

**TOWN OF CHARLESTOWN  
SELECTBOARD MEETING  
JANUARY 21, 2015**

Selectboard Present: Brenda Ferland (Chair); Art Grenier;

Staff Present: David Edkins – Administrator  
Charles Baraly – Fire Chief / Emergency Management Director  
Jessica Dennis – Office Manager  
Patrick Connors – Police Chief - (late)

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mrs. Ferland called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. She welcomed everyone. Regular member, Steve Neill, was out of town therefore unable to be present. Mrs. Ferland advised that meetings are tape recorded and asked that anyone wishing to speak identify themselves for the record.

Mrs. Ferland announced that the format for this meeting will be changed because of the large number of the public in attendance.

**SOUTHWESTERN FIRE MUTUAL AID:** Mrs. Ferland recognized Chief Phil Tirrell of Southwestern NH District Fire Mutual Aid. Chief Tirrell has been talking with Fire Chief Charles Baraly and there was concern about the Town's budget having been adjusted to not cover the full annual cost of the SWNHDFMA. Mr. Tirrell wanted to talk to the Selectboard to find out what their plans are for the future so he can try to be a resource to help guide them to continue to allow the firefighters in the Town of Charlestown to be as safe as possible. The plan that he is aware of is to move the fire dispatch functions to the Charlestown Police Department; he has some concerns about that and the Town not getting the services they have had, and are accustomed to, for the past 45-to-50 years with SWFMA. They have had conversations with other local Fire Chiefs in the local Fire Chief's Association as this will impact the communities surrounding Charlestown. In addition to the services provided it impacts the other communities as SWFMA is based on a sharing of costs. Their costs will go up if Charlestown leaves. They are able to operate at what they consider to be a reasonable figure to the communities because there are so many folks getting service from them. It is easy to take a figure of \$43,000 for the Town of Charlestown and think that is a huge amount of money but when broken down the Town is paying about \$4+/per hour to have somebody dispatch 24/7, 365 days a week, about 200 times a year. If the Police Department dispatch takes over and then finds they cannot handle all the dispatching with only one person working the Town will have to put two people on duty that will double the cost of their dispatching. Chief Tirrell stated that their Board of Directors requires a one year notice when somebody leaves. They set their budget in the fall and send out their assessments in the spring, preferably in January. If someone leaves the SWFMA they are left with a deficit that they cannot make up. The earlier in the year that a Town notifies SWFMA of their intentions helps them with their budget.

Mrs. Ferland advised that they have this change in the Town's budget. Their homework was done very well. They already dispatch for two services in Town and are at the station 24/7 so they feel they are able to handle the Fire Department. The voters vote on their budget in March

and as soon as it passes they will start the process for putting the equipment in place; while this is being done the dispatchers will be getting their training at a location where they dispatch for about 30 other towns. They feel it won't be difficult. The head dispatcher is already aware of what will be required. In the Town's budget they have, what they consider, a guesstimate of one-half of the SWFMA contract because they do not usually get a bill from SWFMA until the Town is done with their budget cycle. This is to cover for the SWFMA services to stay on-line until July 1<sup>st</sup>. We have thoroughly examined this schedule and have been told that it can be met with no problem. Both the Finance Committee and the Selectboard have agreed to this.

Chief Tirrell understands that people can be trained to do this job; they are probably talking about the Hanover dispatch center. It is a different type of scenario to dispatch fire than police. The issues that other police and fire dispatchers have, with a single person on duty, is that when a policeman makes a stop a police dispatch center will usually give the police precedence; the dispatcher has to divide their time when a fire call comes in; it is hard to separate the calls. It is hard to operate when you have a single person working. In 1996 he was faced with the Cheshire County wanting to take the police away from their SWFMA dispatch center and start their own with one dispatcher, it was going to be a cost saving issue, but now they have three full-time dispatchers working. It does not always end up the way someone hopes it will. He is also concerned for the customers they serve for the Town of Charlestown; they would only be saving about \$.25-to-\$.50 on the tax bills by moving from the SWFMA dispatch. Mrs. Ferland stated that they thoroughly investigated this. They are bringing in the equipment as a one-shot deal. Personnel will not cost the Town anything extra; the station is covered 24/7 now.

Chief Tirrell pointed out that currently when they dispatch Charlestown they are dispatching over the site they have on John Olson's property. That site was put up for the SWFMA system coverage by them; that antenna does not cover all the areas. It is not changing equipment but rather the location. Mrs. Ferland advised that they had meetings with the equipment people and the radio people so it is all going to work. When this takes place the next part of the puzzle will be what SWFMA needs to do to remove their equipment; if they are going to leave it there then they will need to make an agreement with the Town. Charlestown.

Mr. Edkins asked if they have other communities that they dispatch for who have full-time dispatch operations 24/7, 365 days. Chief Tirrell replied the City of Keene. Mr. Edkins noted that Claremont, Newport, Springfield, Bellows Falls all do their own dispatch. Chief Tirrell said they are what are called Associate Members. Mr. Edkins mentioned that Charlestown wants to be a part of the Mutual Aid system but feel they can save the taxpayers a great deal of money by dispatching the fire service the same as they do the ambulance and police departments. Chief Tirrell stated that certainly they can keep that money in town if they wish. Charlestown unlike Claremont or Springfield, but not Bellows Falls because they have their own full-time dispatch center, the SWFMA dispatches for Keene, Peterborough and Jaffrey who dispatch their own police departments. There are many towns in their dispatch area that are like them; the towns have been with SWFMA for a long time and are satisfied with their services.

Mr. Edkins advised that Police Chief Pat Connors has done a lot of the research on this and, unfortunately, he was planning to be here but had an emergency police matter that required an investigation. A part of the Town's frustration is that they do not get SWFMA bills until after

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they have set their budgets. In a lot of years there has been a 10% increase. Chief Tirrell mentioned that last year it was a 1% increase. They have no control over the NH Retirement, Workers Compensation and Health Insurance costs.

Mrs. Ferland advised that the only copy of the Petition for the Formation of a District Fire Mutual Aid System that they have is very poor; it was signed in 1957. She asked Chief Tirrell to provide a readable copy. Chief Tirrell advised that their Board is working on this so all towns will have a good copy. Some things have changed since then.

Mr. Edkins stated that the Town's Finance Committee has been after the Selectboard to do something about the SWFMA costs for several years. It does not make much sense to keep spending about \$43,000 a year when they can do it themselves.

Mrs. Ferland pointed out that everything will be new at the center. Chief Tirrell recommended that they take a look at the NFPA requirements 1221, 1061 and 297 as they are the three that pertain with communications.

Virginia Gilman, from Langdon, asked what their plans are for the surrounding towns as they have grave concerns about how this will relate to them for costs and communications. It will change the frequency; how will Charlestown communicate out and the surrounding towns communicate in. Mrs. Ferland responded that SWFMA has an Associate Membership that Charlestown can join. Chief Tirrell advised that the Associate Member is an in-coming member status to get into the association but they cannot go back after they have left. Mr. Edkins clarified that Charlestown is not talking about leaving Mutual Aid but are talking about doing our own dispatching; we still want to be a part of the Mutual Aid system. Chief Tirrell said for \$1,000/year that is not an option; they are not allowing dispatch members to go backwards. The Associate Membership is to give them a step in the door; they would like to join to see what it is all about. Charlestown is also a member of the Connecticut River Fire Chiefs Association. Chief Tirrell explained that it is a chiefs' association that work on trainings but do not dispatch. This is the reason why he came to this meeting; they are concerned with all the facts that Charlestown has not thought about. Years ago in Keene when they brought in their ISO they came in to see how their dispatch operates. Without a SWFMA agreement the other towns could charge for assistance. Mrs. Ferland asked if that statement about if they are not a part of the SWFMA is in writing; she would also like for a copy of that document. Chief Tirrell noted their Board of Directors President is Ken Marsh, Fire Chief in Wilmington, VT. Mr. Edkins asked Chief Tirrell to email him a copy of the requested documents.

Mr. Grenier advised that this came up when the Selectboard had to present the major increases to their Finance Committee. When the bills come in it blows their budget. They do not deny that SWFMA provides a great service but it comes down to finances. Mr. Edkins noted that Charlestown is an SB-2 Town so they had their Public Hearing on the budget last Monday night. Chief Tirrell pointed out that the Town Clerk or whoever handles that could just call to ask for the estimate. Mr. Edkins said Miss Dennis, Office Manager, did call and was told that the estimate was not ready. *Chief Tirrell left at 7:00 PM.*

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**THOMAS COBB and GARRETT NEILL:** Mr. Cobb requested that the Selectboard review a Petition they were submitting and asked that consider including it in the 2015 Warrant for a vote of the people. Mr. Edkins provided some background: Mr. Cobb and Mr. Neill brought in the Petition last Monday which was a week late under State Statute for submitting petitioned warrant articles. He told them that the Selectboard still had the authority to put that Article on the Warrant. Mrs. Ferland made it clear that this is at no cost to the Town. They are just asking the Town “to appoint a committee to study Charlestown’s membership with Fall Mountain Region School District, inspect the current budget and to explore other sustainable options for the education of Charlestown students”. Mrs. Ferland pointed out that if voted on the Selectboard would need the names of their proposed committee. Without objection the Selectboard approved adding this to the Warrant.

Mr. John Streeter, Charlestown’s School Board Representative, was surprised to hear about this Petition. Mary Henry, Chairperson of the School Board, was also present. Mrs. Ferland read the Petition for the record. Mr. Edkins advised that the wording is not quite state statutory warrant article form as it should begin with “To see if the Town will vote to”. Mrs. Ferland felt it should also state that this is at no cost to the taxpayers. Ms. Henry advised that if they need anything to please call either Ms. Jamie Teague or her and they are more than willing to provide the information. Make an appointment to talk to them. Mrs. Ferland pointed out that most voters are frustrated so have stopped going to school district meetings because nobody on the School Board listens but the School Board keeps saying they need more money for education to get things right. Ms. Henry is sorry they feel that way; she feels the Board does listen. Their costs have gone up with the State but the costs internally have gone down. Mr. Grenier noted that Charlestown pays about 60% of the budget. Ms. Henry was not positive but would look it up; they do have the most kids. John Street and Gabe St. Pierre represent Charlestown on the School Board. Mr. Edkins pointed that Charlestown’s contribution is closer to 45%. Mr. Cobb understands that some people will be agitated but they feel they should have more say about the schools; they want to research the way their dollars are spent. They do not want to affect their children’s education. Mr. Streeter mentioned if they contact the office and are not getting the information they want just contact a Town representative. He asked them to keep him in the loop.

**DUANE WETHERBY:** Mr. Wetherby is very upset and is getting nowhere with the Fred Poisson matter. He had sent in letters and read the December 11<sup>th</sup> letter. He feels there are two options: Either have Mr. Poisson obtain a Building Permit or get a permit to remove it. He took some pictures of the structure and sent them in to the office. Previously it took him three years to have a mobile home removed from that property. Mr. Edkins pointed out that Mr. Wetherby has copies of all the paperwork. Mr. Poisson had sent a letter stating that the mobile home was sold and would be moved off the property. Mrs. Ferland felt they would have to take a look at the legal options; they will contact the Town Attorney. It takes time and money but she will not allow this to go on for three years. The first letter went to Mr. Poisson on September 4<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Dick Holmes stated that the January 7<sup>th</sup> letter from Ms. Chaffee is just requesting information; will the legal action still go through. Mr. Edkins said they want to give Mr. Poisson every opportunity to do things right. Mr. Grenier confirmed that they will move forward with this.

*Police Chief Pat Connors came into the meeting.*

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S):**

**Mr. Grenier moved to approve the Minutes of the regular Selectboard meeting of January 7, 2015, as written. Mrs. Ferland seconded the motion. With all in favor, the Minutes were approved and signed by two members of the Selectboard.**

**Mr. Grenier moved to approve the Minutes of the Non-Public Selectboard session of January 7, 2015, as written. Mrs. Ferland seconded the motion. With all in favor, the Minutes were approved and signed by two members of the Selectboard.**

**DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS:**

**Police Department:** Police Chief Pat Connors reported that they have been very busy. There have been many domestic cases. Officer Joe Landry is doing some training on the day shift. Another part-time officer will be attending the part-time academy. The department is still short of part-timers. He asked if a decision had been made on the Town's involvement with SWFMA. Mrs. Ferland said a few things need to be discussed in a non-public session.

**SELECTBOARD COMMENT:** There were no Selectboard comments at this meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS:** There was no Old Business to come before this meeting.

**FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION – Payroll, Purchase Orders, Manifests, Contracts, Warrants, Abatements, Etc.:**

**Payroll:** The Selectboard signed the Payroll Check Register dated January 20, 2015, and the Direct Deposit Register dated January 22, 2015.

**Purchase Orders:** The Selectboard approved and signed the following Purchase Orders: 1) Administration – SBR (Food Shelf Rent) \$6,000.00; 2) Administrative – Home Health & Hospice (Annual Appropriation) \$24,500.00; 3) Water Department – EOS Research - \$1,350.00; 4) Highway Department – Jordan Equipment - \$827.58; 5) Wastewater Department – Normand Beaudry - \$914.25; 6) Highway Department – JP Trucking (winter sand) \$2,362.21; 7) Highway Department – Granite State Minerals (salt) \$3,627.50; and 8) Water Department – Normand Beaudry \$842.50.

**Notice of Intent to Cut Wood or Timber:** The Selectboard approved the Notice of Intent to Cut Wood or Timber for Travis and Sam Putnam on the Sam Putnam Road

**Warrant for Timber Tax Levy:** The Selectboard approved and signed the Warrant for a Timber Tax Levy for a total amount of \$3,582.86.

**Default Budget:** The Selectboard signed three copies of the Default Budget. It needs to be posted by Monday.

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

**New Hampshire Highway Safety Agency:** A letter was received from the NH Highway Safety Agency regarding the FY2016 Financial Assistance for Cities and Towns. It advises what funding is available and how they can apply for it.

**Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission:** The letter from the UVLSRPC lets us know that they finished a draft of the Regional Plan and it is available for review and comment. A Public Hearing will be scheduled in February.

**New Hampshire Division of Fire Safety:** A letter was received from the Office of the State Fire Marshall about fireworks. This is important for the Town because we usually take their recommendations. Mrs. Ferland mentioned that this also pertains to the sale of fireworks.

**Sullivan County:** An invitation was received from Jessie Levine, County Manager, inviting the officials to be a part of their on-going county projects.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT’S REPORT:**

Mr. Edkins reported that the issues on his list were already discussed.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Conservation Commission – Brenda Ferland:** Mrs. Ferland was unable to attend the last meeting as she was attending the Budget Hearing.

**Heritage Commission – Art Grenier:** Mr. Grenier was unable to attend their last meeting as he was attending the Budget Hearing.

**Planning Board – Brenda Ferland:** Due to Mr. Neill’s absence, Mrs. Ferland attended the Planning Board meeting last night. The members tabled the Historic District Ordinance for one year to allow time to work on the language and to bring it back in 2016. The Building Code was approved and will be on the Warrant for the Town to adopt.

**Recreation Department – Art Grenier:** Mr. Grenier reported that the members were busy planning the Winter Carnival activities that start on Saturday. Fire Chief Baraly is disappointed in that he lives next door to Swan Common and it has been a fantastic year, weather-wise, for a skating rink on the Common. However the area has not been cleared for skating in several years until they need it for broom hockey. Even with a little bit of ice the kids are skating. Mr. Grenier advised that the ice will remain there for the rest of the season. He will bring this to Mr. Fairbank’s attention.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION – RSA 91-A:3 II:**

**Mrs. Ferland moved to enter into a Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II to discuss (a) Personnel and (c) Reputations. Mr. Grenier seconded the motion and, on a roll call vote with all in favor, the motion was approved at 7:46 PM.**

**The regular Selectboard meeting resumed at 9:00 PM.**

**PROPOSED 2015 BUDGET:** The Selectboard agreed to make the following changes:

- Ambulance Maintenance & Repair – Approved decreasing this amount from \$5,000 to \$1,500.
- Cemetery Electricity – Increase the \$20 to \$100.
- Hazardous Waste Removal – Approved \$50 in this line item.
- Highway Vehicle Maintenance and Repair – Approved \$37,000 in this line item.

**Water Department:**

- Contracted Services – Decrease the \$9,000 to \$7,000. Mr. Grenier recommended that Miss Dennis be asked to change this line item to “Contracted and Rental Services”.

**Sewer Department:**

- Electricity – Old Claremont Road – Approved increasing this from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

**Fire Department:**

- Dispatching Services – Approved decreasing this from \$25,000 to \$21,533.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Mrs. Ferland moved to adjourn this meeting. Mr. Grenier seconded the motion. With all in favor, the motion was approved at 9:20 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Regina Borden, Recording Secretary

Approved,

Brenda L. Ferland, Chair

Art A. Grenier

Steven A. Neill

(**Note:** These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections, if necessary, will be found in the Minutes of the February 18, 2015, Selectboard meeting.)