

MINUTES OF THE MAY 21, 2009 BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S PROJECT MEETING

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

The meeting opened at 5:00 PM.

Officer Chuck Law gave a presentation on the use of tasers in law enforcement. After the presentation, Officer Law stated the Town had the opportunity to purchase up to ten taser units for the total cost of approximately \$11,000. It was proposed to use monies from the drug forfeiture funds given to the Town to fund the acquisition. He provided a Power Point presentation on the use of tasers concerning a specific model being considered. Officer Law advocated for the purchase and the use of tasers in terms of officer safety and better tools in subduing individuals during an arrest. He mentioned that all the surrounding communities to Stratham currently have tasers.

John Sapienza, from the audience, asked if an officer is in contact with a suspect while being shocked with the taser, is there any risk of injury especially if the officer or the subject are sweaty or drenched with water. Officer Law did not know specifically, but he has been in contact with someone who has been tased, as part of his training, and did not feel it.

Murray Segal asked nationwide how many people have died as a result of being tased. Officer Law did not know of any. Martin Wool expressed a concern that officers may have a propensity to use a taser prematurely just because they have them. Mr. Deschaine noted that there would be a policy and procedure in place to prevent overuse. Mike Moreau asked if a taser would be carried by an officer or placed in the cruisers. Officer Law stated they are typically carried on an officer's belt and they will find room for it if purchased. Mr. Segal asked why there has been opposition in other places to their use. Lieutenant Dick Gendron felt like any new police tool, it has been approached cautiously and others may suspect the police motives in asking for the tools.

Travis Thompson said that if tasers seemed to induce compliance during an arrest, then that is a good thing and it is doing what it is expected to do. Mark Sykas felt that under proper training, supervision, and procedures, and before the use of lethal force, it would be a better alternative in many circumstances. Mr. Wool asked why there was a need for ten or eleven tasers particularly with only ten officers. Mr. Copeland noted that the tasers are an electronic device, which can fail. Substitutes are needed to replace ones that are out for repair. Lieutenant Gendron also explained that they intend to assign them to all of the seven duty officers and they, as a result, will take better care of their personal unit. Officer Law also explained the warranty terms for the units and the extended warranty, which is available for up to five years.

Mr. Canada then moved the discussion of the meeting to the main topic in the agenda, which was to discuss the vision for hiring the next Police Chief. Mr. Moreau asked if a review of the current department members had been done to see if there was a qualified candidate. Mr. Canada explained that once the Board established the basic criteria of the position, existing department members were welcome to apply.

Mr. Copeland explained there have been some discussions on basic criteria for the position in terms of education, experience, exposure to administration and budgeting. Mr. Moreau advocated promoting from within to give the current employees a possible career path to those who know the community best. Mr. Thompson felt as a School Board member that greater interaction with the department's officers at Stratham Memorial School and the Cooperative Middle School would be an advantage and the new Chief should support that. This added interaction provided the opportunity for positive reinforcement for children with the officers.

Mr. Canada asked Lieutenant Gendron to explain his prior involvements at the school, being previously the school liaison. Lieutenant Gendron explained that if you think of it in terms of policing a community, a standard of one officer for every five-hundred people or even if you are using one officer for every one-thousand people, you should have at least one officer in the schools due to the population in each school with over six-hundred students and teachers at Stratham Memorial and almost sixteen-hundred people at the Cooperative Middle School. There is a perceived need in these communities; he supported having a school resource officer at both schools; and a new Chief needs to pursue these types of programs. Officer Law noted that there is no other place in New Hampshire with these types of populations that did not have some sort of security or police presence on site. Thinking of it in those terms, Mr. Copeland agreed but also felt that the cost of resource officers need to be evenly shared amongst all the Cooperative School towns in terms of the Cooperative Middle School. He understood that with all the competing costs of education that a resource officer was not one of the Cooperative's top priorities.

Gary Giarusso said he felt, as a parent, the DARE Program or similar drug prevention programs was needed and felt that the teachers supported it also. Lieutenant Gendron explained how the DARE Program worked and how it was phased out at the request of a previous school board at Stratham Memorial School. Mr. Canada summarized that those present were supportive of having a Police Chief who was committed to greater involvement in the schools.

Mr. Sykas suggested a broader view with greater community involvement. He cited the open house at the new Police Station was a great opportunity to interact with the community. Mr. Sapienza expressed the need to have a Police Chief who has great communication skills, not only with the officers, but with the community, the Board of Selectmen, and also the ability to listen to these same constituencies. Mr. Segal felt leadership was essential in terms of the department, the Town, and the community as a whole. Mr. Wool explained that community involvement included tours of Town facilities, talks at the schools, hosting citizen's academies and other community involvement. He also thought the Police Chief should not be doing private details. Janice Segal said leadership is the ability to bring out the best in people to include members of their department, members of the community and anyone else that the Police Chief met. Mr. Thompson explained the difference between Stratham Memorial School and the Cooperative Middle School and the challenges budgeting for each. He stated at Stratham Memorial School more interaction by the department with programs like Stranger Danger, Bike Safety Programs or even DARE would be welcomed by the current school board.

Mr. Canada asked if the Police Department members present had any additional input. Lieutenant Gendron said he agreed with everything that had been stated tonight. He also said the other officers in the department were looking for a Chief that supports not only themselves, but also their families. Mr. Canada said that he had been emailed with the concern that cautioned against hiring a Chief who was an empire builder. That is not needed. Lieutenant Gendron agreed and felt that the Stratham community would not allow that to happen.

Mr. Sapienza asked if a new Chief would look for an employment contract. Mr. Canada said that would be something that would be considered. It might be an expectation by a new Chief hired. Mr. Copeland asked Mr. Sapienza why he made the inquiry. Mr. Sapienza felt a contract would allow the Board to better measure the Chief's performance as part of that contract. Mr. Canada noted that a contract could not supersede State law as it relates to the employment of a Police Chief. Mr. Deschaine said that that was definitely true but a contract could possibly better define the criteria mentioned in the law. Mr. Sapienza asked if the standard operating procedures, i.e. SOPs, were going to be adopted. Mr. Copeland explained that the Board is acting on this currently to give the department the basics in anticipation of a new Chief who will improve upon them.

Joyce Charbonneau asked if the department was currently understaffed. Sergeant David Pierce explained that, as a detective, he is straight out. Mr. Federico noted that the last vacancy in the department was just filled so the only remaining vacancy was the Chief's position.

Mr. Segal asked how long the selection process would take. Mr. Federico said it could be six to nine months. Mr. Deschaine said it would take as much time as it takes to make the right decision. Mr. Wool asked what the Board thought the selection process would be. Mr. Canada said that they are still formulating the process, which started with a meeting with members of the department, including the present meeting and possibly future meetings with other law enforcement agencies. Once the selection criteria have been developed, the Board is considering hiring a professional agency that will assist them in the advertising, coordinating and eventually vetting of the candidates. Then a citizen's board would be convened to review those candidates. Mr. Canada explained these were just generalities, which are still being clarified by the Board.

There being no further comments from the public, Mr. Canada thanked everyone for attending.

Mr. Federico asked if the Veteran's Memorial Garden at Stratham Hill Park had been cleaned up for Memorial Day. Tara Barker said that it had. Mr. Federico wanted to know if the perennial bulbs had been removed from the garden. Ms. Barker did not believe so but would check with the gardening group and Kim Woods.

Ms. Barker then presented alternative quotes from Mainly Grass for fertilizing and weed and grub control at Stratham Hill Park. Mainly Grass provided the following as their quote. For fertilizing, it was \$1,485. For fertilizing and broad leaf control, it was \$1,795. For grub control, it was \$4,025. The total of the three was \$5,820. Ms. Barker re-reviewed the quote that she had provided at Monday's meeting from Bio-Spray. The total of their quote was \$5,235. Mr. Federico felt grub control was important in order to maintain the esthetics at the Park. If the grubs take hold, it will take a very long time to recover from that damage. Ms. Barker stated that

the budget for field maintenance at the Park was \$2,800 plus \$565 added during the budget deliberations. The \$2,800 was based on a quote provided by Pete's Landscaping for fertilizing and grub control. The Board reviewed, compared, and contrasted both proposals. Mr. Copeland stated he could support the pest management method of surveying for grubs. Mr. Federico felt by the time grubs are found, it is too late. The fields are used by the Recreation programs so much, that they cannot be put under any additional strain. Mr. Federico asked if the Fair had paid for fertilizing the Park last year. No one present knew if that had occurred. Mr. Federico suggested that the Fair be asked to make up the difference between the budget and the proposals. It was noted that the grub control could be reduced possibly by only treating the ball fields. Mr. Canada moved to authorize Bio-Spray to apply fertilizer and broad leaf control at an estimate of \$2,410. Mr. Copeland seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Federico moved to authorize grub control only on the ball fields. Mr. Canada seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Federico asked Ms. Barker to contact Nancy Keane, the Treasurer of the Fair, to see if fertilization was provided by the Fair last year. Mr. Canada said that was not really relevant. Ms. Barker will contact Stan Walker about a possible donation from the Fair to make up the difference in order to do a more complete treatment at the Park.

The discussion moved to other Town properties that should be fertilized. Mr. Federico moved to have the Highway Department fertilize and water the Fire House grounds. Mr. Copeland seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Canada brought up the need for funding of the activities of the group known as The Pocket Gardeners. They need approximately \$200 to buy plant materials for the Municipal Center. Mr. Deschaine and Ms. Barker noted they could find money in the respective budgets for that purpose.

The Board then discussed a request by the Local Government Center for potential impacts in the reduction of State revenues to Towns. The Board discussed the possibility of having a furlough day reducing everyone's hours from a five-day workweek to a four-day workweek. Otherwise, layoffs would be the next possible way to react. In the worst-case scenario, eleven employees would be exposed to possible layoffs to include two in the Highway Department, three in the Police Department, possibly the Planner, possibly two Secretaries and three members of the Library. Not being able to speak for the Schools, but it was envisioned that eight to eighteen teachers might also need to be laid off depending upon the degree of revenues lost.

Mr. Copeland presented a draft of the position announcement for the Chief of Police. He also distributed a draft of the Public Safety Inspection Checklist. It was suggested Charlie Brown and Tim Slager review the Public Safety Inspection Checklist. Mr. Canada said that Mr. Barnes has been doing some of these inspections in the Municipal Center he thought.

The Board next directed Mr. Deschaine to obtain quotes for the following services in the search for a Police Chief. The services included would be advertising for the position, doing the initial vetting of applicants, organizing the candidates for interviews and ultimately conducting background checks on the finalists. The Local Government Center and Municipal Resources, Inc. were identified as two groups to obtain quotes for these services. Mr. Deschaine will also search to see if there are any other firms available that do this type of work.

At 7:42 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