

MINUTES

Master Plan Steering Committee

TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH

Wednesday, September 12, 2012 – 5:45 p.m.

1 Grove Street, Peterborough, New Hampshire

[Note: This meeting was held off-site at the Fire Station on Summer Street]

Members Present: Mose Olenik, Sue Chollet, Beth Alpaugh-Cote, Rick Monahan, Peter Gosline and Alan Zeller

Staff Present: Carol Ogilvie, Director and Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant, Office of Community Development

Also Present: Fire Chief Joseph Lenox and Police Chief Scott Guinard

The meeting was called to order at 5:48 p.m.

Statement from the Chair

Alan Zeller introduced himself and thanked the members for coming. He thanked Chief Lenox for providing meeting space at the Fire Station (16 Summer Street).

Review of August Minutes

A motion was made/seconded (Olenik/Alpaugh-Cote) to approve the Minutes as written with all in favor. Ms. Chollet did not vote.

Review Draft of Municipal Facilities Chapter and Consultation with Fire Chief Lenox and Police Chief Guinard

Chair Zeller turned the meeting over to Chief Lenox. Chief Lenox thanked the Chairman and noted he would ask Chief Guinard to speak about a local Dispatch center. Chief Guinard noted “I have done this several times but the best place to start is the beginning.” He noted the Police and Fire departments have been collaborating on a combined dispatch facility for 6 or 7 years. He briefly reviewed the current status of dispatching (Police from the Hillsborough County Sherriff’s Department and Fire from Southwest New Hampshire District Fire Mutual Aid). He noted several concerns with the present system that included town familiarity and in some instances, response times. He also noted “in 2013 it will cost the Town of Peterborough \$100,488 for dispatch services” adding “these services increase every year from 3% to 6%

Chief Guinard reviewed the financial aspect of the stand-alone dispatch facility for Police, Fire, EMS and DPW Departments (a one-time \$250,000.00 cost plus an additional \$30,000.00 to get set up with equipment). Mr. Monahan asked if that would be an annual cost with Chief Guinard replying “no, the transition cost and the startup cost would be incurred initially with the \$30,000.00 slowly decreasing (each year) “ adding “as time goes on that gap goes down. So down the road we more or less break even.”

Chief Guinard reviewed many of the benefits of having a local dispatch center. “The Police Station would be open 24/7, 365 days a year. He noted the advantage of someone being able to gain access to the lobby area “and get safely locked in there,” if they were being pursued. He gave a potential example of one party pursuing another in a domestic violence situation.

Chief Guinard recalled the ice storm of 2008 and how the Sherriff’s Department was so busy “that they could not handle the volume of calls, we had to take over for ourselves.” He noted other large scale incidents (primarily related to weather) where the Sherriff’s Department could not handle the call volume.

Chief Guinard reviewed the dispatcher positions and hours of operation. He listed required changes and/or upgrades to their current communication system (including a recording system for phone lines and radio transmissions, building materials for structural modifications and box alarm rewriting costs). He added he had been investigating grant availability for some of these necessities “but there is not much out there for this kind of thing” he said. He noted Police, Fire and Rescue, and DPW calls would all be dispatched out of the facility. “All these services, whenever, wherever they are needed” he said adding “it becomes self-sufficient with better service to the community.” He noted improved interoperability with the town services due to closer relationship and immediate sharing of information. Mr. Gosline asked “would there be a reduction in response times?” Chief Guinard replied “oh, absolutely.” He proceeded to explain the trail of a 911 call and the number of parties currently involved “all of which” he said, “can legally hold the call 90 seconds by law.” With a smile Chair Zeller interjected “I hope I am not under water, I can’t hold my breath that long.” Mr. Gosline noted that the local physicians all have recordings for after hours that advise dialing 911 for an emergency.

Chief Lenox added that the Southwest Mutual Aid Dispatch serves over 80 communities “so when you experience a large event, who knows when they will get to you.” Chief Guinard agreed, adding “we look at this is our objective to better serve the community.” Ms. Ogilvie asked Chief Guinard to explain how this facility is related but differs from the shared public safety complex under discussion for some time. Chief Guinard replied “we would get this up and running at the current Police Station. If, down the road we build a facilities complex this would be basically turnkey with a minimal amount of fine tuning to be done.”

Chair Zeller asked “and it is now 8 years later?” “It is the startup costs” replied Chief Guinard. Ms. Chollet asked about the project becoming a CIP item with Ms. Ogilvie replying “yes, it was put in last year.” Ms. Chollet asked if the Budget Committee had turned it down with Chief Guinard replying “no, it has never been officially presented to the Budget Committee.”

A brief explanation of the number and types of calls the Officers respond to in a day followed. Chief Guinard concluded “the average is 25-30 call a day. Just under 10,000 calls a year, not including all the phone calls, reports and requests for directions!”

Mr. Gosline noted he staffs a phone operator at the Hospital around the clock. “During the day they are busy, but at night and especially late evening they are reading books” he said. “Maybe we should talk” he concluded.

Chief Guinard concluded by reiterating the dispatch hours and the responsibilities of the job. Mr. Gosline asked about the status of the municipal facilities complex with Chief Guinard replying “that is still on the table, that desire has not gone away.” A brief discussion about similar facilities in Amherst, Bedford and Moultonbough, New Hampshire followed.

Chair Zeller thanked the Chief for coming in.

Mr. Monahan out at 6:15 p.m.

Chief Lenox began with a report of his department’s activities “13,000 activities/service calls a year” he said. He noted 2550 911 calls to date. Chief Lenox went through a PowerPoint presentation that showed the makeup of his Department (Chiefs, Captains, Lieutenants, Fire and EMS, Administrative Assistant, Supervisor of the Motor Squad, Fire Inspector and Director of the Transfer Division).

He went on add “we have a great partnership with MCH.” He noted a roster of 50 Firefighters, 15 Paramedics, 10 Intermediate and 17 Basic EMTS. He concluded with “we have 7 licensed First Responders and 10 Explorers.”

He spoke briefly about the time commitment over and above didactic and practical training in the classroom for certifications. He cited meetings, training, details, calls (2050 EMS and 500 Fire) and continued education in multiple fields (EMS, Fire I, Fire II and Officer Training). He explained the per diem scheduling with night and weekend duty assignments as well. He noted the Department’s catchment area of Peterborough, Sharon, Hancock, Dublin, Greenfield and Frankestown as well as Mutual Aid coverage as far as away as Milford and Keene.

He reviewed the motor fleet that consists of his vehicle (Car 1) the Officer’s vehicle and Paramedic Intercept vehicle (Car 2), two engines, one tanker, one ladder, two utility vehicles (lighting and brush fire equipment) one explorer truck and three ambulances. “We respond to 13, 500 activities a year, about 37 a day” he said adding “we average seven 911 calls in a 24-hour period.”

Chief Lenox concluded with a tour of the Fire Station. Chair Zeller noted they would continue discussion of the draft Municipal Facilities Chapter. “We’ll revisit that next time” he said.

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant