

Board of Selectmen Special Meeting
March 18, 2019 5:30 PM
Town Hall Conference Room

MINUTES

Members Present: First Selectman Betsy Petrie, Selectman Glen Coutu, Selectman John Bendoraitis

Also Present: Board of Finance Chair Liz Charron, Board of Finance Secretary Meghan Bruce, Town Planner Philip Chester, Deputy Fire Chief Mark Elliott, Assistant Fire Chief Alan Olenick, Fire Chief John Lyon, Todd Kulman, Zach Caler, Emergency Management Director Mark Decaprio, Brian Green, Todd Kulman, Zach Caler, Maggie McCaw, Bob Cady, Brock Littlefield, Myles Davis, Jay Schall, Kathleen Smith, Jeff Arpin, Nate Lyon, Kristian Cwikla, Recording Secretary Linda McDonald and others.

1.0 Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by First Selectman Betsy Petrie at 5:31 pm.

Betsy Petrie recused herself from the meeting and turned over the meeting to Selectmen John Bendoraitis and Glen Coutu.

2.0 Discuss and act upon recommendations of February 2019 JLN Fire Safety Report:

G. Coutu asked if there were any comments from the audience. Several members of the Lebanon Volunteer Fire Department (LVFD) spoke to the recommendations in the February 2019 JLN Fire Safety Report.

Deputy Fire Chief Mark Elliot said the report is factually correct but would have liked to see more development on the recommendation on future growth for the town. He expressed concerned with the first response calls data in the report.

In response to an inquiry from L. Charron, M. Elliot said Village Hill, Norwich Avenue area, and the west side of Town were areas mentioned in study done 20 years ago by the LVFD, with the west side of Town as the priority due to having the largest growth in Town and being furthest away from the fire station.

Fire Chief John Lyon said he was surprised and pleased by the positive accounts in the study, but said it was disheartening that the department wasn't approached first. He explained that every EMT has a radio and AED's are scattered around Town.

Assistant Fire Chief Alan Olenick said he was also pleased by the report. He commented a Fire Department committee started looking at properties for sale for use as a possible substation in 2011 and expressed disappointment there was no mention of other emergency services in town in the JLN report.

Todd Kulman commented the report was not a surprise, offering a good window into how the department has been providing services to the Town over many years and how it will continue to do so.

Resident Kathleen Smith thanked the ambulance service and Fire Department for all they do for the Town. She asked what vehicle would be in the proposed substation, with J. Lyon responding one fire truck that would be equipped to respond to fire and EMS calls would be moved to the substation.

M. Elliot explained ISO rating for insurance companies. He said the fire department focused on a substation on west side of Town because that area is outside the 5-mile ISO radius.

L. Charron inquired as to whether there are other substations needed elsewhere and if any study looking into to having paid full-time staff had been done. M. Elliot responded a substation would be more cost-effective and other ways have been implemented as recommended in the 2009 POCD.

G. Coutu said he knew the report would come back with a glowing review of the Fire Department and it was not the intention of the Town to use the study as a report card on the LVFD when authorizing the study, but what the Town needs and can sustain for services. He said this could be the time to begin to look at paid staffing in the long-term as it is getting harder to recruit volunteers that have the time for the increased mandated training needed. He stated the request for fire truck was not intentioned in the study.

M. Bruce expressed concern regarding the location of the proposed substation. She mentioned added liability to the Town, especially during the busy summer season at the campground.

M. Elliot responded it would be to shorten response time to the west side of Town. Putting one piece of equipment in a substation could potentially help residents on the west side of Town get a better ISO rating. He said is up to the individual insurance company to determine the insurance rate for their client.

J. Arpin of Olenick Road commented the Fire Department has been struggling for 20 years with this issue.

L. Charron said the broader picture is what has to be done over the next 20 years, not just this one project.

J. Bendoraitis said the Fire Department does a good job and the Town has supported the LVFD over the years (i.e. new equipment, FSC improvements). He commented on the mutual aid agreements and said, he understood during their presentation that JLN said a blanket mutual aid agreement would not affect ISO ratings, but if formalized contacts were put in place, ISO would recognize those on the next rating go- round.

B. Green said the LVFD appreciates the Town's support and is fiscally conservative and mutually supportive.

G. Coutu additional substations in the future would require additional equipment.

K. Smith inquired as to the estimated cost for the substation. J. Lyon responded to renovate one bay of the campground building would cost approximately \$30,000.00. At a \$500.00 per month lease, the Fire Department would recoup the investment over the period of 5 years but would be offset by the renovations to the building, meaning the first five years of the lease would be paid by the renovations to the building. M. Elliot added the vehicle insurance coverage would extend to that building and the lease would cover damages as well.

J. Bendoraitis commented he admires the out-of-the box thinking by the Fire Department. He said he has reservations to that location and the condition of the overall building. He is not ruling it out, but the plan would have to go further for him to support it. The substation would only benefit that west end of town and paid staff is a higher priority and a financial plan would have to be in place to potentially fund future substations.

G. Coutu said if the single bay was a stand-alone building, this would be an easier decision. Mixed use of the building is a concern for him, and the BOS must look at what is best for the entire population. He agreed with the looking into paid staff in the future.

B. Greene said it comes down to what residents are willing to put forward fiscally.

Discussion followed on response times in the study and how that was not the intention for having the study done.

M. Elliot distributed and commented on a response time report prepared for the BOF and BOS members to review. He expressed concern with the emphasis and discussion on paid staff at this meeting. J. Bendoraitis responded that using paid staff was put in the current Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) by the Fire Department. J. Bendoraitis said the purpose of this meeting was for open dialogue, as a first step to where the Board sees the best investment for the Town.

The dialog continued about the Fire Department's request for a new ladder truck. M. Elliott spoke about the department's need and the alignment with the JLN report. The department had been investigating demo/off lease trucks that would meet their requirements. M. Elliott expressed his concerns around the funding approval process; without having a PO or funding available, the department is challenged with acquiring possible replacements. The BOS discussed the funding approval requirements and noted that the process can be expedited. Even under expedited conditions, the process of getting BOS and BOF authorizations, and holding a warned town meeting can take about a month. Discussion continued about annual capital funding for equipment replacement; funding authorizations would still need to be executed.

The BOS thanked the Fire Department for their dialog and participation in the process.

3.0 Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Linda H. McDonald and Meghan Bruce

Please see the minutes of subsequent meetings for the approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.