

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**FEBRUARY 13, 2013**  
**WORK SESSION**

Members Present: Robert McLintock, Gary Sagar, David Parker, Nelson Almeida

Absent: Francis Cavaco

Town Administrator: Pamela T. Nolan

Vice Chairman Robert McLintock called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence.

Mr. Parker extended condolences on behalf of the Board of Selectmen and Town of Seekonk to Det. Hendrick on the sudden death of his father. He commended the Honor Guard (a volunteer organization) for their attendance at the funeral.

In accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 20, Vice Chairman McLintock stated that anybody taping must notify the Chair.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Discussion with Police, Fire Department, and DPW Superintendent with Regard to Storm Recovery**

Police Chief Ronald Charron reported that the Police Department was in constant contact with the DPW. As far as the Police Department is concerned, this was a different storm from Irene and Sandy – no large amount of trees and wires down. He increased the manning level to six patrolmen and two supervisors from 4 p.m. Friday to 4 pm. Sunday. Officers doubled up in four wheel drives. The Police Department used SUVs from DPW and Fire Department to get around. Six transmission lines went down so three quarters of the Town was out of power. Route 6 was in complete darkness. The north end was OK.

Chief Charron stated that Capt. Healy did a great job. He was here around the clock. National Grid had a liaison in Town. The Chief was pleased to see that everybody was able to come to work and others went home Saturday morning. The Police Department incurred some overtime.

He noted that having a combined facility (Public Safety Complex), which has taken criticism in the past, is important at a time like this.

No officers were injured and no vehicles damaged. Youngs Caterers provided food.

Mr. Sagar asked if there should be an emergency call center staffed by volunteers.

Chief Charron said that dispatchers were handling calls. The Public Safety Complex is set up for an emergency operations center. He said that Chief Jack would be better prepared to speak on that.

He said that Comcast power was down.

Mr. Parker said the use of 911 was exceptional. It was a huge improvement from the last storm.

Mr. Almeida felt everything went well considering the severity of the storm.

Chief Charron mentioned that Capt. Healy, Capt. Mace, and Mr. Lamoureux put the plan together.

Mrs. Nolan said she saw it first hand. She had met with Mr. Lamoureux, Mrs. McNeil, and Mrs. Huck prior to the storm to talk about preparedness. Mrs. Huck was concerned about seniors – they get upset when they lose communication.

Capt. Healy filled in for Chief Jack, who was away. The Emergency Management Team will come in on February 20<sup>th</sup> to talk specifically about the shelter.

DPW Superintendent Robert Lamoureux commended the Police Department. The only complaints he heard was that people were not able to get through to the Police Department or DPW. He suggested that might be looked at.

Chief Charron said that the two dispatchers were getting a lot of emergency calls, especially rescue. It was hectic.

Mr. Lamoureux said that his phones rang all day long on Sunday. He felt that National Grid was far superior to when they had the floods.

Chief Charron felt that National Grid is getting better.

Mr. Lamoureux added that overall they did a great job.

Mr. Sagar asked the Chief to look into the jacks to see they can hook up more calls at Public Safety.

Chief Jack said that he was very proud of fire personnel. They did a great job as well as the other departments. It was very busy.

Vice Chairman McLintock commended Capt. Healy and all the workers.

Capt. Healy said they had a conference call on Wednesday afternoon with the National Weather Service and they started talking about the storm at the department head meeting on Thursday, February 7. The Emergency Management Team met at 3 p.m. on Thursday. Selectmen Sagar and Almeida were in attendance. At that time, Capt. Mace read a prepared statement.

Capt. Healy met with the Town Administrator on Friday morning and later with police and DPW personnel to discuss an operational plan during the storm. Public safety came first. DPW worked with the Fire Department to make sure roads were plowed for rescue calls. That happened time and time again.

The Fire Department loaned a SUV to the Police Department for access.

Columbia Gas had an operational service team located at the Public Safety Complex. That team assisted in snow removal at the complex and Town Hall.

National Grid had a representative on site.

The Fire Department was extremely busy on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. They had additional staffing. The north end fire station was open continually. They provided and accepted mutual aid.

On Saturday, it was determined to set up a warming shelter at the middle school. DPW (two payloaders and two dump trucks) cleaned the area to open the school.

Capt. Healy said that overall it went well. They relied on DPW for assistance to get them to emergencies.

National Grid brought in two hundred vehicles. Route 6 had power by Saturday.

The shelter worked well. They had a rescue call at Seekonk Common on Saturday night. A patient was transported from there. At that time, they conducted a door to door search. He was concerned because those residents had no power. Seven people were transported to the shelter.

Capt. Healy said that Seekonk Common does not have a generator.

He thanked Mrs. Nolan, Fire Chief Jack, and the Board members he saw or spoke to.

He commended DPW for their efforts and the Police Department, especially Chief Charron and Capt. Mace.

Mrs. Nolan commended Capt. Healy on his performance. He performed admirably; all people did.

Capt. Healy said it is difficult to do everything asked of them with the equipment and people they had.

Mr. Sagar said it was reassuring the see staffing at Banna Fire Station and it reinforces the importance of that building being rebuilt.

Mr. Parker extended kudos to police, fire and DPW. This town was cleared within 30 hours. The amount of communications was doubled. He said he is super proud of all three of those departments and the School Department. Mr. Roy loaned equipment to the Public Works Department.

Mrs. Nolan recognized the Dispatch Department – the stress and pressure is incredible.

Mr. Almeida and Vice Chairman McLintock commended Capt. Healy on a tremendous job.

Vice Chairman McLintock said the concerns about the elderly housing have got to be addressed.

Mr. Parker said there was criticism about the warming center. It would require funding to provide a shelter with food, cots, etc. In this case, the Town provided a warming shelter.

Capt. Mace said it was a warming shelter. The temperature inside the school was 68 degrees. The Reverse 911 announcement told residents to bring blankets, food, etc.

Mr. Almeida said he personally brought necessities to the shelter. A local vendor provided pizza in the evening. A police officer provided coffee the following morning.

Capt. Healy said 24 people used the shelter. It closed at noon on Sunday. The residents of Seekonk Common were brought back home.

Vice Chairman McLintock thanked those who donated food.

Capt. Healy thanked dispatch workers.

Capt. Mace said that he could not add to what had been said. The team will meet next week and come back to the Board with recommendations.

He noted that the Public Safety complex ran on generator.

Capt. Mace said he talked to Capt. Healy about the Reverse 911 system. The success rate was 80% on the first call and 79% on the Sunday.

He felt the information should be sent out through the Rhode Island Broadcast System. The meetings prior to the storm were very helpful. It was a cooperative effort.

Mr. Parker said that residents appreciated the Reverse 911 announcements.

Mrs. Nolan credited the School Department, Interim Superintendent Arlene Bosco, Chairman Mitch Vieira, and Mr. Jim Roy.

Mr. Lamoureux thanked Mr. Roy for his assistance. He also thanked DPW employees who were away from their families to do the best job they could.

They started to prepare the equipment on Wednesday, and he attended the meetings with other departments. Snow plowing continued until 9:30 p.m. on Sunday.

Mr. Sagar said he got complaints that nobody was there when they called.

Mr. Lamoureux said the secretary was there almost for the duration of the storm. She missed calls because some people kept her on the phone. The answering service maxed out at 99 calls.

Mr. Sagar suggested a call center.

Mr. Lamoureux said the coordination of departments was good. He felt a call center could work in the future.

He explained that he sent an e-mail to Mrs. Nolan that he did not have enough equipment for a storm of this magnitude. He had 13 vendors; he would like to have 24 or 25 for a storm of this size. There were people who worked 40 hours. Some of the equipment broke down.

When DPW assisted with emergency calls, that took away from snow plowing.

Mr. Parker asked why only 13 vendors.

Mr. Lamoureux said it has to do with the requirements. The Town requires \$1M insurance. He lost ten vendors from last year.

Mr. Sagar felt that the Town's restrictions are not over the top.

Mrs. Nolan said the Town is at the amount recommended by its insurance company.

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Mr. Sagar said some of the vendors did not get called.

Mr. Lamoureux said every vendor on the list was called.

He felt they need to review the entire process. Some vendors were not called because vehicles are registered in one name and the insurance in another person's name. He said there is nothing wrong with that. The Town is named as additional insurer on the application.

In response to Vice Chairman McLintock's question, Mr. Lamoureux said he had 13 DPW vehicles on the road – six large dump trucks (18 ton vehicles), 1½ ton dump trucks and two F 350s.

Vice Chairman McLintock said there is always money available for public safety issues. The Town has a reserve fund strictly for snowstorms.

Mr. Lamoureux said he had called as many vendors as he could starting at 4 p.m. on Thursday prior to the storm.

Mr. Almeida felt he should have gotten authorization much sooner – 12 hours before a storm of this magnitude is not sufficient.

Vice Chairman McLintock said these are issues that do not need to be aired in public.

He had a list for Mr. Lamoureux to look at.

Mr. Sagar said the Town did better than other communities.

Mrs. Nolan said if the Town needs big trucks that should be in the budget. She suggested the Board seriously discuss this.

Mr. Sagar suggested looking into wind plows.

Mr. Almeida thanked them all for their efforts. He felt DPW did an excellent job considering the size of the storm.

Mr. Sagar said they should evaluate the rates paid to vendors.

Mr. Lamoureux said the rates are similar to surrounding communities.

Vice Chairman McLintock said they will get together and discuss what should be done.

He thanked the employees who worked all those hours. It is well appreciation.

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Mr. Al Silva of 79 Pershing Avenue listened to a scanner throughout the storm. He said the fire department was very busy. He commended all three departments.

Mr. David Saad of 129 West River Street urged the Board to reconstitute the call firefighters. They could have been used during the storm.

Town Engineer David Cabral thanked Seekonk residents. He said there are two different operations going on. First all main and secondary roads are kept open so that fire and police can get into those streets. There were complaints from people that they did not see a plow until Tuesday. The vendors keep residential streets open. There are ten different plow routes. It would be better to have at least two vendors in a plow route.

They had messages on the phone that DPW was out there and that trash was not delayed. He said residents need to be patient.

Driving around the Town, people told him how much they appreciated what was done. Every road is down to the pavement. He thanked residents for their patience.

Mr. Sagar stated that the No. Attleboro website has information on the responsibilities of the homeowner during a snowstorm.

Mr. Cabral advised they have similar information.

### **Discussion on FY 2014 Budgets**

Finance Director Bruce Alexander was in attendance.

### **Veterans**

Veterans Agent Seth Bai said the format was zero-based budgeting. He came up with the numbers before them.

He allowed for a 3% increase in case load each year. He used 16 clients (8 single and 8 with spouses).

Mr. Alexander said that for the past two years, Mr. Bai has had a 30% increase in benefits – all categories. He thought 16 was a little excessive and backed off to 4 single and 4 with spouses in each category.

The salary line is contractual (Steelworkers union) and other expenses are constant.

Mr. Bai had requested \$84,000 for ordinary benefits for veterans. Mr. Alexander backed off to \$65,000. There is \$53,000 for fuel and \$83,000 for medical.

Mr. Alexander noted that Mrs. DeFontes is confident the figures are adequate.

Mr. Bai's request for clerical support was denied.

Mr. Almeida felt he should have a clerical worker.

Mrs. Nolan said she is not opposed to clerical help but there is no room for another person in Town Hall; maybe when the senior center is completed and the Veterans Agent is located there.

Mr. Sagar would like to keep the position funded.

Mr. Bai said it could be a 9 to 10 hours per week position.

Mr. Alexander said sometimes there is shrinkage in clientele.

Mr. Almeida suggested using a projector so that people at home can see the budgets.

Mr. Bai nominated Capt. Healy as Employee of the Month.

### **Human Services**

Director Bernadette Huck said her budget is level-funded at \$192,712.40.

Board members agreed that they might have to go to the Fall Town Meeting for additional funding for the new senior center.

### **Police Department**

Police Chief Ronald Charron was in attendance. Total budget is \$3,251,756.

Chief Charron said the salary increase is negotiated. They requested an additional police officer position so that the school resource officer does not have to be taken out of the schools. That position would be used as a traffic control officer in the summer.

He advised that newly appointed Chief Mace is asking for a captain, three lieutenants and 5 sergeants. It is the same amount of rank. He can speak to that if the Board wants.

Mrs. Nolan advised the new patrolman position was removed from the budget. She noted that many department heads have asked for additional personnel, which she removed.

Mr. Almeida inquired about the DARE officers.

Chief Charron said that State funding was eventually eliminated. There is a school resource officer. The DARE program is on hold.



The role of the school resource officer and DARE program is differently.

Funding for DARE was shifted to the school resource officer.

Chief Charron said that he enjoyed doing that.

Mr. Sagar asked about cost.

Chief Charron said it is a 17-week program. The cost is mainly the officer's salary. It would have to be coordinated with the School Department

Mr. Sagar said he asked the Town Administrator for an inventory of the 128 town-owned vehicles.

Chief Charron said that two officers are assigned to each cruiser. That allows for a three-year life cycle of that car. They are now transferring some of those cars to the role of the traffic cop. The contractors are paying cruiser user fee to use them at the site. All cruisers are accounted for.

Chief Charron explained that the Police Department has to purchase three vehicles (3 year lease program). They researched the SUV. Two will be marked cars and one administrative.

The Chief's car will be transferred to detectives. Newly-appointed Chief Mace will get a new vehicle.

He noted that Tasca Ford is in Town and able to do service and repairs.

The decision to purchase the Ford utility vehicle is based on safety. It is a V6 and has the highest rated rear impact. The cost is about \$29,000 each.

Capt. Mace said it is about \$3,000 more than the Crown Victoria's.

A motion was made by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Almeida, and it was unanimously

**VOTED:** To adjourn at 7:37 p.m.

The vote: Mr. Parker – Aye; Mr. Almeida – Aye; Mr. Sagar – Aye; Vice-Chairman McLintock – Aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary S. Sagar, Clerk

Patricia Gamer, Secretary