

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes  
August 25, 2016

At the Selectmen's Meeting held on Thursday, August 25, 2016 at 6:40 p.m. the following people were in attendance: Selectpersons: Wendy Hersom and Mark Lufkin.

Jeremy Oleson, Twin Mountain Fire Chief and Randy Flynn, Lancaster Fire Chief.

Others in attendance: Tom Ladd, Steve Jones, Heather Watkins, Jeff & Elaine Wiseman, Lori Comeau, Kelley Sweeney of Weeks Hospital, John Wilkinson, Shawn Sherwood, Bryan Glidden, Michael Brigati of Weeks Hospital, and Jacob Ineson.

Wendy said Jay has given his notice, and it will take us a little while to find someone to replace him. We are looking to see how Whitefield and Twin Mountain can help us out. Randy said we have no issue doing whatever we need to do. Jeremy said he suggests we meet with the membership and see what direction they want to go in to help the situation and go from there. That is pretty important. Randy asked who is going to be in-charge on an interim basis?

Wendy said the Deputy Chief probably but he is out of the area fighting fires out west for a couple of weeks. There are two Lieutenants who would be next in line Bryan Glidden and Brian Lennox. Wendy asked Bryan what he is doing these days, and he said he is driving truck. He is only available and around nights and weekends, like most of the members. Wendy asked Lancaster and Twin Mountain if we get a call and no one is around to respond will they respond with mutual aid? Jeremy said with the department if you are not able to field a crew to respond to the call, that is not how mutual aid is supposed to work and then it gets taxing on their end. Jeremy said that Whitefield still have some good members who might rise to the occasion if you speak to them and go from there. It is a fragile environment with a lot of towns with this type of stuff. You lose one key player who makes a lot of calls, then it will be rough. Jeremy said we have the same issue in Twin.

The Town needs to figure out what the plan is – what you want from the department fire or ambulance? What are the Town's expectations compared to what they can actually give? Randy said you have a lot of good people and you should meet with them first. Mutual aid is set up with a run card system, which can be changed even for alarm activations. Depending on what side of town the call comes from, you can have Twin or Lancaster respond. They would be more than happy to respond. Your officers might be able to know how things might be cut up a little bit and then advise dispatch for a little while or if they have it under control. They might be able to handle some of the calls.

Wendy said EMS is an issue every time. Randy said that Lori is in a position to do more calls and god bless Tom – why he is not burnt out yet. It is basically going to be Tom during the days.

Jeremy said the big thing going forward, besides going to calls, is the Town has to decide what direction they want to go and make it as sustainable as possible for the taxpayers. The days of cheap EMS are starting to go away.

Randy said you used to hire firemen to run the ambulance, but now Randy said he hires EMS people who run on the fire side. Randy said they have more EMS calls than fire calls. Jeremy said it is definitely complicated. They are willing to help. When it all sugars out, who is still with the department? Wendy asked Randy and Jeremy if they would be interested in being on a hiring committee? They both said yes.

Randy asked the Weeks paramedics to come because he wasn't sure what they could offer to help. Michael Brigati and Kelley Sweeny are here from Weeks. Michael said it depends on what we agree on. They don't have 7-day a week coverage, and they cover 500 square miles. They could be on the other end of the county. Jeremy has a few medics. Randy said they try be every day with a medic, which he believes is a key skill level which is becoming more and more needed. Jeremy said especially with the nursing home and two schools having that medic level provider is very important. Twin has a medic four days a week who is a full-time staff member, and they have some per diem people who will work or are around town. They would like more. They have mostly advanced EMT's. Jeremy said you can have BLS and ALS.

The Board asked Tom Ladd about his availability. Tom said he is currently under-employed as a self-employed Librarian. His schedule is strange and flexible. He is around days and sometimes he is not. When he can work, it pays a lot more. He will do what he can here, but for quite a while he has been doing what he can because it is a not a new problem but we have gone over the cliff losing a lot of coverage.

Jeremy said depending on the members, you still need people to respond to calls, and we are not familiar with the roads. They could be 15 to 20 minutes away and that is important. Randy said we would respond like a first responder. The Board asked Heather Watkins if she will be done and she said most likely next Friday as well as Jay.

Lori said she is planning to run as much as she can. Tom said they have an on-line scheduling system. The problem has been for a long time if you commit yourself to Tuesday night and then something comes up it is hard to find someone to cover for you. They haven't been doing a lot of signing up beyond the required times. There is a \$75 stipend for being on call and available during the days of the week. We don't know if you are going to have two shifts starting on Monday. Shawn becomes more available next month. The nights have been an issue. Short-term to get us through the next week – we might be able to do a little bit more. Shawn said it should start getting busier when the weather gets cold. Tom Ladd said the Lancaster Fair is taxing for EMS as well.

Randy said offering the \$75 stipend to a second person may not be a bad idea. It is not offered during the evening shifts currently. Randy said the biggest problem, and as he said at the beginning, it only appears like you have Tom who is available consistently. Tom said he has two more months before he hits 40 years in EMS.

People are not knocking the door down to volunteer. It is almost impossible to get people. Jeremy has had good mutual aid partners. Jeremy said some of us work 7 days a week, all hours of the day. Jeremy has a couple of guys who work in town and that helps. Personnel everywhere has been short.

Jeremy said you can throw money at it but that is not always the issue. It interferes with family life. It takes so much to hold your certificate and it has become complicated and time-consuming. It is more of a profession today than it was a volunteer thing. Randy said they don't want to step on anybody's toes here. Jeremy spoke with Jack Anderson in Bethlehem to let him know what was going on. Bethlehem has an ambulance as well. He said they have the same issues. Jeremy said not to be doom and gloom but that is how it is.

Wendy asked about a regional EMS service? Jeremy said it would be difficult and complicated. It would take a lot of planning and thought of what would work best and some people would lose out on it. It would cost some money.

If you keep track of Colebrook, when the 45<sup>th</sup> went in up there, it cost them a lot of money. It would have to be fire-based because there are so many calls where you are multi-based. Randy said they have seen the people cutting the car is the one who has to drive the ambulance.

Wendy asked the members in attendance what they could do. The EMS providers are here tonight – this is what we get on a normal basis – four if you are lucky. Tom said the number of times we have covered two calls is phenomenal. Sometimes it happens and sometimes it does not. Getting one truck out the door now is going to be the challenge. Tom said that Dalton needs to be included in this as well – they have helped them out a lot usually with an individual person on a call. In the short term or for a long term solution. Dalton is a rescue, but their members don't get paid. They don't get paid so they don't want to transport – they will do it to help us out. They only have a few who can treat and transport. You need one basic and Dalton has three basics, Ron, Carol and one other. They are all first responders – do their assessment then Whitefield comes and transports. There is more to it than putting two people in an ambulance.

Wendy asked if it would it help if we could pay Dalton people or pay Lancaster and have a guy come down here and hang out. Bryan said we have got members who will do that.

Heather said that It is nice these guys have full-time help with them all the time – Jay has never had that. Jeremy said he doesn't have full-time help with him all the time. Lori has more free time to respond to calls and she is going to do what she needs to make money for the day. She is on Lancaster's roster. Randy asked her do you want to do a transfer - \$125 for Randy or she makes \$25 on that one call or \$75 for ten hours and she did a transfer for 3 ½ hours and made \$125. Bryan said he and Mossy do shifts in Lancaster because it pays more. If you don't want to pay for help, you are not going to get help. Wendy said she more than understands volunteerism.

Wendy said it is all well and good we want money. If someone has a solution of where to get money. Shawn Sherwood said the ambulance basically gets money for the Town. Kelly Sweeney said a lot of towns have the revenue fund their service. Whatever money they make, goes back in to the service. The Town of Whitefield has the ambulance revenue go in to the general fund.

Jeremy said that they have a special revenue fund in Twin Mountain. You have a nursing home and try to make money off of that to put it back in and it didn't work. Jeremy said he would have to understand why it didn't. Jeremy said the revenue is not going to be 100% to pay for the service.

The income last year for the ambulance was \$129,602 plus \$7500 from the Town of Dalton. Randy said in Lancaster the money goes in to the general fund, similar to Whitefield.

Tom Ladd said If it was a profitable thing, you would have companies providing that service knocking the doors down to do it. Randy has got a system where they do in a lot of other places with private companies – transfers, etc., which creates a revenue stream. Tom said if you had to rely solely on 911 calls, it would not be that profitable.

Tom said it is different up here making this transition all volunteerism is not going to cut it anymore. A number of solutions are possible. We have a short term emergency 2 to 3 weeks to make sure we have fire/ems coverage in town. Possibly an interim chief will be put in place until we complete the process of hiring a new chief who is full-time if that is the choice you are going to make. Rumors are that it may or may not happen. We have had certain modes over the years. Tom sees it as a three stage process – you can't just hire someone overnight. Wendy said the department does not pay for itself, never has, and we have never expected it to. Wendy said she has been on the Board for the longest period of time and she was involved with the day to day operations of the fire-rescue for a number of months.

Wendy said she would love to hire 5 or 6 full-time EMT's, but people do not want their tax rates to jump \$2 to \$3 a thousand.

Wendy is hearing from people here tonight that they want to make money , and it is the same for people to afford to live in this town. There is a balance somewhere. Jeremy says you want to make it as sustainable as we can. Lori says she wants to give back to the community and she does it because she loves it. She does it for that too. Lori said the money is not the only reason we do this. Wendy said she would love to have a full-time staff. Over the years we have had issues with billing and we have tried to increase the revenues.

Someone asked what is going to happen after Friday with the billing – once Jay's name comes off that Medicare billing, you are not going to be able to bill. We don't know the answer to that. We can check with the billing company to see what has to be done.

You need someone on the medical resource agreement – for every ambulance so the person who signs that is the head of service. Kelly thinks we have 5 days to sign that. She will get the information to us.

Kelly said that Jay is turning in the controlled substances tomorrow and we will work out who is left on the service who can administer any other medications. We have to get a licenses interim person it will take three business days to get level of license needed for that – don't need to have an EMS license for head of service. It has to be whoever is going to oversee the department. There is a lot to it. Kelly gave us a copy of the agreement. The only thing that has to be changed is the signature blocks.

The Board agreed to meet with the Fire/Rescue membership next Wednesday night at the Fire Station at 7:00 p.m.

Randy said that maybe Jay can break the town down as far as coverage so it would be easier for dispatch to know what geographical area to dispatch to.

Tom Ladd said if we are talking with other services could we also find out the willingness of Calix to do any paramedic intercepts with calls toward Littleton. If we are heading towards Lancaster we are fine. Tom is wondering do we have an option to use Calix is the question? Twin Mountain said they don't have a paramedic go on every one of their calls.

Someone said that every time you call for a Calix paramedic is \$150. Kelly said Conway charges \$500 for paramedic intercepts. Kelly said we should never in medicine take in to consideration for the cost of things before we provide the care. If we feel your patient needs a paramedic, then ask for the paramedic. You have to do what is best for that patient. Tom said why do you think he is asking at a public forum.

Kelly said as the EMS coordinator please call for a paramedic if it is needed regardless of the cost. Randy said that is not saying you will get one. Wendy said we can call and speak with Calix and see what they say. Jeff Wiseman, a resident of the Town, asked who is going to be the interim chief?

Wendy said we are trying to sort things out and determine things. The thought on the interim basis is the Deputy Chief would move up but he is out of the area so we can't speak with him.

Any other brilliant suggestions? Tom said as he understood it, Jay is on vacation next week and he is not answering calls. He is done being in the office on Friday and is using vacation next week according to Tom. Wendy said we were not aware of that. Heather said it will be like all his other vacations, he will respond from home.

Mr. Brigati said you have to stick with people who are already rostered with Whitefield people. You have to be affiliated the Whitefield Department to run. Jeremy said that is basically an e-mail to add someone. Tom Ladd said thank you for having this meeting that brought in surrounding chiefs and bringing in people from Weeks and thank you for scheduling a meeting with the department members.

Wendy said we do appreciate what the EMS and fire providers do. John Wilkinson said you had a good thing going, but you let it go. John said he thought things were going pretty smooth.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.