

Board of Fire Wards Town of New Castle, NH

Minutes of 8 April 2014 Meeting

Present: Chairman Dennis Dinsmore, Fire Ward Reg Whitehouse, Fire Ward Carl Roediger, Selectperson Lorn Buxton

In Attendance: Selectperson Patty Cohen, Selectperson David McGuckin, Tom Smith, Damon Frampton, Bill Cronin

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dinsmore at 1605 hrs.

A motion was made by Whitehouse to approve the draft minutes from the 11 March 2014 meeting without correction. Seconded by Dinsmore. Motion passed.

Selectperson Buxton

The Budget Committee has voted to deny the budget request from the Fire Department for a new line item funding weekend coverage. At a recent Selectboard meeting, he had proposed the addition of a separate warrant article for the funding. That proposal was voted down by the Selectboard.

Chairman Dinsmore asked Buxton what the impact to the tax rate would be if the \$20,000 was added to the budget. He replied that the effect would be approximately 2 cents to the tax rate. At this point, the only option available for the proposal would be as an amendment to the budget made from the floor at Town meeting.

Old Business

Selectperson Cohen reported that issues with the Town's website were the result of the expiration of the domain name. She was able to determine that the domain name has been "owned" by an individual, not the Town. The individual, a member of the Fire Department, will have to release the name so that the Town can assume the rental and return the site to operation. Once this is done, the Fire Department's site will be rebuilt and added as a separate page to the Town's site.

New Business

Tom Smith requested to address the Board to respond to items he had read in the draft minutes of the March Fire Wards meeting. He requested that the following statement be read into the record for this meeting:

"In response to the Board of Fire Wards minutes of 11 March 2014 Meeting, the Chairman of the Budget Committee states on the record to the Board of Fire Wards, Fire Chief, and every member of the Fire Department, there is no hidden plan or agenda. New Castle is faced with a situation that does not exist in any of the surrounding municipalities – a finite number of taxpayers in New Castle with little chance to increase

the tax basis. Therefore any proposed increase in spending must be and is carefully reviewed.”

Mr. Smith also stated that he never “campaigned” against the weekend coverage proposal. He had asked several member of the Department about the issue in an attempt to learn more about the proposal.

Mr. Smith stated that there are approximately 540 tax paying residences with no chance to expand the tax base so spending must be constantly monitored.

There is a concern that as salary lines or positions increase, they will never be reviewed and done away with if the need decreases. The first full time hire was in 2002 with the addition of the public safety officer. That was followed by a full time Fire Chief in 2004.

Mr. Smith did admit to using the term “outsourcing” during a Budget meeting in the context of, if costs continue to rise, prudent budgeting would require investigating all possible mitigation strategies.

There was an engaged discussion amongst all meeting attendees about the need for weekend coverage, especially in the summer months when the New Castle Common is full of visitors. There was additional discussion centered on recruitment of new volunteers, especially among New Castle residents. Various ideas to get the word out were discussed.

Due to the annual Town Meeting, the next meeting is scheduled for June 10, 2014 @ 4:00pm at the New Castle Fire Station.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 1710 hrs. by Dinsmore and seconded by Whitehouse. The vote was unanimous.

Carl F. Roediger, Secretary
New Castle Board of Fire Wards

Minutes Approved: June 17, 2014; Fire Wards Committee Meeting