

SELECTMEN'S WORKSHOP
Minutes of 01-19-10
4:20 p.m.

Selectmen:

Peter F. Brothers, Chairman
Miller C. Lovett, Vice Chairman
Robert C. Flanders
Charles G. Palm
Colette Worsman

Town Manager:

Phillip L. Warren

Recording Clerk:

Karin Landry

Call to Order: Chairman Peter Brothers called the meeting to order in Room B of the Community Center at 4:20 p.m. He introduced the Board, Town Manager, and the Recording Clerk.

W10-06 Laconia Motorcycle Week Association Participation

At the direction of the Board, Town Manager Phillip Warren contacted Paul Lessard, the Town's representative on the Laconia Motorcycle Week Association, and confirmed that effective June 30, 2010, he will be resigning from the Association. The fee paid by the Town to the Association includes membership and representation at the table. The meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month at 11 a.m., at the Association's headquarters on Union Ave. in Laconia.

It is the Board's task to decide if they want to refill the position and how best to do so. There is agreement among the Board that the event directly impacts the Town in terms of municipal, emergency, and broad based services, and in terms of the economy in the area. Representation at the table is key in coordinating the event.

Selectman Flanders suggested the Town Manager as the perfect liaison between the Association and the emergency services that will be impacted by the event. The Town Manager has indicated a willingness to serve. The Board expressed concerns regarding the additional burden that will be placed on the Town Manager by taking on the appointment. Mr. Warren told the Board that taking on the appointment is the most efficient way to handle the matter because he will not have to be apprised of what took place at the meetings by another representative. Selectman Worsman agreed to the appointment for a year, and asked that the matter be reviewed next January during the budget process. There was a general agreement among the Board to appoint Mr. Warren as the Town's representative to the Association for one year at a time, subject to funding.

Although the appointment will not take place until July 1, 2010, the meetings are open to the public and the Town Manager is free to attend any meetings between now and then. The Chair indicated that sending a substitute representative during the meetings that take place during the

early part of the year is acceptable, but that it is crucial for the Town Manager to be involved in the meetings during the weeks leading up to the event.

There was a consensus among the Board to appoint Town Manager Phillip Warren as the Lakes Region Motorcycle Week Association representative for the Town of Meredith for one year, effective July 1, 2010.

Selectman Palm suggested that a letter of appreciation be sent to Paul Lessard at the appropriate time for his years of service as the Town's representative on the Association.

W10-05 Fire Department Intern Program

The Board made it clear to the Town Manager at a previous meeting that they do not wish to see an expansion of the fire department intern program. The Town Manager researched the records, and was not able to find an agreement to keep the program at three interns. In a conversation with Fire Chief Ken Jones in late December, the Chief indicated that the program would include two first year students and two returning students. The Town Manager is acutely aware of the Board's position not to expand program, but does not see this as an expansion.

The Town Manager updated the Board on the program:

Benefits

- Interns are trained, qualified fire fighters, or are in the process of receiving training that is not paid for by the Town
- Availability of trained firefighters (when not at class) for daytime and weekend calls
- 32 hours of labor per intern per week in exchange for room and board
- Station cleaning, inspections of equipment, emergency lights and classification signage, cleaning apparatus, answering phones and doors, miscellaneous errands, fire prevention, assisting with fire inspections and monthly payroll, and performing duties normally performed by an administrative assistant.
- Initiating preplanning of buildings in the spring
- Conducting department inventories for the new software that has been purchased.

Additional Department Cost:

- Utilities expense for 24-hour coverage (the exact cost is unknown because the remodeled building has always been staffed with interns).

Interns are only compensated for calls, as are other members of the department. In the past year, the department lost a total of 11 members serving in various capacities. The roster currently includes 31 active firefighters, with varying degrees of fire suppression operation qualifications.

Utilizing four interns allows two first year interns to work with two returning second year students, who are able to assist in the education and training of the first year students.

Chief Jones views the program as extremely beneficial to the Town, and requests the Board's support for up to four interns.

While the Chair understands the need for the program, as the program progresses, it is important that the Board be kept posted on the progress of the program. He acknowledges that the interns are a very valuable resource, and that the shift from a call department to a combination of call and interns is a benefit to the Town and the department.

Selectman Flanders things the program makes perfect sense, and believes it would be foolish not to support it.

Chief Jones briefly overviewed the services performed by the interns and the training that is provided at the fire station. It was his understanding at the outset of the program that two interns would be brought in. With the success of the program, a third person was brought in for the fall semester. He explained that in order to have a rotation that includes two experienced interns, there must be two new interns brought in each year, for a total of four interns. He apologized to the Board for any misunderstandings surrounding the number of interns that would be included in the program.

Selectman Worsman's recollection is that the Board approved two interns, a freshman and a senior. While she does not disagree that the program is beneficial, she expressed concerns that the program is expanding without an opportunity for the Board to evaluate it. In addition, she expressed concerns that the station will become a dorm room.

The Chief deferred to Deputy Chief Klutz, who is actively involved in the supervision and mentoring of the interns, for a thorough explanation of training and supervision. He explained how the interns were identified, and explained the process for taking on two interns at the entry level, as two others move to second year positions. A very thorough student manual was created that sets forth all regulations including grounds for dismissal. The program has aided in keeping the roster at the level set forth many years ago by the **Wamisett??** Engine Company, the predecessor of the Meredith Fire Department – 42 firefighters and 3 officers. It is often difficult to keep the roster at targeted levels as a result of circumstances such as the need for affordable housing, family responsibilities, career changes, and retirements. Deputy Klutz believes that the program should be constrained by its operating budget as opposed to the number of interns participating in the program. The students are bound by the same regulations and have the same training as other members of the department, without the associated costs to the Town. The program offers the Town a positive dollar benefit through an exchange of housing for labor.

Selectman Worsman pointed out that other firefighters are generally older and more mature, and reiterated that she is concerned with the station becoming a dorm room. The Deputy explained that while it is impossible to have supervision in place 24 hours a day, the students make a contract with the Town that sets forth strict provisions for expulsion. Visitors are not allowed in the station unless they are on a supervised tour. There is good leverage in providing living accommodations while the students attend college.

Selectman Palm pointed out that while the Board might understand the program at a level of 3 or 4 interns at a given time, expansion of the program to six interns would create concerns.

The Chair agrees that the interns compliment the call personnel, without significant impact in terms of expansion of the budget. In addition, the program presents a tactic for replacing retiring members of the department.

Deputy Klutz reviewed the steps that have been taken to minimize animosity between the younger members of the department and the students. He credits Chief Jones with making sure that the interns are well received. The students are able to perform some of the heavier work, which will result in prolonging the careers of long-time members of the department.

Selectman Lovett acknowledged that it appears that there is a major financial contribution to the Town by using interns. He inquired if the interns get a stipend, and if food (board) is provided by the Town. If there are no substantial costs to the Town, he estimates the savings at approximately \$60,000 a year. The Town Manager confirmed that the Town does not pay for food, and that interns are not paid other than when responding to a call. Having interns in-house allows for keeping response times to acceptable levels. Selectman Lovett pointed out that the benefits realized by the Town appear to mitigate any concerns about adding a fourth intern to the program. Dialogue ensued regarding the ISO rating and how it might be affected by having the intern program in place. Selectman Lovett summarized by saying that there are no down sides to the program, and that there are quantifiable up sides - certainly in the future, but probably at the present time.

Selectman Worsman directed that the minutes reflect that there was an agreement among the Board that the intern level will not be more than four, and that the program will be evaluated at a later date.

W10-07 Fireworks

As a result of notification that the Chamber of Commerce will not host the 4th of July fireworks this year, the Board directed the Town Manager to contact the Chamber to obtain additional information. The Chamber has for several years received \$13,000 from the Town, \$6,000 for the fireworks and \$7,000 to offset the staffing of the information center. For the past several years, the Chamber has signed a contract in the amount of \$6,500 with Atlas Fireworks, with the Chamber funding the additional \$500. The Chamber coordinated with Lakes Region Marine Construction for a barge, and paid the \$1,000 fee for doing so. It is the Chamber's position that since the Town provides the bulk of the funding and emergency services for the event, the contract should be signed by Town officials and not Chamber personnel. The Chamber checked with other Towns, and found that it is common for them to arrange for the fireworks.

The cost of the insurance certificate is included in the Chamber's master policy, and cannot be identified. The Town Manager is investigating the cost of the Town's insurance company providing the certificate, and hopes to present the information at the next meeting. He is not exploring the possibility of another organization hosting the event at this time. Selectman Palm suggested that the Town Manager explore whether most Town's sign the contract for fireworks,

or pass it along to another organization. The Chair pointed out that although it is not the case without exception, municipalities are typically in a better position to procure liability coverage at a reasonable cost. The location of the fireworks, i.e., downtown or the harbor, area needs to be determined. The police and fire departments are heavily coordinated with the activity because of the number of spectators.

In summary, during the budget review, the Board directed the Town Manager to investigate if a portion of the funds provided to the Chamber are used for fireworks, and if so, withholding that amount and pursuing other options, including identifying an organization that wants to sponsor the event or co-partner with the Town. There was a general agreement among the Board that the event is important at the patriotic, economic, and tourism levels, and that the event should take place. Information on the topic will be posted on the Town website, and it is hoped that word will make its way through the media.

Selectman Palm motioned to adjourn the Workshop at 5:35 p.m. Seconded by Selectman Worsman. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Phillip L. Warren, Town Manager

Peter F. Brothers, Chairman

Karin Landry, Recording Clerk

Miller C. Lovett, Vice Chairman

Robert C. Flanders

Charles G. Palm

Colette Worsman