

**MINUTES OF SELECTMAN'S MEETING
TOWN OF GORHAM
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2017 6:00 PM
TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM**

Gorham Selectman present: Terry Oliver, Pat Lefebvre, and Mike Waddell

Also present: Robin Frost, Town Manager; Denise Vallee; Carol Porter; Chief PJ Cyr; Judy Leblanc; Diane Bouthot; Doug Gralenski; Arthur Perry; Mike Pelchat; Roland Daigle; Jen Cloutier; Phil Cloutier; Dennis Wade; Jen Lemoine; Mary White; Adam White; Paul Nault; Laura Towle; Sue Penney; Andy Porter; Yves Zornio; Sue Dorval; Mike Cote; Robert Demers; Sue Demers; Dan Buteau; Edith Tucker, Berlin Daily Sun

1. Call to Order: The public hearing was called to order by Chairman Oliver at 6:00 pm.

2. PUBLIC HEARING: Land Purchase from Eversource Adjacent to Public Works

Selectman Waddell advised that the town is looking to purchase 6.4 acres of land adjacent to the Public Works garage. It is land that we currently use for snow storage along with the debris pile and compost. The purchase has been approved by the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission. The cost is \$17,500 for the land.

Judy Leblanc asked how the cost would be covered and was advised it would come from the Town Building and Repair CRF. Edith Tucker asked if there would also be legal fees and Selectman Lefebvre the total cost with the fees would be around \$34,000. Leblanc stated that when they discussed possibly setting aside money in the budget process last year they were told it was not needed and TM Frost advised that they were not in talks about the purchase then. Diane Bouthot asked if the town has the money and was advised we do. TM Frost advised that the land will require some work, but CMA is working on a plan. Robert Demers asked how much the site plan will cost and was advised it is \$7,000. Waddell advised the site plan will address some process issues at public works now and how to handle some of the items being brought there. Demers asked if they will maintain the pit and Waddell advised they would. Laura Towle mentioned that the price is reasonable for more than six acres of land and the opportunity will not likely come again. Phil Cloutier asked if we could still use the land if we don't buy it and Lefebvre stated we could not.

On a motion by Chairman Oliver, seconded by Selectman Waddell, the Board voted unanimously to close the Public Hearing on the land purchase at 6:14 pm.

3. PUBLIC HEARING: Contract Police and Dispatch Services with Berlin PD

Chairman Oliver opened the Public Hearing at 6:15 pm for the Police and Dispatch Services.

Chief Cyr shared a breakdown of charges for the liabilities that Gorham would still have if services were to be contracted with Berlin. This would be for the back end of the radio that will still be in Gorham, along with the repeater on Pine Mountain, which would still have to be maintained. The cost of the communication equipment would be \$37,500, cost of security upgrades for the town hall would be \$51,610, security user fees would be \$2,000, utility costs \$1,500, and there would be lost revenue in the amount of \$12,050. For the first year, we would not save any money due to the costs, and in years 2-4 we would see a savings of \$56,306. This would equal about \$20.64 in savings a year on a \$100,000 home.

Selectman Lefebvre read a letter from Chief Morency in Berlin stating why he was unable to attend the meeting, and letting the town know that Berlin PD remains interested in providing services for Gorham.

Selectman Waddell pointed out that the cost estimate from Berlin did not include the additional savings of not having the capital items included in the budget, which total about \$40,000 a year.

Chief Cyr advised that he had the sense after the last meeting that people thought the town could function with just 5 officers, as that is what Berlin would provide. However, that does not take into account sick time, vacation time, or holidays. It also does not take into account the supervision that needs to be provided. Cyr advised that without the seventh officer, retention will always be an issue.

Robert Demers stated that although he is not in favor of contracting with Berlin, he is also not in favor of a seven man department. Demers would like to see the department operate with six, which would save about \$100,000. Sue Demers stated that they need to discuss what the town needs for police coverage and also mentioned the \$12,050 in revenue that would be lost, as what the other towns pay for dispatch coverage is a big issue this year. Demers also mentioned Paul Robitaille's comment at the last hearing about so many people passing through, and stated that Shelburne and Randolph also have those people passing through and they have no police coverage.

Paul Nault asked how much it would cost to start up the police department again if things did not work out and Chief Cyr advised it would be a lot of money, especially with cruisers to buy and the front-end of the dispatch system to replace. Sue Penney stated that we need to know what the cost would be and Doug Gralenski stated that the restart cost is his biggest concern. Gralenski also stated that even if you restart a department, those seven trained officers don't just reappear, and it would take a few years to rebuild.

Mary White asked what the cost would be to provide coverage in Gorham similar to what Berlin was offering. White also feels that the department does not need seven officers, and suggested having more auxiliary and part-time officers to fill-in. White stated that Conway only has 3-4 officers on and Cyr disagreed, stating that Conway may have only 3-4 patrol officers, but they also have a Chief, a Lieutenant, a Prosecutor, and Assistant Prosecutor, and detectives on at the same time. Cyr also advised that you could cover the 168 hours per week with only five men, but it does not create a healthy work environment or supervision when that is all you have, and the reason they went to seven is to increase retention. Dennis Wade mentioned that you cannot quantify what the officers prevent by being here, that maybe there are crimes that do not happen because of the officer's presence. It was also mentioned that the lower the number you have in the department, the less chance you have for training, and the lower the morale, as they will have to work overtime to cover vacations. Yves Zornio stated that it is like an insurance policy to have the officers. Zornio asked about BPD negotiating the cost of the current GPD capital and Cyr stated they were willing to, and that their cost included a cruiser 24/7 and another 30 hours per week. Special events like the Fourth of July would be covered in the cost, plus the money set aside for Patriotic Purposes in the budget.

Leblanc mentioned that Berlin would provide 82% single coverage and 18% double coverage. Gorham is providing 49% single coverage, 36% double coverage, and 15% triple. Leblanc stated that twelve of the officers that work in Berlin live in Gorham and may have worked for Gorham PD. They are familiar with the town and they are your friends and neighbors. She mentioned that we would be getting more services from Berlin, such as detectives and a prosecutor, and they would be working out of their cruisers, giving us better patrol coverage. Leblanc stated that 8 of the 10 times she has driven by the police department in the last few weeks, all four of the cruisers were in the parking lot, and one of those

times it was at Gorham House of Pizza. Leblanc mentioned that Berlin gets more money in grants, an average of \$270,000 per year, which would increase if Gorham was to contract with them. She stated that Milan has been pleased with the service that Berlin provides for them. Leblanc stated that we need to look at the pros and cons and get definite answers to make an informed decision.

Sue Demers mentioned that she was disappointed with the cost for dispatch and thought there would have been more of a savings.

Laura Towle asked about the cost to train a new officer, which is about \$80-85,000. She also asked how often this has to be done and Leblanc stated there have been nine in the last five years. Towle stated that with the training costs, money is better spent to keep the officers we have. Towle stated that people don't realize how often the police department plays a role in their life and that years ago she had a husband who wanted her dead and the police department kept her alive. Towle also mentioned that Berlin PD has a better equipped force to investigate crimes, as the Yokohama was broken into and money was stolen and things were broken, and there is still no resolution. There was good evidence but some things were not taken care of as they should have been.

Chief Cyr mentioned the grants and advised that Gorham does not qualify for some as they are based on serious violent crimes, which Gorham does not have. Cyr advised that the Board has expressed concern about the need for grant money. Cyr also advised that they have taken steps to improve the retention issue, with better compensation, a consistent schedule, and supervision.

Mike Cote stated that this the second meeting and people have questions, but while we discuss it, there are 12 people working here who are worried about their jobs. Cote stated that a decision needs to be made. Selectman Lefebvre stated that the proposals will need to go to the town meeting for the taxpayers to vote on, but Chairman Oliver advised they would discuss it at their next meeting and give an opinion as to how they feel as a Board.

Adam White stated that when the process started, they wanted a committee to decide what was needed in town, and against the opinion of the people, the Board decided that Chief Cyr could do it himself. White suggested that we look at what we need, keep what we have, and fix it.

Yves Zornio asked about retention in Berlin and was advised it was not an issue there, most officers stay until retirement.

Sue Demers stated that she would like to see the department remain in Gorham, but not with the number we currently have. Demers was reminded that staffing is a conversation for the budget process.

Phil Cloutier mentioned the handout that Chief Cyr had made and asked if he planned for a flat line budget for the next four years. Chief Cyr stated that he used the information he had available at the time, but did not know.

Selectman Waddell asked the people in attendance who would be in favor of going to Berlin and 3 raised their hands to say they were, 1 was not sure, and the rest were opposed. Waddell also stated that there was nothing holding the Board to putting this on the warrant.

Jen Lemoine spoke and stated there are pros and cons to the contract, but she would like to see the department stay in Gorham. Lemoine stated that she helped work on several budgets, and there is no fat in the police budget.

Mary White suggested that the town look at what other police departments are doing and Chief Cyr suggested that she look at the NHMA website, which lists the towns and what they have for personnel in their departments.

Bob Demers asked if the department was fully staffed and Chief Cyr advised they were and all the officers are currently trained.

Chief Cyr mentioned that it was not prudent for the Board to wait until March to make a decision as there are other job openings in the area for officers and dispatchers.

4. Adjournment: On a motion by Selectman Lefebvre, seconded by Chairman Oliver, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 pm.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED:

Terry Oliver

Patrick Lefebvre

Michael Waddell