

**MINUTES OF SELECTMAN'S MEETING  
TOWN OF GORHAM  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2017 6:00 PM  
MEDALLION OPERA HOUSE AND TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM**

Gorham Selectman present: Terry Oliver and Mike Waddell

Also present: Robin Frost, Town Manager; Chief PJ Cyr; Chief Peter Morency; Deputy Chief Dan Buteau; Marc Tremblay, Berlin Police Commission; Jerry Nault, Berlin Police Commission; Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun; Jennifer Cloutier; Pauline Switter; Lisa Arguin; Daniel Arguin; Chris Kilmer; Sarah Blais; Richard McClure; William Blunden; Dorothy Sanschagrin; Henry Sanschagrin; Sandy Lemire; Abby Evankow; Donald Therrien; Sue Therrien; Douglas Gralenski; Roland Daigle; Raymond McKenzie; Bruce Lary; Wanda Tanguay; Diane Bouthot; Hollie Dube; Stephen Delorge; Robert Demers; Judy LeBlanc; Suzanne Demers; Dennis Wade; Michael Cote; Andrea Philbrook; Eric Benjamin; Myles Chouinard; Susan Dorval; Wilma Martin; Andy Binette; Philip Cloutier; Mary White; Adam White; Brian Ruel; Nicole Pizzo; Terrill Platt; Leo Lozier; John Scarinza; Paul Robitaille; Phil Pelletier; Wally Corrigan, Jr; Carolyn Letellier; and others

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

TM Frost invited the public to attend a community meeting, Downtown Gorham, at the Medallion Opera House on October 24 from 6-6:30 pm. This is an opportunity for people to share their thoughts on what they would like to see in town and to hear the results of the First Impressions assessment. Frost requested that anyone interested RSVP to Denise Vallee.

**PUBLIC HEARING: Proposed Police/Dispatch Contract with Berlin Police**

Chief Morency stated that the town voted last spring to look at services from Berlin Police Department as a way to keep costs down and they were here not as a way to make money, but at the request of the town. Morency shared some points to consider when making the decision as to whether to contract with Berlin. Both Municipal Resources, Inc. and the NH Municipal Association have recommended the regionalization of police services. Gorham will realize savings in the budget and in cost avoidance, from upkeep of vehicles, weapons, and radios. Gorham would gain full-time supervision, and the resources of a detective division, full-time drug investigator, prosecutor, records manager, accident reconstruction team, evidence technician, and DARE officer. Gorham will gain more community policing programs and be provided additional opportunities for grants. Gorham will no longer have to contend with the problem of officer retention and the expenses associated with that, but will retain their voice in the law enforcement process. A legal document will be drafted and a not-to-exceed rate will be included. Since office space would not be needed, there is a potential for revenue from leasing space in the town hall.

Chief Cyr advised that he was initially in favor of the study, but shared some concerns. Cyr stated that the contract with Berlin would provide only single coverage 82% of the time. Cyr questioned what would happen if that officer was busy with an arrest and if Berlin would send another officer to cover the town at no additional cost. Cyr advised that we should be looking at alternative ways to provide services, but should look at the operational details closely. Cyr stated that even if Berlin provided service, the town would still be responsible for the maintenance and operational costs of the radio infrastructure in the building and on Pine Mountain. Cyr reminded the group that it is not regionalization of services, but a contract for service, and that it would be Berlin officers responding to calls in Gorham with Berlin cruisers. Cyr stated that although Berlin does provide a high quality law enforcement service with plenty of experience, coverage would be only one officer most of the time. Currently the town has

single coverage 49% of the time, with double 36%, and triple 15%. Cyr stated that there is supervision of the officers in Gorham, as he works dayshift and Sgt. Santos works a cover shift either 10am-8pm, or 4pm-2am. Cyr stated that it is early in the game and requested that people not be quick to jump to decisions. Cyr asked that people consider what would happen if things did not work out and what the cost would be to restart our own police department.

Morency responded to the comments, stating that what the RFP asked for is exactly what was quoted, and stated that this was about working together and helping each other out. Morency stated that supervision is about always having someone available to help new officers out, which helps them to grow in their careers. Morency also stated that radio costs will be there regardless of what is decided.

Doug Gralenski stated that the biggest risk is that we are dissolving our current police department and the contract is only for 4 years. Gralenski asked if there was something in the contract to cover re-negotiation, and if there was not a new agreement reached, that the contract would continue with the same terms. Gralenski also stated that there was nothing in place if the contract was severed by either party.

Mary White stated that we were comparing oranges to apples, and stated that she would like to see what it would cost Gorham to provide the same level of service that Berlin has proposed. Chief Cyr stated that he would work on that.

Judy Leblanc asked what the motivation was for putting this in front of the town to begin with and why we did not ask Berlin for the cost of the same services we have now. Cyr responded that if we asked for the same services, there would be no cost savings, as you would be paying the same salaries at Berlin's higher rate of pay. Leblanc also asked what the number one problem with officer retention is, and Cyr stated that it is a combination of pay, no consistent schedule, lack of training and supervision, and wanting to work in a department with double coverage so they are not alone. Leblanc asked that if we were to keep the officers we have now, would we have to increase our budget to keep them. Cyr stated that the department just became fully staffed and they have not had enough time to see it work. Leblanc asked if we were losing another officer to Berlin and Cyr advised that we were.

Leo Lozier asked what the Selectmen's reasoning was for requesting this and Chairman Oliver replied that it was to reduce costs and eliminate the problem of officer retention. Lozier stated that giving police services to Berlin was not the answer, as single coverage would be increasing from 36% to 82%. Selectman Waddell stated that his concern would be when the officer is occupied and if another officer would come to patrol while they are busy at no additional cost. Waddell pointed out that for the better part of a year, the current department has been functioning with only 5 officers, so there was not double coverage a majority of the time. Waddell stated that the retention problem is an issue and there was a lot of discussion about that at the budget committee level as to how do to things differently. Lozier stated that in 4 years, the contract may be the same or may be more. Waddell replied that it is not just cost, but retention. Morency stated that they have no intention of stopping the contract in 4 years, they were just asked to go to 2022. Gralenski stated again that terms of renegotiation would need to be included in the contract.

Paul Robitaille stated that we need to be concerned with safety. Robitaille pointed out that there are 25,000 cars that travel through Gorham on a weekend, and when the hotels and campgrounds are full, the town goes from a population of 2,800 to 9,000. Robitaille felt that a single officer would not be able to keep a grasp on that and that cutting back on the number of police officers in the area is a big mistake for us all, we need to keep them all to back each other up. Robitaille stated that we cannot rely on state

police, and although we are worried about taxes, the police have a hard time keeping up on the busy weekends we have now.

Carolyn Letellier stated that as a survivor of domestic violence, safety should come first.

Bruce Lary thanked both Chiefs for their work. Lary asked what the cost savings projected of \$150,000 would mean on the tax rate. He was advised it would be about 60 cents. Lary stated that on a \$100,000 home, this would be a savings of \$60 a year.

Morency reassured the group that the town would always have an officer on patrol, barring an unforeseen mass casualty incident.

Abby Evankow asked if the cost would be more of a savings if the departments were consolidated, rather than a contract for services. Morency stated that there would need to be one structure and one chain of command. Cyr stated that under the current proposal, 5 full-time patrol positions, and 2.5 full-time dispatch positions would be eliminated.

Henry Sanschagrín asked what the cost to hire and train a new officer is and Cyr stated it is between \$80,000-85,000.

Robert Demers asked if we currently have mutual aid between the communities and was advised we do. Demers asked if there was a cost to either community for that and was advised there was not. Demers suggested that since we are losing another officer, that the department not fill the vacancy, which will save the town about the same as contracting with Berlin. Demers also asked about dispatch centers and stated that when the Drega incident happened years ago, there was an issue with communication between the departments. Morency advised there was talk at that time about having one dispatch center for the county, but that never happened. Jennifer Cloutier advised that there are interoperability channels that allow the departments to communicate in the event of a large scale emergency situation. Morency stated that the issue of duplicate services was another reason for the request, as both communities are paying for dispatch costs, and other costs such as IMC. Morency advised that if dispatch was combined, they would hire some additional personnel. Cyr advised that if Berlin just took dispatch services under the contract, the first year would be a cost savings of \$16,308, and the town would lose \$5,000 in revenue from the contracts with surrounding towns and the county. Cyr advised that some costs that are in the dispatch budget, such as phone lines, the radio, and recording software would still have to be included in the police budget. Cyr stated that would eliminate any savings the first year, and the savings would be about \$10,000 the following years. Morency stated that he was missing the point, as the town would not have to replace \$320,000 worth of radio equipment for dispatch and Cyr responded that some of it would still need to be replaced, although it wouldn't be as much.

Gralenski stated that this question was a cloud that is not helping the morale or retention at our current department and he hopes the decision will be made quickly.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING: Acceptance of Unanticipated Highway Block Funding**

TM Frost advised that Senate Bill 38 added an additional appropriation for the Highway Block Grant of \$53,385.76, and they are required to hold a public hearing to accept the funds.

There was no public comment.

Chairman Oliver closed the public hearing at 7:15.

**On a motion by Selectman Waddell, seconded by Chairman Oliver, the Board voted to accept the additional Highway Block Grant funds in the amount of \$53,385.76.**

### **3. New Business:**

**a) Budget Meeting Schedule with Department Heads** – TM Frost advised that the first meeting will be on October 30 with Fire and EMS. November 6<sup>th</sup> will be Public Works, Cemeteries, and the Recreation Department. November 13<sup>th</sup> will be Finance and Assessing. November 14<sup>th</sup> will be Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Library, and Police.

**b) Proposal from CMA Engineers for Public Works/Transfer Station** – TM Frost advised that a proposal was received from CMA to evaluate and develop a plan for the added property that the town is purchasing by the Public Works facility. The plan will address snow storage, leaf and yard waste, the debris pile, and a review of the current operations. The cost is \$7,000. Selectman Waddell stated that this was a reasonable sum for the scope of work. Waddell asked if there was a signed Purchase and Sales Agreement for the land and Frost advised there was. Frost stated that Ed Boutin is taking a look at title insurance and that the closing date was moved from 30 to 45 days, but they are hoping to close before that. Frost advised that there will need to be two public hearings before the closing. Waddell asked where the funds will come from and Frost advised that there is money in building maintenance and in the legal line. The cost for the property is \$17,500 and the property is 6.4 acres in size. Waddell stated that the hydro dam will be sold, as they have a signed Purchase and Sales agreement. The town is buying land that did not sell with the hydro dam for snow storage, as we have been using it for years, but could not continue due to the divestiture.

**On a motion by Selectman Waddell, seconded by Chairman Oliver, the Board voted to accept the proposal from CMS for the site work at the Public Works Department.**

### **4. Old Business/Updates:**

**a) Fire Ponds in Stony Brook** – TM Frost advised that the Fire Department will be fixing this themselves. They will probably start next week and pump the water out of the pond to fill the cistern until that is full, then they will replace the broken pipe. They do have verbal landowner permission, but will get it in writing.

**b) Cascade Playground** – TM Frost advised that there is nothing new to report.

**c) Complete Road Improvement Plan** – TM Frost advised there is nothing new to report. The completion date is December 1.

**e) Jimtown Crosswalk Request** – TM Frost advised she has heard nothing back, but will check with them.

**f) Eversource Divestiture** – TM Frost advised that this can be replaced with Public Works land expansion.

**g) Alternative OHRV Trailhead** – TM Frost advised that she spoke with Chris Gamache, who met on site with a representative from Pike. They are agreeable to working out something with the State to lease or purchase the land off of the Berlin-Gorham Road. Gamache also met with Bert Drouin reference to a piece of land that could provide access, however this would include using a piece of land that Pike would rather not use.

### **5. Public Comment:**

Barbara Tetreault asked if the town was concerned with the allocation of the Gorham hydro facility in the sale, as it is about \$1 million less than the assessment. Frost advised that we are always concerned about a case for a possible abatement request, but will speak with Sansoucy, who is responsible for utility assessments.

Judy Leblanc mentioned that the new assessments from KRT were mailed out and wondered about whether the value of the town went up or down. TM Frost advised that the numbers are preliminary but some areas went up, while others went down, so overall there was not much change. If taxpayers want to request a hearing, it will need to be by October 24. Selectman Waddell requested a report that shows the original vs. the current values. Frost advised that final values are due by the end of month so that the tax rate can be set.

Robert Demers asked who the Emergency Director for the town was and TM Frost advised it is Chief Watkins. Demers asked where the emergency shelter is and was advised it is the Edward Fenn Elementary School. Demers asked if they have all the equipment they need, as looking at the current emergency situations in the country, we should be prepared. Frost advised there was a question about the generator that they have.

#### **6. Other Business:**

**a) Town Manager's Update** – TM Frost had the Selectman sign the MS1 Extension Request. The town is requesting an extension until November 6, which gives us an extra week beyond when the final values are due. Waddell asked if the values on the utilities are available from Sansoucy and Frost stated she would get those.

Frost advised that the school requested that the town help to fund fitted mats for the stage area at the Ed Fenn School. They were able to raise \$500 with a fundraiser and are requesting the town pay the remaining balance of \$533.28 from the Recreation Revolving Fund. The Selectmen agreed to pay half of the balance and requested that the school fund the other half.

**b) Selectmen's Updates** – Selectman Waddell asked about the disposal of town property. TM Frost advised there was a question about who actually owns the snow machine. Frost advised that the fire truck and ambulance have not yet been put out to bid.

Waddell asked about the RFP for auditing firms. Frost advised that both received were lower than expected. Frost advised that she and Denise Vallee recommend going with Melanson and Heath, which is the least expensive. This will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

#### **c) Approval of Minutes (October 2, 2017) –**

**On a motion by Selectman Waddell, seconded by Chairman Oliver, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of October 2, 2017 as presented.**

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

There were no abatements.

#### **7. Non-public Session: RSA 91-A:3, II- 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 7:58 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 8:50 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 8:50 pm.

**REVIEWED AND APPROVED:**

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**Terry Oliver**

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**Patrick Lefebvre**

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**Michael Waddell**