

MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 4, 2024 SELECT BOARD MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Board Members Chair Mike Houghton, Vice Chair Allison Knab, Joe Anderson

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator David Moore, Fire Chief Jeff Denton

Ms. Knab motioned approval of the October 7, 2024 minutes as written. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the minutes of October 21, 2024. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. Ms. Knab abstained as she was absent. Motion passed.

Mr. Houghton recognized Police Chief Anthony King for his quarterly report. Chief King reviewed the training schedule for his personnel. Officers Knight and Migliore are finishing up field training. Officer Robertson is slated to attend the January 2025 academy. Officer Storie, because of paperwork delaying his application, will have to wait until the May academy.

Chief King reported that HVAC work at the Police Station is nearing completion. As previously approved, they plan to renovate the patrol room using donated funds. After estimates are received, work will begin.

Referring to his CIP, Chief King reviewed his fleet, stating that the cost of a cruiser has increased to \$55,000. Mr. Anderson requested a spreadsheet of town vehicles (not DPW).

Chief King has identified several IT issues. Two servers are near failure and must be replaced: one for body worn cameras, one for police dept. cameras. Cloud-based storage is recommended, however that comes at a cost.

Next, Chief King reported on his Taser replacement plan. Currently, the estimate is \$34,000 for ten. He is working to get that number down.

Chief King reported that the control access system to the Police Station is starting to fail. It will cost between \$16,000 – \$23,000 to replace the system.

Mr. Anderson asked about the Animal Control Officer. Chief King indicated he is hoping to increase the number of hours available for this position. Mr. Anderson requested the ACO be in place prior to the warmer weather. Ms. Knab agreed, noting the Trail Management Advisory Committee is hoping the ACO be in place to enforce ordinances. Chief King noted he is hoping to replace the School Resource Officer and still has 2 part-time positions to fill.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Houghton called attention to the correspondence item from Mr. Wass who was present. Mr. Moore said we can't take any actions on exemptions until Town Meeting 2025. He acknowledged the value of the Town Meeting authorized exemptions will not keep their value in the context of the new valuations. The Select Board has expressed a desire to bring that to the next Town Meeting will work to take steps toward that goal. Mr. Wass requested to speak. He

advocated for additional exemptions, such as assistance for necessary improvements to homes to enable a person with disabilities to remain there and an exemption for the deaf. He inquired about the process. He suggested we increase qualifying asset income limits. He also suggested closing the gap between married and single income limits to avoid a widow/widower who qualified, but then does not. There is no state law maximum; there are only minimums. He noted many people now have 401Ks as opposed to pensions, so their values are higher. Anderson confirmed with Mr. Moore that the money would need to come from the remaining taxpayers. The Board thanked Mr. Wass for coming in.

Mr. Houghton recognized Chief Denton for his department report. Chief stated that, after waiting three years, the new ambulance is scheduled to arrive in December. It had been decided to sell the old ambulance. Mr. Moore will look further into the process of how to dispose of the old ambulance. Chief Denton mentioned that he knows of someone donating old ambulances to the Ukraine.

Chief Denton, referring to the CIP, said they would postpone replacement of the forestry truck with a more well-rounded vehicle but it won't be for another year or two. Chief Denton recommends we replace Engine 3 in 2026, in order to receive the replacement in 2029. There is a two – four year timeframe. Engine 3 is from 2008. Recently, he has spent a large part of his budget on major repairs for the trucks. He needs to update the budget to accurately reflect the recent vehicle maintenance.

Chief Denton continued, saying the pancake breakfast allowed for great outreach and was successful. Paving on the Fire Station parking lot is almost done.

Next, Chief Denton discussed personnel. We have interest from some highly qualified paramedics and interviews are scheduled. A team of five members including Mr. Anderson will do the interviews. We are looking for 3 or 4 to fill shifts. The next step would be a chief's interview then a recommendation to the Board.

One hurdle to the paramedic program is getting a contract with a resource hospital. Chief Denton has learned that we may hear back from Exeter Hospital as soon as this week. This is the first step. Mr. Anderson asked about trust with them. Chief Denton said speed is of the essence; we need this contract before we can move forward. We can always change later if need be. Exeter Hospital is closer and a better resource. We will need to get paramedic supplies there. Mr. Moore added that this has no bearing as to which hospital patients are taken to. Chief Denton confirmed that it is just operational for us to work under their license. In response to Mr. Houghton's question about Exeter ALS being extended, Chief Denton said not all paramedics have contracts with Exeter and some will likely leave before the March date.

Chief Denton continued saying the Seacoast Chiefs are looking at 3 options to fill the void.

1. Private contractor.
2. Plaistow Fire Dept. has devised a plan where they would operate a service outside their own dept. as a separate entity and provide a fly car and a supervisor car. Service for our area would be out of Brentwood. They are also offering continuing education for paramedics and also EMTs.

3. The Seacoast Chiefs are looking to create a plan on their own.

The Seacoast Chiefs want to decide on a plan that will work for everyone. Ms. Knab asked who would make the decision. Chief Denton said there's a Board of Directors and a President. There are monthly business meetings where everyone has a vote. The goal is to do what makes the most sense for the communities. The Chiefs don't want to be the ones to operate or fund a paramedic program. The towns would pay into one of the options. He recommends that, even though we will have our own paramedics, we should get involved because it allows for a tiered layer of support. Mr. Moore offered support for playing host for a unit out of our station. Chief Denton explained that because of our location, the primary location would likely be out of Brentwood. But, we might be able to augment them by providing a temporary host location. We are actively involved in the conversation to make it work for everyone.

Chief Denton reviewed shift coverage for 7 days a week, 3 on. Not all positions are filled. Hiring paramedics will, hopefully, remedy that. They will then seek to hire EMTs/firefighters on a per diem basis. He will talk about the night stipend in a non-public session. He told the members an increase in the overnight stipend wouldn't happen until they could fill the shifts. They've taken it upon themselves to fill every shift from now until the end of the year.

Chief Denton reported having no Fire Inspector candidates. We have a contractor doing school (SMS) inspections. He has taken it upon himself to do Lindt. They're growing very fast. We've asked them to do a comprehensive review. The Board asked if the contractor could do it. Chief said it is expensive, \$500 just for the schools. Mr. Houghton urged him to explore it. Chief Denton said he might have a candidate that would be available in January.

Chief Denton praised the new administrative assistant, Britt Fowle. He said she's been working one day a week at the station and is doing great. He would like to expand her hours there. He feels it is a good fit between them and DPW.

Next, Chief Denton discussed an item he has added to his budget: hydrant / fire pond maintenance. This issue needs more attention. His operations team tests the more frequently used ponds. Performing this is challenge because coverage at the station for emergencies is needed while this is happening. DPW worked on two ponds this year. There are many other ponds throughout town that have silt built up and need to be dredged. It is important to maintain the water supply in the event of an emergency. Ms. Knab is concerned about the Town's liability. Mr. Houghton asked if we had a policy. Chief Denton said this has been a concern for many years, even before he became Chief. Funding will help alleviate some issues, as they will be able to make repairs quicker and do some preventative maintenance. Sub-divisions should be providing upkeep, but many are unaware of this responsibility. He continued, saying he'd like to implement standards for commercial properties as we do for residential properties.

Chief Denton returned to his budget, noting increases are due to the need for fire gear, personnel additions, uniforms, and new equipment. Mr. Moore said their requested changes are in the preliminary budget the Board has. Mr. Anderson asked for details. Referring to a handout, Mr. Moore said that assumptions were made for personnel: Admin Coordinator for 24 hours a week, paramedic coordinator full time and a part time paramedic and additional per diems. Three part-

time dual cert employees from our existing per diems will be regularly scheduled at 30 hours a week. They briefly discussed their flexibility regarding shifts, pay, etc. Chief Denton said we'll have more clarity after the interviews.

At 7:56 pm Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a), (b) and (c). Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes.

At 8:56 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes noting failure to do so may render a proposed action ineffective. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton said they had nothing to add to the RFP for the website. He deferred road naming, the Parks & Recreation request and budget discussions to the next meeting.

Mr. Moore explained that the Secretary of State advised a Continuity of Plan for election polling places in the event of an emergency. We've gotten CMS support and filled out the form. The Clerk is ready for the election. The Board coordinated their attendance at the polling location. Mr. Moore gave a list of pro-tems for them.

Mr. Anderson said he would attend the Scouts event on Veterans Day. He is also the Master of Ceremonies at the Veterans Day ceremony.

The Board discussed the November 15th newsletter and plan for communicating about the tax rate setting process and result with DRA. They agreed to meet again in a special meeting if necessary to review the communication.

At 9:10 pm Ms. Knab motioned to adjourn. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary