

**Board of Selectmen's Meeting
September 11, 2012, 7:00 PM
Medway Senior Center
76 Oakland Street**

Present: Chairman Andrew Espinosa, Selectman Dennis Crowley, Selectman John Foresto, and Town Administrator Suzanne Kennedy. Selectman Richard D'Innocenzo and Selectman Glenn Trindade were absent.

Also Present: Melanie Phillips, Finance Director; Jeffery Lynch, Fire Chief (arrived at 7:20 PM).

There being a quorum present, Chairman Espinosa called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Espinosa asked for a moment of silence in memory of lives lost in the World Trade Center tragedy on September 11, 2001.

Public Comment: None

Award and Sign Bond Documents – Middle School Repair Project, sewer collection system and fire truck -- \$5,100,000:

The Board reviewed descriptive information regarding the General Obligation Bond Award, dated September 15, 2012; and Yield Curve Comparison for GO Bonds, dated September 5, 2012.

Ms. Melanie Phillips, Finance Director, reported that this particular bond went out to bid on September 5, resulting in 8 bids. The rate on the bids ranged from a low of 1.98% to a high of 2.145%. The second bidder lost the bid because they offered less of a premium. Ms. Phillips was pleased to see three new bidders this time around, noting that this means the Town's rating is good. Referring to the handout titled Yield Curve Comparison, she pointed out that it depicts Medway's performance against both the AA and AAA scale ratings. The winning bid was FTN Financial Capital Markets with a TIC of 1.93105% with a premium of \$142,091.50. Ms. Phillips stated the Board must vote in order to award the bid.

Selectman Foresto moved that the Board of Selectmen award the General Obligation Bond for \$5,100,000 dated September 15, 2012 to FTN Financial Capital Markets with a TIC bid of 1.983105% and a premium of \$142,091.50; Selectman Crowley seconded. Responding to a question from Selectman Crowley, Ms. Phillips explained how the bid process, rates, and debt service are handled. VOTE: 3-0-0.

Discussion -- Fire/EMS Department:

The Board reviewed documents reflecting emergency calls for calendar years 2010, 2011, and 2012.

Present: William Mergandahl, Pro EMS.

Ms. Kennedy reported that Fire Chief Lynch would arrive shortly, as he was presently on a call. Mr. William Mergandahl, EMS Billing Coordinator with Pro EMS, was available to answer questions. He noted that additional software is necessary to help with billing. Data and knowing what you are doing is critical to making decisions about the EMS system as well as fire suppression. A lot of calls are related to EMS, but the department still needs the capability to record and respond to fire calls. The Town needs the ability to capture the information. Currently the Town has no capability to go into the dispatch software and quickly produce batch information of different kinds of calls. A specific software module is necessary, which costs roughly \$12,000 - \$15,000, plus training costs. As long as the software system is configured correctly when it is installed, it is fairly intuitive and training would be minimal. Typically report data is noted on drop down menus, not anything in a text format. The present system is designed to capture police data, not fire data. Mr. Mergandahl indicated it is difficult to tether the computer-aided dispatch record with what actually happens in the field, and a lot of information is lost. With the Fire and EMS modules, it would be impossible to leave out critical information due to flags and alerts when initial data is entered.

Mr. Mergandahl stated that hydrant information (active vs. inactive, pressure load, etc.) can be loaded into the system, as well as floor plans of area buildings. Selectman Crowley wanted to know who would enter all that information. The Fire Department staff would have to enter some information just as the Department of Public Service staff enters some information into their system. GIS data is also utilized. A record of disabled persons would be available in the system. A couple of months of close supervision will get a lot of people on track on how to use the system, i.e., entering information, creating reports and accessing data.

Selectman Foresto stated the annual reports were put together to show whether there were significant differences between the early shift versus the late shift, costs, revenues, etc. Selectman Crowley briefly spoke about a previous process when a similar comparison was made years ago. Mr. Mergandahl stated that typically emergency call volume goes up by 3% annually, mostly due to increase in elderly population. He pointed out that these reports are only for emergency calls, not the fire suppression calls. Discussion followed.

The report showing 2012 calls was closely reviewed. Fire Chief Lynch explained that an "all call" is when dispatch pages all available EMTs if an EMT is not assigned to the shift. There could be zero response or as many as five people show up. The call goes out every 5 minutes or so. Chairman Espinosa asked how detailed the information in the database is, as he is interested in additional data. Mr. Mergandahl stated the report is made up of data points, and much more information can be pulled into a report. Chief Lynch stated the reporting software can be as detailed as one would like it to be. Chief Lynch reported that he was informed that the company that supplies the current reporting system is going out of business. He indicated he tried to reach Customer Support without success.

The Board reviewed the 2011 report and Selectman Crowley wondered, of the ones the department responded to, how many of the calls could be successfully billed. Mr. Mergandahl advised using a 90-day lag period which allows time for payments to come in against bills and thus that could not be answered accurately just yet. He noted there are more people with third-party insurance than Medicare, Medicaid, etc., which benefits the Town. Discussion followed including salary for ALS-certified personnel vs. BLS-certified personnel.

Chairman Espinosa suggested that the purpose of this meeting to get familiar with the system, noting that the Board needs to understand this from an operational standpoint before moving forward too

quickly. Ms. Kennedy added that this exercise was to point out the weaknesses in our current system. Selectman Crowley theorized that adding two additional people to the department would increase coverage, increase the ability to respond, thus creating billable units. It is important to understand the costs before moving ahead to looking at the potential revenue. Perhaps it is better to start with BLS personnel and move to ALS as the Town can afford it. Selectman Crowley asked how long it takes for volunteer firefighters to get to a fire at 3 AM. Ms. Kennedy wondered if outsourcing might provide some options. Mr. Mergandahl responded that the fire suppression piece cannot be outsourced.

Selectman Foresto asked Chief Lynch if there are other factors that the Board needs to consider. Chairman Espinosa added that there is a lot to learn, in order to understand and make some strategic decisions. Selectman Crowley noted that this information will help the Board make good decisions during budget time.

It was noted that there is no way to answer call response time with the current system. Ms. Kennedy stated she would like to recommend an article at Fall Town Meeting to buy the software.

Selectman Crowley wanted to know the cost to add two additional people, and the cost for two additional people plus ALS certification, and, finally, the anticipated cash flow and revenue over the next three or four years.

Referring to the missed calls, Mr. Jeff O'Neill, Chairman, Finance Committee, asked if there is a cost associated with that or if it is just lost revenue. While there is no immediate cost, Selectman Crowley suggested there really is because the Town is paying people to respond, even if the patient opts not to be transported. Revenue comes in only if the person is transported, yet the personnel costs will be there regardless. Mr. Mergandahl clarified that roughly 25% of those calls are not transported to a medical facility. Chief Lynch noted that hardship cases might be forgiven by the Town, but an independent service may not forgive the bill for those with financial hardship.

Selectman Crowley moved that the Board ask the Town Administrator to prepare a cost analysis for adding the EMS and Payment Modules for the existing EMS System; Selectman Foresto seconded. It was noted that this software will work with the existing Fire House system. VOTE: 3-0-0.

Selectman Crowley asked Ms. Kennedy to add amortized costs of the new ambulance to the report she will be preparing. That way we can see whether we are actually bringing revenue over the costs.

Regarding the contract for ALS intercept calls, Ms. Kennedy stated that, though it is out-of-date, it is valid. She indicated she would like to have an updated contract, one that Chief Lynch will negotiate with the aid of Town Counsel, in order to provide increased protection for the Town. Mr. Mergandahl noted that rates for the ALS intercept calls vary from \$200 per call (Medway) to \$500 (Belmont). Medway currently waives copays for Medway residents, something that eliminates one piece of the billing process. There are always a lot of cash payments that are not collected in time to be part of the current report. Brief discussion followed on aspects of current billing and revenue, noting that only a year's worth of data from the present billing company can be examined.

Fire Chief's Report:

Fire Chief Jeffery Lynch apologized for being late. He stated the department is functioning and the firefighters did an excellent job at yesterday's fire; he was pleased with their performance. He expressed concern for the lack of training, particularly with newer members of the department. He

noted that he asked each member to provide a summary of their training, suggesting this would be something the new software could track. A good portion of the firefighters do not meet the national standard and he feels that they should. He said the department can send members to training (42 courses over a period of eight months) or do an in-house training. Due to financial constraints, he has opted to do the in-house training while trying to come up with a creative way to provide the training with little cost. After the training is complete, firefighters can go to the firefighting academy for testing to obtain certification. Selectman Crowley asked if the training could be postponed until FY14 with the idea that potential funding might be secured through grant funds. Chief Lynch stated that only seven or eight firefighters are certified. He added that the men are willing to train; they just have to find a way to do it. Selectman Foresto asked if they need to eventually recertify. Chief Lynch responded that training is typically provided on a monthly basis, but that there is no recertification process.

Chairman Espinosa wanted to know if lack of training has always been an issue, and what the liability and risk to the Town are. It was noted that if it is not addressed, and there is a fatality, there could be legal repercussions via wrongful death suit.

Chief Lynch stated it is not clear how things were done in the past, but assumed that the previous chief usually made the promotions. He would prefer to have something quantitative in a promotions procedure as there is currently no testing or list of qualifications specific to each position or promotion. There are guidelines for Fire Officer 1 and Fire Officer 2, but nothing that says that a lieutenant has to have certain skills or education. He would also like to move toward standardization of positions and necessary qualifications, adding that, anecdotally, it was probably a "who you know" type of situation. Responding to a question from Selectman Crowley, he stated that he wants to train the command staff as well, but he does not have a real clear picture of things and needs more time for assessment.

Chief Lynch continued, stating he could not believe the fire alarm panel in either station is not working. He is currently in the process of getting estimates for replacing the alarm systems; all the firefighting equipment is in those two buildings, without protection. He is also concerned that there are parts of town without hydrants. He stated he has proposed the purchase of a tank truck that carries 3,000 gallons of water to the CIPC. Each engine holds 1,000 gallons, and the ladder truck holds 250 gallons. Yesterday the department knocked down the fire with approximately 1,000 gallons of water.

Brief discussion followed on deployment of staff, noting concerns for keeping a good number of available staff. When the department operates on a "on call" basis, one never knows how many people will show up. Some days there may be no one. If there were more "call" individuals, he could form companies or teams to man a truck. He stated he is losing on-call firefighters. Some individuals are getting jobs with other departments, another is moving out of town, and another is interviewing. Ms. Kennedy noted that there is a local bylaw that allows residents of contiguous communities to participate in an on-call basis.

Ms. Kennedy asked Chief Lynch to explain how the Town of Holliston handles its department. Chief Lynch explained that out of 86 people on staff, there are 10 people assigned to each of 4 or 5 engines, as well as a couple of ambulance companies. Staff members are required to be on duty for specific times. It was noted that the Holliston Fire Department has a much larger budget, and can pay stipends and health benefits. Ms. Kennedy stated she would like to develop a spreadsheet that will list staffing and budget requirements, compare nearby towns, to see the commonalities and differences, which will help in decision-making. Chief Lynch noted that Medway does not have a structure that supports assignment of personnel with the expectation that they will be there. Not knowing how many people will respond

makes it difficult to staff efficiently or safely, and it is also difficult to tell the extra people they are not needed at the site.

Chief Lynch stated he is a firm believer in physical fitness, and would like to implement a physical fitness program. For the paid personnel, there is a standard that says the department should be conducting annual physicals. For the call personnel, there is no such requirement, and he would like to implement one. By instituting one in Portsmouth, just by having a small gym in the station, injuries and absenteeism were reduced. Line-of-duty injuries were reduced by 80%. Camaraderie among the firefighters would make it enjoyable while accomplishing the fitness objective. There are already a couple pieces of equipment in the station now.

Selectman Crowley suggested the pay scale for the call personnel needs to be examined, perhaps over a five-year window. He would like to build the training into the FY14 budget, expressing concern that an announcement of being untrained might install fear in residents. Discussion followed. Chief Lynch clarified that all the firefighters have had introductory training sessions, but are not trained to the national standard. Selectman Crowley suggested Chief Lynch develop a plan on how he would implement the training program; Ms. Kennedy suggested it could be considered when the Board is preparing the Town Meeting Warrant.

Responding to a question from Selectman Crowley, Chief Lynch stated that training would be on the top of his wish list for \$50,000. Training is a priority, as it reduces liability, and increases safety for the firefighters and the public. The Chief stated that some of the firefighters may have gained enough experience and training over the years that they could pass the test at the academy, and that is acceptable to him. He added it would be nice to have some additional firefighter/EMTs. If more personnel are ALS certified, it is possible to get more mutual aid calls and transports. Mr. Mergandahl noted that mutual aid is reciprocal, but those relationships need to be developed. It was noted that if some people advance to the AL level, other firefighters can be hired from the paramedic list.

Chairman Espinosa suggested that a five-year plan requires understanding the mission. He posed the questions: Do we want to maintain the existing level or increase it? Does that include being a source for aiding other towns, or being the best possible department for Medway? Selectman Crowley noted this should be a service-driven decision, not revenue-driven. He admitted that, in a small town with limited resources, showing the revenue stream might make it easier to sell to the residents.

Chairman Espinosa asked for Chief Lynch's input on what he has experienced since his arrival and what the Town can afford. Chief Lynch stated he has serious issues with fire prevention in town. Inspections are lacking, and business or property owners have been allowed to do things with alarms or sprinkler systems that the law does not provide for, which is a liability to both parties. He noted that he did an inspection of a day care center recently where the alarm system was deactivated. There are enforcement codes that establishments must comply with but because the Fire Department lacks recordkeeping, there is no way to know the status. It is the owners' responsibility to keep their systems up to date, but the Town is accountable to do the inspections. Chief Lynch stated that, thus far, he has not been able to find records of past inspections.

During the budget process last year, Ms. Phillips tried to analyze three years of data on fire alarm calls. There is currently a bylaw that references false calls, but there have to be a certain number before charges begin. Selectman Crowley suggested it is time to start charging. It was noted that there are numerous calls to Lovering Heights every month that turn out to be false alarms. Chief Lynch added

that there are some programming issues with the alarm system, and the facility put heat detectors instead of smoke detectors in the kitchens. Selectman Crowley stated that it is important that the other Board members agree in order to develop a policy about charging for false alarm calls. Chairman Espinosa added that the way the matter is packaged for presentation at Town Meeting is important.

To summarize the spirit of the meeting, Selectman Crowley stated that training is crucial toward enforcement of fire regulations. The fire house alarm panels need to be in proper working order. Chairman Espinosa stated that the cost should be presented as an Emergency Transfer Request to the Finance Committee. Chief Lynch estimated the panel at the headquarters would cost around \$4,500. Regarding the training, he indicated the firefighters are dedicated and work together very well.

Chairman Espinosa stated he was glad Selectman Crowley made this an important issue and also for suggesting this meeting. The Board thanked Mr. Mergandahl for his invaluable assistance and for coming all the way from Cambridge. At this time, Mr. Mergandahl left the meeting.

Selectman Crowley stated that Mr. Mergandahl was extremely helpful in this discussion as well as preparation beforehand. He inquired as to the charge for those services; Ms. Kennedy responded no invoice has been submitted though she has requested it on several occasions. Discussion followed on an appropriate fee.

**At 9:09 PM Selectman Foresto moved to adjourn; Chairman Espinosa seconded. No discussion.
VOTE: 3-0-0.**

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanette Galliardt
Night Board Secretary