



TOWN OF NEWTOWN
BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS

MINUTES FROM THE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING HELD TUESDAY, May 13, 2014
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBERS
NEWTOWN MUNICIPAL CENTER
3 PRIMROSE LANE, NEWTOWN, CT 06470

**These minutes are not finalized until approved
At the next regularly scheduled meeting.*

Chairman Paul Mangiafico called the regular meeting to order at 7 pm.

PRESENT: Brian Budd, James Viadero, Joel Faxon, and Paul Mangiafico

ABSENT: Andrew Sachs

ALSO PRESENT: Chief Michael Kehoe; ADHOC Committee members Jeffrey Capecci and Neil Chaudhary, 3 members of the press, and 7 members of the public.

Chairman Mangiafico stated that the only item they would be discussing that night was the subject of regionalizing dispatch. He said that the meeting that evening was a result of a communication he received from former Legislative Council Chairman Jeff Capecci who was one of the two members of an ADHOC committee formed by First Selectman Pat Llodra. The Chairman indicated that the ADHOC Committee was charged with finding out all they could about the pros and cons of regionalization of the Town's Dispatch Center. Chairman Mangiafico stated they would be discussing the communication specifically with respect to the First Selectman's recommendation to consolidate with Northwest CT Public Safety Communications Center, Inc. in Prospect, CT. The Chairman added that ultimately their purpose was to vote whether to do this or not to do this recommendation.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Doug Fuchs, a resident of Redding, indicated that he was very familiar with the subject as he researched the idea of regionalizing dispatch on a statewide level as President of the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association. After doing so, he said he was adamantly opposed to regionalization because of the cost. Mr. Fuchs said there were no benefits to regionalization and no cost savings.

Mr. Fuchs suggested that one of the biggest problems the Town faced by regionalizing was that the current dispatch center would go "dark" meaning there would be no one working there. He noted that if that occurred they would have to hire people to answer the phones and handle walk-ins. He stressed that the Chief needed to have the hiring and firing capability of the dispatchers as they dealt with warrants, NCIC, and FBI requests. Mr. Fuchs also questioned the ability of a regionalized dispatch to handle the sheer volume of all the calls and noted that the dispatch center also handles routine calls from the community as well as 911 calls. He said he didn't believe the residents would think regionalization was a good idea. In conclusion he suggested the ADHOC Committee and the Board consider couple of questions: What would it do to the Town's dispatchers? What would it cost in the long run to lay people off?

Jason Chicos, a dispatcher in Newtown for 12 years, stated that someone had come in applying for a job with 10 years experience in Trumbull. Mr. Chicos thought it ironic because the man said he lost his job because of the consolidation of their dispatch going to CMED. Mr. Chicos noted that after 12-14 and what they have been through that regionalization was an awful idea as the risk of a delay could lead to an unfortunate incident. He noted that there might be a cost savings but suggested there wouldn't be enough. Mr. Chicos concluded by reminding the Board that dispatch doesn't just take 911 calls they handle everything for the community.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Discussion on Consolidation of Emergency Dispatch – Mr. Capeci informed those in attendance that the First Selectman had established the ADHOC Committee to give her a recommendation, but indicated that ultimately it was her decision. He said they had been up to Northwest a couple of times and had a good idea of how they ran their organization. Addressing Mr. Fuchs, Mr. Capeci noted that a lot of issues he had brought up they were looking into.

Mr. Capeci added that they were also looking into other areas not just Northwest. Chairman Mangiafico indicated that the proposal was to consolidate dispatch in Prospect. Commissioner Faxon stated that he had done some research and asked the question that if prospect was not chosen was there an entity that would step into place that would be better than what they already have.

Mr. Chaudhary said they were also looking at Litchfield County Dispatch which was a firm like Northwest. He said they only have a single PD but do the dispatching for the fire departments and ambulances for many of the small towns.

Mr. Capeci suggested that they didn't know much about the other options.

Chief Kehoe suggested that it would help if they defined the words to look at the configuration. He stated that *consolidation* was the combining of all dispatch services in a community which Newtown already did in town with its Police, Fire and Ambulance. The Chief noted that *regionalization* was the combining of services of different towns into one area. He added that *status quo* was also an option. Chief Kehoe said they need to decide what is the best option and to decide what makes the most sense.

Chairman Mangiafico suggested they constrain their discussion and focus on two questions whether to regionalize or whether to regionalize with Northwest in Prospect. He said that the answer to the first question was perhaps because he thinks that fundamentally the idea of regionalizing to avoid duplication of services is sound. The Chairman said that in regards to the second question it would depend on what the circumstances are and what the other proposals are. Chairman Mangiafico asked fellow Police Commissioners if they should make a recommendation to the ADHOC Committee to regionalize with Northwest in Prospect.

To answer that question, Commissioner Viadero suggested they look at the finances and whether the facilities are better. He stressed that the services in Newtown were very good, but believed they needed to look at what the dollar savings are. He suggested that if it was only for the dollar savings he thinks it's a poor decision to regionalize at this time.

Mr. Capeci said that they had been furnished a work sheet with an estimate but that it doesn't take into account the staffing of the PD after the dispatch goes "dark." He said they want the same or better service for Newtown and noted that the safety of residents outweighs the costs. Chairman Mangiafico stated that in the 4 or 5-page long cost analysis provided by the Finance Director Bob Tait the Town would save \$149,000 a year by regionalizing. The Chairman suggested that this figure was off because the finance director did not have the effect of having a "dark" window when the 9 dispatchers go away. He indicated that the dispatchers do more than answer 911 calls; and he suggested that they would have to keep 4 or 5 dispatch people adding another \$400,000 to the cost of regionalization and causing the \$149,000 gain to disappear.

Chairman Mangiafico stated that when it comes to the number of calls, Newtown is a heavy hitter. He noted that the only PD Northwest provides service for is Middlebury which has 13,000 calls a year where as Newtown would increase that figure by a factor of 4. To handle this increased volume, he believes Northwest would have to hire an additional 4 dispatchers. The Chairman said that this cost analysis tells him there is no significant cost savings and tells him this is not a good idea for Newtown.

Mr. Chaudhary said that the \$149,000 cost savings could be more and that the additional hires for Prospect were included in the assessment.

Chairman Mangiafico noted that there would be an additional 4 or 5 dispatchers needed to remain in the PD if the Town regionalized dispatch and stated that there was no evidence Newtown would save any money.

Mr. Capeci said that they need to better understand the numbers Mr. Tait put together. He said that there is an annual cost the Town will have to pay but there is a one-time to regionalize. Mr. Capeci stressed that they don't want a lesser service should they regionalize and they don't want a dark PD. He said they have asked for more information from Mr. Tait but have not gotten it yet.

Commissioner Budd suggested that they look into potential cost over-runs with set up costs when they have to convert the CAD RMS which is the system the PD currently uses to their system. He stated that Northwest gets a significant grant to operate as a non-profit, but expressed concern that if that number was cut the Town would have to bear cost over-runs of that. The Commissioner added that the cost of failure would be increased when they had to re-employ all the dispatchers again. He suggested they tread lightly when considering the proposal to regionalize.

Chief Kehoe said that they needed to address the costs of moving the CAD RMS system to the system they use. He suggested that it was only fair that if they went to their vendor that they throw that cost into the mix when they go into deliberations. The Chief noted that Middlebury tried but the interface failed miserably. He said that they use Global Systems and that Global only has one other PD in Connecticut.

Commissioner Budd stated that the trend is towards NexGen to convert over to a paperless system.

Mr. Capeci indicated that regardless of what their findings will be the PD will have to upgrade its CAD RMS in the next 4 or 5 years. The Chief noted that it has been a discussion the last 3 years. Mr. Capeci added that this wasn't an additional cost to regionalization.

Commissioner Faxon said he went online and looked at the tax returns of Northwest from 2002 to present. He noted that Northwest claimed loses for every year but the last one in which they posted a gain of \$4,000. The Commissioner stated that they had difficulty meeting expectation. Commissioner Faxon suggests that if the principal concern is public safety and they are going to look at Northwest, they need to look at the fact they were losing money year after year and the fact Northwest is largely dependent on the State. He added the concern is that if Newtown is taken on by Northwest, and Northwest folds, Newtown would have to re-start again.

Chairman Mangiafico suggested that another concern was the fact that out of Northwest's 9 Board of Directors, two of them are residents of Newtown and one of them is Maureen Will who also happens to be the Director of Emergency Communications in Newtown.

Mr. Capeci stated that they would get better financial information.

Chairman Mangiafico stressed that it is important they don't rush into judgment and he asked Mr. Capeci to have the Director of Finance get more up to date financial information.

Chairman Mangiafico stated that the 9 dispatchers in Newtown are unionized. He said it is his personal feeling that management has an absolute responsibility to their employees and do things in a way that's better for them. However, the Chairman added that this does not mean regionalization should not be discussed as it's the tax payers that are footing the bill for all of it.

He stated that eliminating jobs of employees when there is no compelling reason to do so is not good business. Chairman Mangiafico suggested that with regards to regionalization, they have an obligation to look at all of the options available to them.

Commissioner Faxon reminded everyone that Newtown's communications center was voted Dispatch Center of the Year in the Nation last year by a national group that looks at all the agencies throughout the Country. He said he is concerned about move from a center of excellence to a center with an uncertain future.

Chief Kehoe suggested that when the Mr. Tait develops a sheet to have people with him to help him understand better what he is looking at.

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Faxon moved to adjourn at 812 pm. Commissioner Budd seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Ted Swigart, Clerk