilleon – The Mayor's recommendation was for \$71,100 the finance committee recommendation was for \$69,850.

Councilor Woodsom – *I recommend the finance committee recommendation of \$69,850*

Councilor Chandler – *second*

Councilor Benson – I would ask that the council not vote this recommendation and that we take our salaries out of part 1.

Councilor Pinierio – I recommend that we take a 2% cut of our budget from the finance committee recommendation. If we are the leaders of the town lets show the tax payers that we mean business and cut out budget.

Councilor Woodsom – Our expenses are bare bones, we can not cut the Clerks salaries or we will not have one. I really don't think it is a good idea to cut the councilors salaries they are a meager \$1,200 a year. I don't know who is going to fill these seats when we are gone for zero. I know we don't do it for the money but if it is a non paying job I question the participation we will get or the quality of the people who will run.

Councilor Pinierio – In our budget it says \$4, 500 for advertising, we only spent \$1,700 all I am requesting to do is to cut \$1,390 and there is still some money left. Let's lead the town and cut our budget.

Councilor Larnard – When you look at the budget, it is only thru a certain amount of time. I know we spend a lot of money advertising our business and we have to by law. There are other bills that are coming in that will use that advertising money.

President McMilleon – The motion is to fund the municipal council \$69,850.

Roll Call Vote – 5 Yes, 4 No (Lawrence, Pinierio, Benson, King)

Mayor \$168,887.09

Councilor Woodsom – *I move the recommendation of the finance committee \$168,887.09*

Councilor Larnard – *second*

Councilor Pinierio – In state travel, I think we can cut that to \$2,500 instead of \$3,000.

Councilor Chandler – I would like to say that this budget is up slightly but I think we made a conscience effort several months ago to give the Mayor a pay raise because we thought it was blatantly unfair that he was paid so poorly relative to many other town employees and he probably has the most responsible job in the town. In this particular case I am not opposed to this increase in this budget.

Councilor Benson – I would like to see this level funded the expenses to last year which would be a \$1,000 reduction.

President McMilleon – The recommendation is for \$168,887.09

Roll Call Vote – 6 Yes, 3 No (Lawrence, Pinierio, Benson)

Reserve Fund \$50,000.00

Councilor Woodsom – Finance committee recommendation was \$50,000.00
Councilor Benson – *I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*
Councilor Lawrence - *second*
Roll Call Voted – Unanimous

Administration and Finance \$264,582.00

Councilor Woodsom – *Finance recommendation was for \$264,582.00, I will move the recommendation of the finance committee.*
Councilor Benson – *second*
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Assessor \$198,854.00

Councilor Woodsom – *Finance recommendation was for \$198,854.00, I will move the recommendation of the finance committee.*
Councilor Benson – *second*
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Collector/Treasurer - \$187,122.00

Councilor Woodsom – *Finance recommendation was for \$187,122.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*
Councilor Benson – *second*
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Legal Services - \$100,000.00

Councilor Woodsom – *Finance recommendation was for \$100,000.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*
Councilor Larnard – *second*

Councilor Pinierio – I make a recommendation that we put that budget at \$80,000.00 the same as it was FY04.

Councilor Benson – I agree with Mr. Pinierio.

Councilor Lawrence – I agree also because we do make a transfer at the end of the year from other departments to cover this.

Councilor Woodsom – I think cutting this budget is penny wise and pound foolish. You can get into a lot of trouble if you don't consult legal when you need it. It can cause a lot of problems, you see it in the private sector all the time.

President McMilleon – A question for Mike Basque. We don't know how this is going to come in every year correct?

Mike Basque – It is an estimate, the last several years we have come back for about \$20,000 transfers.

President McMilleon – There is a possibility that we could get additional monies from the State?

Mike Basque – You mean additional state aide, yes there is that possibility.

Councilor Chandler – Last year the budget was \$80,000 and we have a transfer for an additional \$20,000 now so that will put it up to \$100,000 so we are in effect level funding it. I think if we roll back to last years budget number we are only just fooling our selves because I don't think we are really going to be able to save that.

Councilor Larnard – I would like to echo that; I'm not sure that is good budgeting practice. In looking back you can clearly see we have spent that much money and we keep transferring. If we know it is going to be \$100,000 we should fund that.

Councilor Headley – In FY04 we have already spent close to \$74,600 that was as of the third month of the year, this goes to the end of June. If we have \$100,000 we are just barely going to scrape by then.

Councilor King – I would like to echo what Councilor Larnard said. We have to look at this budget as a working document that is going to accurately reflect what the costs are.

Councilor Pinierio – I still think we should level fund to last year even though the Mayor has requested another additional because he claims he is short. We have asked him to go back in his budget to try and find that money.

President McMilleon – We have a motion to fund legal services at \$100,000.
Roll Call Vote – 5 Yes, 4 NO (Lawrence, Pinierio, Benson, McMilleon)

MIS - \$247,055.52

Councilor Woodsom – Finance recommendation was for \$247,055.52.

Councilor Benson – *I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Pinierio - *second* I would like to let the public know that this budget came in \$10,000 less than last year.

Councilor Larnard – I would like to comment on this budget. To me it seems that this department is very overwhelmed. They are doing a whole bunch of things for the town. They seem understaffed. I went back and looked at the most recent report from the DOR and one of their recommendations, that I would like us move towards, is that they recommended that the town pull together a technology committee that kind of helps supports this department and offers some expertise and brain storm some different ideas about equipment and staff. When we are done with the budget season I would like to revisit that.

President McMilleon – the recommendation is for \$247,055.52
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Central Supply - \$55,000.00

Councilor Woodsom – *Finance recommendation was for \$55,000.00, I will make that my motion.*

Councilor Headley – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Town Clerk \$124,265.05

Councilor Woodsom – Finance recommendation was for \$124,265.05.

Councilor Larnard – *I would like to make a motion that we fund the finance committee recommendation.*

Councilor Pinierio – *second.* This budget went up less than \$3,000.

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Elections

Councilor Woodsom – Finance Committee recommendation was for \$23,400.00.

Councilor Benson – *I move the recommendation of the Finance Committee.*

Councilor Pinierio – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Liquor Commission

Councilor Woodsom – *Finance Committee recommendation was for \$1,000.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Benson – *second*

Roll Call Voted – Unanimous

Conservation Commission

Councilor Woodsom – Finance Committee recommendation was for \$31,300.00.

Councilor Benson – *so moved*

Councilor Chandler – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Community and Economic Development

Councilor Woodsom – Finance Committee recommendation was for \$417,202.00.

Councilor Pinierio – *I make a motion that we accept the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Lawrence – *second*

Councilor Pinierio – This budget went down almost \$40,000 over last year.

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Planning Board

Councilor Woodsom – Finance Committee recommendation was for \$17,650.00

Councilor Pinierio – *I make a motion that we accept the finance committee recommendation.*

Councilor Benson – *second* although this budget has increased the planning board takes in about \$35,000 a year in fees so it more than pays for itself.

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Board of Appeals

Councilor Woodsom – Finance Committee recommendation was for \$13,860.00.

Councilor Benson – *I move the recommendation from the finance committee.*

Councilor Pinierio – *second*, this is another department that came in under from last year.\

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Municipal Buildings

Councilor Woodsom – Finance Committee recommendation was to fund at \$80,000.00 which was a \$10,000.00 cut.

Councilor Lawrence – *I move to accept the finance committee recommendation.*

Councilor Benson – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Senior Center Building

Councilor Woodsom – Finance Committee recommendation was to fund at \$15,000.00.

Councilor Larnard – I would move the recommendation of the finance committee.

Councilor Benson – second

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Police Department

Councilor Woodsom – Finance Committee recommendation was to fund at \$3,235,957.00.

Councilor Larnard – *I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor King – *second*

Councilor Chandler – This is the one budget that I have a real problem with because it is up about 51/2% over last year which I think is uncalled for. I think it is not fair to ask all our non union employees in this town that have no pay raise to fund a strong union; two years pay together. I don't see the justification of it. Other unions have had their pay raises, I don't have a problem with that. There has to be a cost involved. The schools have suffered a cost by having to lay teachers off. I don't see why we fund this department without any pain involved.

Councilor Benson – Even if we don't go with a number as high as \$90,000, I have pointed out several line items that were not real numbers and that I believe we could realize at least some savings to the tune of about \$10 – 15,000. I would like to see us do that rather than vote the Mayor's recommendation.

Councilor Woodsom – I don't have a problem looking at a couple line items. I do not agree with targeting the increase in the personnel department. We did have an agreement with them last year, they did step forward. They froze their pay last year and we knew they would be taking a pay increase this year.

Councilor Pinierio – Last year the Police Department was the only department to step forward to not take their pay raise. They negotiated that with the Mayor to get the 3% this year plus their normal raise. I probably would not have made that agreement to get the other 3% this year but that is the Mayor's choice. I think we have to fund the salary part of the police budget because we do need public safety. Between the fire and police department when ever you need them they are there. The police responded to the fire that we had downtown they stayed. Some people said why do we have so many police downtown when we had the fire? I said just take a look and see people trying to sneak into the building or across the fire lines that is why the police department was there.

Councilor Larnard – I would like to go back. Last year when we were in tough financial straits and we were facing such a short fall, the police union was the only union in town that was willing to negotiate and they did not take a pay raise that year that realized us a savings of about \$72 or \$78,000. When you go back on the budget last year and you look at the % change of the police budget last year it went up .1% and if you go into this years budget and look at the increase it went up .3%. So over the last two years it went up 3.1%. If you go back and look at other departments in town last year there were some increases. When you go back and look at the history of what happened with the police department they did make a sacrifice last year and that was something that we did with the union. When you look over the two years it is a 3.1% increase. I do think the last time there were some really good things brought out about union contracts. I really feel that when we do union contracts they need to sustainable over time. Some good points were brought out about shift coverage issues which make a big deal with the fire department. I am hoping we can look at shift issues with the fire department. This has created a lot of conversation and people have very strong feelings. *I'm fine with a \$10,000.00 decrease overall so I withdraw my motion.*

Councilor Benson – *I move we fund the police department total at \$3,225,957.00*

Councilor Pinierio – second.

Roll Call Vote – 7 Yes, 2 No (Chandler, McMilleon)

Fire

Councilor Woodsom – *Finance Committee recommendation was for \$2,486,347.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Chandler – *second*

Councilor Benson – The total number of this budget did go down but, I would like the council to know when voting this budget that last year additional equipment was covered in the budget and this year it is in the CIP for \$130,000 so to really get an accurate number on how much this budget has increased or decreased you have to add \$130,000 to the end number.

Councilor Larnard – How does the ambulance fund affect the budget? I know some of the capital improvements are paid through the ambulance fund so then that offsets. When you talk about purchasing different equipment for the fire department, because we have the ambulance service, they bring in a lot of revenue through the town so the town uses that revenue to buy some of these items that would be in the capital improvement, so how does that offset.

Mike Basque – The reduction that Councilor Benson talks about was last years ambulance purchase, \$150,000 that is not in there this year. The ambulance revenues are down this year also because we are not purchasing that ambulance, he is correct but the difference is in the ambulance purchase itself.

Councilor Lawrence – What was the receipts from the ambulance?

Mike Basque – Last fiscal year we took \$350,000 this year we recommended \$259,000. That is what we are recommending you appropriate this year. The balance in there is \$473,000.

Councilor Lawrence – What does it cost to run the ambulance?

Mike Basque – It is like \$259,000.

Roll Call Vote – 8 Yes, 1 No (Benson)

Inspection Department

Councilor Woodsom – *Finance Committee recommendation was for \$159,335.69, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Benson - *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Weights & Measurers

Councilor Woodsom – *Finance Committee recommendation was for \$4,500.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Benson – *second*

Roll Call Vote - unanimous

Emergency Management

Councilor Woodsom – Finance Committee recommendation was for \$39,345.00.

Councilor Benson – *I move the recommendation of the Finance Committee.*

Councilor Pinierio – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Harbor Master

Councilor Woodsom – *Finance Committee recommendation was for \$7,500.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Benson – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Department of Public Works

Councilor Woodsom – Finance Committee recommendation was for \$1,234,758.59

Councilor King – *I move that we accept the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Chandler - *second*

Councilor Benson – I would ask this committee to vote this recommendation down and reduce this budget by \$64,000.00 and not hire the new superintendent. This is a high paying position and in a couple of more years you are looking at more money. You have to pay benefits I just can't see it.

Councilor Larnard – I will repeat what I said earlier. Last night I was at a neighborhood meeting with the Director of DPW at 7:00PM until 9:00PM. Even in a small neighborhood setting we were able to come to some consensus but there were 13 issues. Years had gone by and things were not adequately addressed and I think this time we have a better shot of doing it if we add this position, I think it will save us money. We have to take care of the infrastructure; it increases our bond rating in town. I see this as a central part of the restructuring of the DPW which was studied extensively. We have many reports that have made this recommendation so I fully support the addition of this staff member.

Councilor King – I would like to second Councilor Larnard's remarks and just add that for too long our infrastructure needs have gone unmet and that has to stop. We have to start reinvesting in our community.

Councilor Chandler – I would like to speak in favor of this position. I think people misunderstand the addition of an expensive supervisory position. When we look at the DPW budget we have to remember that the DPW does not stand alone, there is a semantic problem because DPW is Brian Gilbert and is the whole DPW. Within the DPW there are the DPW, Sewer and Water and by having this supervisor in the new organization that Brian has set up people are going to be much more efficiently handled. When you total these budgets up he is actually saving us money. I don't think we can argue with a guy that is putting a plan together to save money.

President McMilleon – I would like to add to that comment. We heard earlier the need to thin out of the box and I think Brian is thinking out of the box and trying to reorganize. I have had an occasion in the last couple of months to call him on neighborhood issues and the response has been very quick. I see the quality going up and the performance with that department.

Councilor Lawrence – I agree with both sides but I do side with Councilor Benson. We talk about neglecting the infrastructure and I think that has changed this past year by having Brian in place. I think we have turned the corner on our infrastructure obligations. The current head is doing a great job. I'm not sure we necessarily need this but I would like to take some more time to look at it.

Councilor Pinierio – I see in the budget chief equipment operator, last year he was budgeted at \$41,000 and this year it is up to \$84,000. I think that line item should be cut.

Brian Gilbert – That is the shift of the 3 staff coming from the water down to the dpw.

Councilor Benson – I also believe that there can be savings in part II of this budget to the tune of about \$17,860. The line items that I talked about before, \$2,500 out of telephone and \$2,500 out of street signs, that line item has doubled and the removal of cemetery supplies; a line item that shouldn't be in the budget anyway. That is the one that made its way in a couple of years ago.

Councilor King – Can you address again what you are currently using that cemetery funds for and can you tell us the percentage that the budget has gone down this year.

Brian Gilbert – The effective increase in the DPW budget is negative 3.6% if you take into consideration part I and part II and I believe that the capital has remained the same. With regard to the cemetery; one thing I think that there are many elements within the cemetery that really need to be addressed, certainly it is roads, various monuments, turf and curbing but, there are needs beyond that that are functional every day to day. We used to use the \$25,000 but, that has been cut to \$12,500 to mirror what our expenses are on that line item. We have used this in the past for internments. We have a heater that burns the frost out of the ground we need propane for that. Screened loam, fertilizer and plywood for various reasons. We have a lowering device that we have to maintain, repair of irrigation within the cemetery and equipment.

Roger Benson – I feel you are sort of getting in the middle of things and you probably shouldn't be because you are new, I realize what you spend that money on now but, I have a real hard time agreeing on this line item simply because a good portion of that stuff was done before, before this line item was even in the budget and I know it is not your responsibility to know what was spent in the past but the bottom line is we did it in the past and now we have a new line item.

Brian Gilbert – All of the various line items in the DPW budget have been reduced. How this line item is used now is to support the cemetery. Various other lines that have been cut can now be used for some of those various other elements of our operations that would have been reduced.

Councilor Headley – The Mayor has already made a large cut from what the department has requested. I can't see where we can really cut more than it has already been cut.

President McMilleon – The motion is for the finance committee recommendation of \$1,234,758.59.

Roll Call Vote – 6 Yes, 3 No (Lawrence, Pinierio, Benson)

Engineering

Councilor Woodsom – Finance Committee recommendation was for \$99,527.00.

Councilor Pinierio – *I motion we accept the finance committee recommendation.*

Councilor Benson – I want to clear something up, I made a mistake when we were going over this budget and voted to cut it. I saw the addition of a \$4,000 line item and sited it as a reason to cut. I believe you even said it but it flew past so quick we didn't really talk too much about it. That line item has been moved rightly so to part 1. That being said I still support the cut I just wanted to make it clear that the \$4,000 for the interns was already in the budget, it had just been moved. I still believe we can take that from water shed management. I believe the department can sustain the cut but I wanted to make clear the reason I wanted to cut the budget was inaccurate.

Councilor King – *second*
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Snow & Ice

Councilor Woodsom – *The recommendation from Finance was for \$128,000, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Pinierio – *second*
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Outdoor Lighting

Councilor Woodsom – The recommendation of the Finance Committee was for \$136,000.00 which reflects a \$9,000 decrease.

Councilor Benson – *I move the recommendation of the Finance Committee.*

Councilor Chandler – *second*
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Recycling

Councilor Woodsom – *The recommendation of the Finance Committee was for \$762,000.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Lawrence – *second*
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Health Department

Councilor Woodsom – *The recommendation of the Finance Committee was for \$168,189.20, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor King – *second*
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Council on Aging

Councilor Woodsom – *The recommendation of the Finance Committee was for \$123,396.40, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Larnard – *second*
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Veteran Services

Councilor Woodsom – *The recommendation of the Finance Committee was for \$96,289.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Larnard – *second*
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Library

Councilor Woodsom – The recommendation from the Finance Committee was for \$521,302.00.

Councilor Larnard – *I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Chandler – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Celebrations

Councilor Woodsom – *The recommendation of the Finance Committee was for \$8,600.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Benson – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Debt Services

Councilor Woodsom – *The recommendation of the Finance Committee was for \$2,411,004.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Benson – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Other Assessments

Councilor Woodsom – *The recommendation of the Finance Committee was for \$914,715.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Chandler – *second*

Councilor Lawrence – I would really like to see a reduction of \$35,000. We have had so much talk over the past few years about the Town supporting the Alliance I think we should make that cut. They said they could get along without it, I think we should proceed.

Councilor Benson – I am going to agree with Councilor Lawrence on this. I do appreciate and thank the Mayor for reducing the line item from what it was. If we choose to cut it completely that is fine but, we should at least work to wean them off and eventually go down to \$10 or \$20 thousand which is more in tune with what communities generally give their Chambers. It is even more frustrating to find out that there are departments paying dues. If the town is giving them 30 to 40 thousand dollars you would think that the town would be a member. I will vote against the motion on the floor.

Councilor Pinierio – I agree with Councilor Lawrence also even though the alliance has done a lot of good.

Councilor King – I would disagree, right now the town needs all the help it can get in moving our community forward and bringing new businesses into our downtown and supporting the businesses in the downtown. The Alliance themselves have put in \$62,000 into the façade program. The advocate and got us numerous grants. I believe we should, by attrition bring them down but, I don't think the time to completely alter the funds is right now. Not when we are in the momentum in trying to build up the businesses and trying to shift some of the tax burden on to the business community. I believe we are addressing the fact of other departments paying into the Alliance so that is being addressed. I would ask that vote as they stand.

Councilor Lawrence – We have an investment in the community with some business owners I would like to reiterate what Mr. Gleason said earlier. If you are not a member you don't get recommended. I

don't think we should fund a business that is not recommending every business in town that is contributing to Amesbury's growth and future.

Councilor Larnard – We come up against this every year. I wonder if us giving the Alliance money harms them more than it does them any good. I see the Alliance as a crucial piece working with the town and the residents to expand the tax base and help us out with the revitalization of the downtown. We come up against this issue all the time. I totally agree with trying to wean them off but, it just seems we should do it at a more rapid rate, I wonder if we are doing them more harm. Are new businesses not joining because there is this controversy about the Alliance? Would it be better if we made a bigger cut in the budget than we did this year? Stop the separate departments, make it clear. At the same time recognize what the Alliance did right after the fire; they had an immediate response and gave money and was helping out. I sometime wonder every time we come to this budget are we just doing them more time than good. I would support taking a bigger cut than what we took.

Councilor Chandler – The Alliance does some wonderful things. They have been involved in the river walk and different studies in the millyards and the façade program. I did hear Terrance and I am very sympathetic to that situation. I would like to approve the money that we approved but, lets put a condition that this money will be used to promote all business in Amesbury. If they want to accept our money, they will have to do that.

Councilor King – Does that make it unfair for the folks that have joined the Alliance. For people that have paid membership into the Alliance verses people who choose not to join. I understand the question that they are receiving public funds and should be supporting every group. But, in fairness for the people who support the Alliance and put the flower beds out who support the poles, who pay for the facades in town verses folks who choose not to join.

Councilor Chandler – I would say to that, then if we give them the money with this condition attached the decision is theirs.

Councilor Benson – I would like to echo what Councilor Larnard said, this is exactly the sort of quandary that taking our money results in. If you are going to take our money it is absolutely wrong and that is the bottom line, not to refer all businesses, all businesses pay taxes. If you are taking our money you have to promote all businesses. I know that leaves the question; what do dues paying businesses get? I don't know.

Councilor Woodsom – *I agree with Roger, I will withdraw my motion.*

Councilor Benson – *I move that we reduce line item 560320 to zero a reduction of \$35,000.*

Councilor Pinierio – *I second that motion.*

President McMilleon – The motion would make Other Assessments \$879,715.00.

Councilor Woodsom – I saw Mr. Hoyts hand up and I would like to hear his comments. I move we suspend rule

Councilor Benson – *I amend my motion to fund 560320 at \$10,000 a reduction of \$25,000 for a total Other Assessment of \$889,715.00*

Councilor Pinierio – *second*

Councilor Woodsom – *I would like to make a motion to suspend Rule 5F.*

Councilor Woodsom – *second*

Roll Call Vote to suspend – 8 Yes, 1 NO (McMilleon)

Peter Hoyt – The Alliance was comfortable and understood the reduction to \$35,000. It would be most disappointing if the cut would be down to \$10,000.

Chris York – A reduction to \$10,000 is still funding a private business with public money. It is time it comes out of the budget.

Tom Iacobucci – Two issues: If you want to set conditions it should not be done in the budget. Reduce it to zero let it be a separate appropriation. Also, taking this away will give them the incentive to go out a really push a membership drive to make up the difference.

President McMilleon – We will now go back into secession. The motion is to reduce the Alliance line item from \$35,000 to \$10,000. Total for Other Assessments would be \$889,715.00.

Councilor Woodsom – I don't really see the point of funding at \$10,000. Tom raises a good point; if they come back to us later in the year with a proposal as to what they will do with the money we will know where the money is going.

Councilor Larnard – I can see where that makes sense. Go with zero and have them come in with a specific proposal.

Councilor Benson – *I will amend my motion to zero for a total reduction \$35,000 leaving Other Assessment at \$879,715.00. My motion is to cut line item 560320.*

Councilor Lawrence – *second*

Roll Call Vote – 7 Yes, 2 Abstain (Chandler, Headley)

Councilor Benson – Do we need to vote a revised total for Other Assessment?

Councilor Woodsom – *I make a motion that we fund Other Assessment \$879,715.00*

Councilor Pinierio – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Five minute recess 10:30 – 10:40

Employee Benefits

Councilor Woodsom – The Finance Committee recommendation was for \$3,114,353.00.

Councilor Benson – *I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Lawrence – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Insurance Expense

Councilor Woodsom – The Finance Committee recommendation was for \$348,450, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.

Councilor Benson – second
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

School

Councilor Woodsom – *The Finance Committee recommendation was for \$20,313,233.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Benson – second. I would like to reiterate what I said in finance committee and thank the School Committee and the Mayor once again for making a real effort here to hold the line not saying that I necessarily agree with everything that was done but, I certainly appreciate keeping the budget down.

Councilor Pinierio – I want to thank the school department for all their efforts and I know they will do a good job next year for us.

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Landry Stadium

Councilor Woodsom – *The recommendation of the Finance Committee was for \$5,000.00, I move the recommendation of the finance committee.*

Councilor Benson – *second*
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Sewer

Councilor Woodsom – The recommendation of the Finance Committee was for \$2,356,548.07.

Councilor King – *I move we accept the recommendation of the Finance Committee.*

Councilor Chandler – *second*
Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

Water

Councilor Woodsom – The recommendation of the Finance Committee was for \$2,388,135.33

Councilor Lawrence – *I move the recommendation of the Finance Committee to fund at \$2,388,135.33*

Councilor Benson – *second*

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

President McMilleon – We have a total appropriation of \$38,332,829.54. That to fund said appropriation of \$37,922,829.54 be raised by taxation and other revenue sources and further that \$410,000.00 be applied from the sources detailed below:

Sale of Cemetery Lots	\$ 8,000.00
Ambulance Receipts	259,000.00
Youth Revolving	129,000.00
Cemetery Trust	14,000.00

Further voted that the following enterprise fund budgets:

Landry Stadium	5,000.00
Sewer Department	2,356,548.07
Water Department	2,388,135.33

Total Recommended Appropriation \$43,082,512.94

President McMilleon – Do I have a motion to accept what I just read?

Councilor Woodsom – so moved

Councilor Larnard – second

Roll Call Vote – 6 Yes, 3 No (Lawrence, Pinierio, Benson)

New Business

2004-77 Citizen Petition to place a question on the next state or town general election.

President McMilleon – reads 2004-77 into the record.

Councilor Benson – I move we put this on our July 13 meeting and schedule a public hearing.

Councilor Chandler – second

Voted – Unanimous

Adjourn 10:45PM

Councilor Benson – so moved

Councilor Piniero – second

Respectfully submitted,
Assistant Town Clerk