

The weekly meeting of the Board of Selectmen was held on Tuesday, March 8, 2011 at 7:35 p.m.

Present: Theresa E. McNulty, Chairman; Joseph L. Miksch, Clerk; Robert M. Condon
George Samia, Town Administrator, Catherine Johnson, Administrative Assistant

Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. McNulty opened the meeting with an explanation of the process of placing an item on the Board of Selectmen's weekly agenda.

Mr. Samia explained that the situation with the bill for the removal of snow from the school roofs is nothing more than a symptom of a larger issue, a breakdown in a process. Mr. Samia expressed his disappointment of being circumvented by the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen and the Fire Chief as well as others involved in this situation. .

Chief John Cowan read a statement of the recent events that he had concerns with in these difficult times. Chief Cowan stated that he has witnessed the bypassing of the Town Administrator by the Board of Selectmen Chair Person and the Fire Chief. He explained that he has witnessed the communication breakdown. Chief Cowan further stated that he was moved to bring his concerns to the Board of Selectmen due to the fact that the information was not offered to the general public.

Chief Cowan gave a chronology of the events of the last two weeks that have concerned him regarding the handling of him not being able to speak at the prior weeks meeting during Open Forum on the bill for the snow removal off the roofs of the schools in town.

Mr. Miksch expressed his concerns with being "shut off" at the Open Forum portion of the prior weeks meeting as well.

Ms. Cheryl Pooler, Administrative Assessor was present to state her concerns with the handling of the Open Forum portion of the prior week's meeting as well as her concerns with the financial aspect of the bill, specifically the fact that the procurement law was not followed for the removal of the snow from the town's school roofs.

Ms. Pooler continued by calling attention to a letter she received which was written on Board of Selectmen letterhead addressed to her from Ms. McNulty. She asked the other selectmen, Mr. Condon and Mr. Miksch, if they were aware of this letter to which they stated they were not.

Ms. Pooler admonished Ms. McNulty for acting on her own without input from the other two selectmen. The content of the letter was a public information request for documents from the Assessors office. Ms. Pooler said that sending the letter could be construed as being retaliatory in nature and implying impropriety on her part.

Chief Cowan stated he received a similar letter from Ms. McNulty and further admonished her but also explained that the requested documents would be forthcoming. Chief Cowan proceeded to read the entire letter.

Mrs. McNulty stated that the letters were sent as a result of a request of a town official and a town resident.

Mr. Condon requested Ms. Pooler read the aforementioned letter.

Superintendent Susan Cote was present to express her concerns with the handling of the bill for the removal of the snow from the school buildings.

Chief Cowan suggested to the board that a (3) member Emergency Management Board be formed consisting Fire Chief Ryon Pratt, DPW Director John Haines and himself, Police Chief John Cowan for the purposes of checks and balances and guarantee of one member being in town at all times.

Action Item

M/Miksch, s/Condon, a unanimous vote approve the minutes of the February 1, 2011 meeting.

Board Discussion

Mr. Condon requested an update from Mr. Samia on the aforementioned bill and expressed interest in debating the invoice. Board of Selectmen expressed intention that Board of Selectmen would vote to approve payment as last step before payment is made.

Fire Chief Ryon Pratt was present to state that he was not afforded the courtesy of what was to be discussed tonight and that he will come to the Board soon to tell the rest of the story.

Open Forum

Numerous members of the audience expressed their concerns in the following areas:

1. Board of Selectmen policies and procedures
2. Independent investigation of the recent violation of procurement laws.

Detective Scott Allen was present to read a statement of support for Police Chief John Cowan.

M/Miksch, s/Condon, move to close Open session and go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations and to not return to Open Session.

VOTE: Yes – McNulty, Miksch, Condon; a unanimous vote in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Board of Selectmen Clerk