

MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 19, 2009 SELECTMEN'S PROJECT MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman David Canada, Selectmen Bruno Federico and Tim Copeland, and Town Administrator Paul Deschaine.

The meeting was opened at 5:05PM.

Mr. Canada announced the intent of this month's Project Meeting was to critique the Town's response to the December ice storm. He thanked members of the Emergency Operations Center staff for being present, which included Mike Daley, David Emanuel, and Alison Pike. David Emanuel had created an outline for the EOC staff meeting, which was done on February 03, 2009. Everyone present used that as an outline to discuss various issues regarding the storm. Please refer to the attached document for specifics on each item.

Emergency generating systems were discussed and the need for such systems to protect Town property. More specifically, the Stratham Memorial School apparently does not have any generator capabilities and the Stratham Municipal Center generator only maintains part of the building.

The issue of sheltering residents was discussed. Concerns were raised as to what were the minimum standards necessary to have a functioning shelter. Items noted include having a kitchen, sleeping facilities, and possibly showers were thought to be the minimum requirements. Everyone present felt that further investigation on these minimum requirements was needed. The lack of showering facilities seemed to be the largest obstacle to overcome. The discussion then turned to the availability of resources like cots, showers, and personnel to man the facility.

Various sites that could be used for shelters were discussed and identified. Stratham Memorial School, the Cooperative Middle School, or, as a regional facility, the Exeter High School were identified. Stratham Memorial School does not have showers or a generator. The Cooperative Middle School did have showers but had limited generation capabilities. Exeter High School was used as a regional shelter during the ice storm. Mr. Canada supported a regional shelter system but had reservations based on being asked during the ice storm to shelter overflow people from the regional shelter. Although that circumstance never happened, he questioned whether we should be prepared to do so. The consensus ran that the regional approach was the best approach. Mr. Copeland will approach the School Administrator of Unit 16 about further possibilities.

The discussion continued on the need for a utility vehicle in the Fire Department to replace personal vehicles that were used. Mr. Copeland suggested picking up a surplus vehicle from a federal surplus program. Mr. Canada also suggested reusing an old police cruiser as long as replacing it did not become a Capital Improvements Program item. Mr. Canada also suggested that there are two Town administrative vehicles that could have been put into service. The versatility of such vehicles was discussed. It was observed in an emergency, one truck could not service all the needs. Mr. Emanuel suggested having a policy on how to reimburse individuals for the use of their personal vehicles both in terms of normal use during an incident and damage

and/or liability issues in using their personal vehicles during an incident. Mr. Daley will attempt to draft a policy addressing those issues.

The discussion then turned to the special needs list. There was a known need to update the list of individuals who have special needs to be responded to during an emergency event. That list is currently maintained by the State of New Hampshire. Mr. Canada stated that the dog notice mailing will be accompanied by a notice from the Selectmen requesting people to contact the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Office if they have special needs. Mr. Canada said that the State special needs cards that were in the Seabrook Station calendars that are mailed out annually was the only way to track that information currently. Mr. Canada said that he felt there was a need for a local repository of that information. He will make copies of the card for the calendar, which can be sent to people who call the Town. When those cards are returned, we can copy the information to the State. He will also insure that these response cards are available during Election Day at the Library and at the Town Offices.

Difficulties in communication during the storm were discussed. The lack of power presented a challenge for most means of communication. More direct contact with individuals needed to be done in these types of circumstances by sending someone directly to their residence. While discussing communication issues, communication with the public utilities was discussed. It was stated that Unitil had multiple people contacting them asking the same questions. That led to more confusion and frustration on the part of the utility. It was stated that there needed to be a central point of contact between the Town and the public utilities. Mr. Emanuel theorized that having Mr. Daley as a contact person made sense, but we did not have him post his findings on the white boards during the ice storm. Consequently, there was a knowledge vacuum. Mr. Daley also felt that the utility contact needs to be in the EOC because you would make contact from his office in the Police Department and would not be able to immediately post the results of that conversation until the next time he was in the EOC. In the meantime, someone in the EOC would get impatient and try to make the contact with the utility. The need to improve communication with the community and internally with the other departments was discussed. It was noted a consistent message was needed to be given to the public. A better effort to standardize the communication should be made.

Mr. Emanuel noted that the stock of cones, barricades, and batteries needed to be consolidated and replenished. He suggested that all the cones and barricades be located at the Fire House in one central place. Mr. Daley concurred and suggested that a sign in and sign out sheet be present in a storage closet to manage the equipment.

Mr. Emanuel stated that he was still working with the State Bureau of Emergency Management on equipping the EOC. It is now necessary to complete the NIMSCAST system to complete the request. Meanwhile, the white boards will be installed and hung this week or next by Dan Crow.

The discussion turned to the availability of telephone lines in the EOC and their dedication to that function. There needs to be an evaluation of how many telephone lines need to be in the EOC and balance that with the telephone service provided to the Fire Department.

The use of the National Guard to go door to door was discussed. It was mentioned that it was a resource that should be turned to earlier in an incident. Mr. Federico asked if there should be a neighborhood coordinator to facilitate the door-to-door effort. Mr. Emanuel mentioned that the Town should investigate compensating volunteers for their time during a long-term event. If a policy was in place for payment, it may be reimbursable by FEMA. Mr. Canada had a reservation about compensating people who were just on standby. Mr. Deschaine said that he was unsure if standby time was eligible for FEMA reimbursement. Mr. Canada also felt reimbursement by FEMA was not necessarily a guarantee. Mr. Deschaine made the point that FEMA was not reimbursing for standby time; therefore, a policy should be in place to assure that the most appropriate response be made with the greatest likelihood of reimbursement. The Board of Selectmen felt it was something appropriate to follow up on.

There was a recommendation that someone be assigned to monitor the fuel levels at all Town facilities. There was also a recommendation to have a mechanic on hand during these emergency events so Town equipment can be serviced during long-term events.

Mr. Emanuel finished his review by emphasizing that self-reliance is the best emergency preparedness. He supported this by giving the FEMA website address for personal emergency planning in his Town Report this year.

Mr. Canada asked Ms. Pike if the Ladies Auxiliary had any logistical issues. Ms. Pike stated they were well prepared but manpower was a problem and that was because of communication issues also. The food storage at the Fire Department was enough to support about two days of personnel. Ms. Pike requested that any outside groups that use the building be suspended during an incident since the Auxiliary needs the kitchen and the immediate area for food preparation. The Board thanked the Auxiliary for all their efforts and it was noted that it was quite impressive.

Mr. Daley mentioned that a training program for his department was being implemented to help police officers to better identify poles that are damaged. This will help the utility identify the needs when a report of trouble is made.

Mr. Canada mentioned there was a need to publicize where public notices would be posted. The Fire House, the Municipal Center, and the Library were mentioned as potential locations for such postings.

The Board of Selectmen thanked everyone for his or her input.

Mr. Emanuel then addressed the Board as Town Moderator. He wanted to know if there were any special concerns for the upcoming Town Election and/or Town Meeting. Mr. Federico expressed his concern with time management issues. The Warrant is very long and the meeting could be very long also. Mr. Deschaine stated that he has instructed all presenters to limit themselves to ten to fifteen minutes. Mr. Canada said people need to be prepared to stick it out if necessary. Mr. Emanuel asked if there were alternatives if the meeting had to be recessed to another date and time. The Board agreed to determine the room availability in advance of the meeting.

Mr. Daley asked for a non-public session with the Board next Monday at 7:00PM to discuss a personnel matter. It would be concerning hiring a replacement officer to fill the final vacancy. The Board agreed to meet with Mr. Daley at that time.

Mr. Deschaine presented the very final drafts of the minutes of the Board of Selectmen's meetings of December 8, 2008, January 5, 2009, January 12, 2009, and January 26, 2009. Mr. Canada moved to approve those minutes as presented. Mr. Federico seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Deschaine presented a request to use the Municipal Center by a patrol unit of the Troop 185 Boy Scout Unit. Mr. Copeland moved to allow the use of the Municipal Center on February 20th by the patrol unit and to waive the fee. Mr. Canada seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Deschaine presented a request by the Cooperative Middle School Chamber Chorus and the Stratham Youth Baseball Program for raffle permits. Mr. Federico moved to approve both requests. Mr. Copeland seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The Board of Selectmen signed the 2009 Town Warrant and the accompanying Department of Revenue Administration form MS-6 to be posted with the Warrant.

Mr. Canada reported that he found out that Elise Jordan's request to use the Park was for the Chapman Family Reunion, which is a reunion that has been held at the Park for a number of years. The Board approved the use of the Park for the Chapman Family Reunion.

At 7:19PM, Mr. Canada moved to adjourn. Mr. Federico seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Reviewed By,

Norma Corrow
Recording Secretary

Paul Deschaine
Town Administrator