

MINUTES OF THE MAY 06, 2009 SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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

The meeting opened at 4:10 PM.

Members of the Stratham Police Department were present to discuss the future of the Department in light of Michael Daley's retirement. Lieutenant Richard Gendron was asked to leave the meeting room as the highest-ranking officer to allow the lower ranked members of the Department to have a frank discussion with the Board.

Mr. Copeland asked all present if the Standard Operating Procedures, i.e. SOPs, were a critical need for the Department at this time. All present expressed a desire to have them and confusion about which policies the Department had, which ones they did not, and whether they had been approved or were they just guidelines. Mr. Canada asked if there were any further comments that were to be made that still required Mr. Gendron to be out of the room. No one stated there were any, so Mr. Canada left to find Mr. Gendron to invite him again to participate. Upon Mr. Gendron's return, the discussion continued on the SOPs. Mr. Canada suggested that the current drafts be distributed for comment before the Board acts upon them.

Mr. Copeland then asked what kind of Chief the members of the Department were looking for. Mike Gobbi said that he did not want a tyrant or to be micro-managed. George Malgeri and others asked if the search for a new Chief was going to be a nationwide search or one that was only going to be done regionally or even locally. They also asked how the search is going to be conducted. Mr. Copeland and Mr. Deschaine emphasized that nothing has yet been decided and that part of making that decision was to have discussions like these.

General points were made in that a future Chief needs to be progressive, willing to work with the Department members, be a broad thinker, and open to new ideas. It was also expressed a need to have a New Hampshire base of knowledge, that they be perspective and have the experience and knowledge of New Hampshire and New England and, most importantly, Stratham-type culture as this is a unique community.

Other thoughts included that the Chief needs to be a good manager, allow for the Department members to grow and develop, acknowledge that many have family commitments, that there be recognition for work done, but also sensitivity to life balances and allowing for scheduling flexibility. These points all represented being responsive to the employees of the Department. An example of such was shift bidding.

The topic of tasers was then brought up. Mike Gobbi asked if the purchase of tasers was going to move forward. Mr. Gendron said that Chuck Law has been to taser training, so they are prepared to implement it. Mr. Deschaine mentioned that the use of tasers has not been approved by the Board as of yet. Mr. Copeland said he did not recall approving their use, but supported their use. Mr. Deschaine said that a review of the SOPs and a presentation to the Board would

be necessary for approval. The discussion then continued as to whether they should wait for a new Chief before implementing the tasers. No final recommendation was arrived at.

David Pierce asked if the DARE money could be used for Department needs. Mr. Deschaine said that Mr. Gendron is investigating into the parameters on use of that money since there is no longer a DARE program in the Town of Stratham.

Mr. Gobbi asked if the rifles and the armory could be deployed into the cars. It was observed that not all people were trained and that has been a function of not having enough money for training. It was also stated that there needed to be a special type of mount for the rifles in the cars.

There was further discussion on the SOPs and the necessary training to deploy the rifles. The Board supported the deployment of the rifles as soon as practical, which would include training, the adoption of SOPs and the purchase and installation of the mounts.

The discussion moved back again to the SOPs in general, the logistics of approving the SOPs, the currency of the existing SOPs, whether they should wait for the new Chief to be hired before adopting the SOPs, and how long would it take to approve, implement and train members of the Department in the newly-adopted SOPs and whether that amount of time would coincide with the timeframe of hiring a new Chief. Bill Hart said that he would make the observation that SOPs are important, but if people are not trained in them, that is a problem. He suggested perhaps that the new Chief could be instructed to implement the current SOPs as a backbone for the more day-to-day operations, while making a wholesale revision to the SOPs a longer-term goal. Adoption of SOPs that meet the CALEA standards might come later depending upon the recommendation of the new Chief.

Various police practices were then discussed like community policing, bike patrols, Officer Friendly and other programs. Mr. Pierce asked if grants could still be pursued. The Board did not object to applying for grants but cautioned that not all grants are appropriate for the Town of Stratham.

After some additional general comments regarding the Department and a new Chief, the Board expressed their appreciation for all members' efforts and thanked them for attending this meeting. As members of the Department were leaving, Mr. Gendron reported on the status of the Department in general. He stated everything appears to be working well. Some processes are being fixed and corrective actions are being made. The Board thanked Mr. Gendron for his report.

Mr. Canada brought forward a request by Vickie Avery to use the new freestanding Fire Department sign to advertise the summer concert series. The Board did not object to allow the first two lines of the sign to be used leaving the third and fourth lines for the Fire Department to use for the fire rating for that day. The Board is still getting input from the Fire Department for the use of the reader board on the sign. Until then, the Board set the following policy for use of the board. Access to the reader board is limited solely to Town related activities. Anne Buchanan will keep track of requests to use the sign on a first-come, first-served basis.

Department heads making requests to use this sign are responsible for insuring that the message is put up and taken down after their sign use.

No further discussions occurred regarding filling the Police Chief's position.

Mr. Federico reported that he is prepared to host next Tuesday's public coffee in recognition of Public Service Recognition Week. The event will occur at 9:30 AM in the Municipal Center. He will plan on approximately fifty people.

Mr. Deschaine presented, for the Board's review, an approval of extension of the cable TV franchise agreement with Comcast. The agreement expires this Saturday, May 9, 2009, and negotiations are still continuing. The Board voted to approve the extension by executing the document. The extension was for six months approximately.

At 6:09 PM, Mr. Federico moved to adjourn. Mr. Canada seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Reviewed By,

Norma Corrow
Recording Secretary

Paul Deschaine
Town Administrator