

**MINUTES OF SELECTMAN'S MEETING
TOWN OF GORHAM
MONDAY, OCTOBER 30, 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; Chief James Watkins; Edith Tucker, Berlin Daily Sun; Diane Bouthot; Mary White; Adam White; Arthur Perry; and Paul Robitaille

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Selectman Lefebvre at 6:00 pm.

2. Appointments:

a) Fire/EMS Budget Review – Chief James Watkins – Chief Watkins advised that he has dropped down the budget for the part-time positions mainly due to the fact that transfers are down considerably, averaging about one per week from AVH. Selectman Waddell asked about call volume and Watkins advised that 911 calls are okay. In September they received 47 calls from 911, of which 23 were no transport. He advised that many of these were lift assists, which cannot be billed as they can only bill when they transport. Watkins stated that the Medicare rules on this may change in the future. Waddell asked how many full-time positions there were in the EMS department and Watkins advised there are three, which do not include his position. Waddell requested a copy of the roster, which Watkins will provide. Waddell asked if they are disposing of one ambulance and Watkins advised they are. Decals were removed last week and they hope to have it out of the station by the end of the week. Both the ambulance and fire engine will be put out to bid. Selectman Lefebvre mentioned that there was a drop in the vehicle maintenance line. The budget was for \$9,000 and so far only \$824 has been spent. Watkins advised that there are improvements being made to Ambulance 3 for oxygen gauges, which are \$2200. Watkins advised this is not in the supply line as supplies are disposable items for patient care. Lefebvre asked about the Medical Service line, which Watkins advised is for pre-employment physicals, flu shots, and vaccines. Watkins advised that the fuel line is down, as they are not doing as many transfers. Watkins advised that he still budgeted for some transfers, as they are hoping they will increase. Waddell asked about operations and Watkins advised they currently have five people in the EMT class and two getting recertified, so by the end of February, they should have five new people on the roster. Watkins advised there are currently about 22-24 on the roster, of which 8-10 are active. Watkins explained the Equipment and Machines line and advised that the biggest expense here was computers and a cardiac monitor. Watkins suggested the line be increased, as a lot of the equipment is older and will need to be fixed or replaced in time. Waddell noted that the Heat and Oil line has been consistent, the same as the Electricity line. Watkins advised that the last electric bill was down about \$212 from the one before. Waddell also asked for a list of vehicles. Lefebvre asked about the increase in the insurance and Denise Vallee advised that the maximum increase is 5.9%, which starts in July. Vallee also advised that the increase in retirement was due to an error in last year's budget, which has been adjusted to be split between EMS and Fire. Waddell asked if any of the new EMT's are cross-trained and Watkins advised that they currently have about six employees who are, however there is one in the class who is interested. Lefebvre asked how many of the transfer requests are staffed and Watkins advised they staff about 47%. Watkins stated that they usually have a paramedic available, but no driver. Lefebvre asked how revenue has been affected. Watkins advised they are about 4 weeks behind on payments from Medicare, as their contract had expired and they are working on renewing it. They are currently at \$216,670, and the budget was \$255,000. The billing clerk believes they will get to that number, but won't surpass it. Lefebvre asked how they could staff the other 53% of transfers and

Watkins stated that they cannot force people to work. Watkins stated that transfers that are not staffed get covered by Berlin EMS. Watkins advised that the top three insurance providers, Wellsense, Medicare, and Healthy Families, only pay 10% of the bill amount, which does not even cover the cost of personnel. Lefebvre asked about staffing for calls and Watkins advised that is good, with only a few having to be covered by Berlin. Lefebvre suggested that with the lack of calls and transfers, we may not even need two ambulances. Watkins advised he would not recommend this, as sometimes they need both for a call, and sometimes one is in the garage for service which leaves one available. Waddell asked about the Capital requests and Watkins advised there is nothing new. They are the same as last year, at \$25,000 for the Ambulance CRF and \$5,000 for the Ambulance Equipment CRF.

Chief Watkins advised that he dropped the training budget from \$14,800 to \$9,000 and physicals to \$7,000. Watkins is hoping that the heat and oil expense will be less this year with the work that was done to the heating system. Selectman Waddell asked how many firemen are currently on the roster and Watkins advised there are 30-32, of which about 16 are active. Watkins advised that Engine 3 needs some repair work, so that line may need to go up. Watkins also advised that with no new cruiser at the PD this year, they will not be giving an old one to the fire department, and the one they have may not make it through the winter. Waddell stated that Watkins may need to revise the budget request. Watkins advised that revenues for the department were budgeted at \$6,000 and are currently at \$6,496, with another \$2,800 to be billed to the county. Selectman Lefebvre asked about grants and Watkins advised there is an assistant firefighter grant that he is hoping to apply for. Watkins advised that the town may not qualify for a grant for the tanker they would like to replace, as the call volume is not high enough, there are not a lot of building fires, and the tax rate is high. The new tanker that they would like to get would still have firefighting capabilities and have an automatic transmission, as there are not a lot of personnel who can drive the one they have. This would allow them to have one truck in Cascade and two at the central station. Lefebvre asked if it would be worth replacing the transmission in the one we have with an automatic and Watkins advised it would be \$86,000 just for the transmission and would not be warrantied. Lefebvre asked about grants for equipment. Watkins advised that they also need to look at new radios. Lefebvre suggested a hiring a grant writing company, as some advertise 100% success rate. Watkins advised that these cost about \$7000.

b) Police Budget Review – Chief PJ Cyr – Postponed due to storm.

3. New Business:

a) First Impressions Program Community Forum Report – TM Frost advised that they went over the First Impressions Report and then broke into groups to discuss the river, community identity, infrastructure, and four-season recreation. There are things we could do now, things that would take time, and ideas that would not cost a lot of money. They would like to have another meeting and form a committee to get started on some of the suggestions. Frost advised there was a lot of enthusiasm and people want things to happen. Selectman Waddell asked if there was anything in writing from the meeting and Denise Vallee advised there are some notes and she will get them a copy.

b) 2017 Revaluation Report - TM Frost advised the revaluation is complete and final values should be in by tomorrow. They will finalize the MS1 and get it to the state. Frost advised that in the packets, the selectmen have the draft MS1, sales analysis report, listing high to low, and the estimated tax rate breakdown. Selectman Waddell advised that at last count there had been 107 reviews. Selectman Lefebvre advised that he was disappointed with the review meeting, as were other residents in his neighborhood. Waddell asked if any adjustments were made after the meetings and Frost advised she did not have that information yet, but would get it to them as soon as it is available. Waddell asked if

the MS1 would have the adjusted values and Frost advised it would. Waddell asked if the values were in from Sansoucy yet and Frost advised they were not yet. Waddell asked if there was a target date to set the tax rate and Frost advised as soon as possible. Frost advised they will schedule a meeting to set the tax rate as soon as the final numbers are in.

c) Contracts with Randolph and Shelburne - Chairman Oliver advised that the Budget Committee is concerned about Randolph and Shelburne not paying their fair share of the cost for dispatch services. The would like the Board look at a fair way of recouping more of the cost from the other communities, such as calculating based on population rather than per call. Diane Bouthot advised that they are especially concerned about the cost of the new equipment, as the other communities should be responsible for each paying 1/3 of it. TM Frost advised the capital reserves are included, but because they are doing it by call, they are not paying enough. Selectman Lefebvre stated that Randolph did not want to sign the contract last year for \$1700. TM Frost will get copies of the contracts to the Board. Edith Tucker asked how it is figured for the county and Frost advised it is by number of unincorporated places.

4. Old Business/Updates:

a) Fire Ponds in Stony Brook – TM Frost advised the fire department is still planning to do the work, but has not started yet.

b) Cascade Playground – TM Frost advised that the equipment has been delivered, but no installation date set.

c) Complete Road Improvement Plan – TM Frost advised the completion date is December 1. Selectman Waddell mentioned the damage to Stony Brook Road, which is now one lane, and asked if the state will make a declaration. Frost advised with the amount of damage in the area, she expects there will be. Waddell advised it will be expensive to fix on our own. Frost advised that Chief Watkins is the Emergency Management Director and he is making contact with the appropriate people. Frost advised that she did send an email to Phil Corbett at CMA to give him a heads up about the issues from the storm. Waddell asked if someone will be reviewing the areas that are damaged and Frost advised that Buddy Holmes is taking pictures and documenting everything.

d) Spring Road Culvert - TM Frost advised that they will be meeting with abutters next week.

e) Eversource Property Purchase – TM Frost advised this is moving along. The Public Hearing is scheduled for November 6, and another will be held on November 20. The Board will vote on November 27. Selectman Waddell mentioned that they have approval from the Planning Board and still need approval from the Conservation Commission, which should happen next week.

f) Alternative OHRV Trailhead – TM Frost advised that there is nothing new to report. The state is working diligently on this.

g) Fairpoint Poles in Cascade – Selectman Lefebvre asked about the pavement around the poles that needs to be replaced before winter. TM Frost advised that she left a message with Fairpoint and is waiting to hear back from them.

5. Public Comment:

Paul Robitaille asked about the OHRV trailhead and where it will be moved to. TM Frost advised the spot they have identified is just north of Grace Peabody Park on Pike property. Robitaille asked if there was enough parking and was advised there would be.

Robitaille also asked about the streetlight project and was advised it would begin in November.

Robitaille stated that he was happy with the way his meeting went with the assessor.

Robitaille also stated that the town should look at the median wage of the three communities when looking at the contract for dispatch with Randolph and Shelburne.

Adam White shared that during the assessing process, they should not have made assumptions about the properties, but should have made an attempt to look at each. If someone is not home, they could leave a card and make an appointment to go back. Mary White suggested that when the town contracts for a revaluation again, they should set it up that way in the contract.

Mary White shared a concern that by moving the OHRV trailhead, they will be moving it from one residential area to another. Selectman Waddell advised that the Pike property is in a Commercial A and Industrial zone. Paul Robitaille asked what would happen to the old trailhead and TM Frost advised riders could still trailer their OHRV's there, but would not drive beyond Moose Brook Motel on Route 2. Edith Tucker mentioned that the reason people did not want OHRV's on the Berlin-Gorham Road was because people did not want them to go to Walmart to shop. TM Frost advised that is not the case, it is for safety, and any change to the trail will have to be approved by DOT and the Department of Safety.

6. Other Business:

a) Town Manager's Update – TM Frost did not have anything.

b) Selectmen's Updates – Selectman Lefebvre suggested that when KRT speaks with residents on the phone that they say they work for KRT and not the Town of Gorham.

Selectman Waddell stated that the next time an assessment of the town is done they will have to set up criteria beforehand. Waddell said that the Board should have seen the values before the letters went out the public. Also, notification should have been given to the homeowners as they are supposed to go in. Waddell also mentioned that the old and new cards should be available to homeowners so that they can compare values.

Selectman Lefebvre asked about Code Enforcement issues. TM Frost advised that new letters were supposed to be sent out last week, but she will check to be sure.

Selectman Waddell mentioned the NCIC Annual Meeting and North Country Council meetings that he recently attended and suggested that we are not taking advantage of all that NCIC has to offer. TM Frost advised that she will be working with them to help with grants. Selectman Lefebvre stated that they will not help find business to come, but will help assist a business that is already interested. Waddell asked about the Mexican restaurant that is supposed to be coming to the Pizza Hut building and TM Frost advised that it looks as though that is going to happen.

c) Approval of Minutes (October 16, 2017) –

On a motion by Selectman Waddell, seconded by Chairman Oliver, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of October 16, 2017 as presented.

d) Sign Manifest; Abatements and Exemptions (if necessary) –

TM Frost had an abatement from Lead Mountain LLC. Frost advised that the assessor worked with their tax consultant and using an income approach came up with a value of \$499,609, which would be a decrease of about \$381,500. Waddell asked what the value was the first time it was negotiated and Frost advised it was \$450,000. Waddell expressed concerns about using the income approach to assess a property in that district. Selectman Lefebvre stated that the first time they requested an abatement they stated the property was vacant, which was not true. The Board decided to ask Sansoucy to look at the capitalization rate and to wait for a decision until the hearing on December 15.

7. Non-public Session: RSA 91-A:3, II- a, e

On a motion by Selectman Waddell, seconded by Chairman Oliver, the Board unanimously voted by roll call to move to non-public session to discuss a personnel issue at 7:56 pm. Oliver – Aye, Waddell – Aye.

On a motion by Selectman Waddell, seconded by Chairman Oliver, the Board voted unanimously by roll call to come out of non-public session at 9:25 pm. Oliver – Aye, Waddell - Aye.

Minutes of non-public session are available separately.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 pm.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED:

Terry Oliver

Patrick Lefebvre

Michael Waddell