

Fire Services Study Committee

May 3, 2018
Meeting Minutes

Committee members present:

Michael Ball, Douglas Erb, Kathy Parsons, Richard Sagar, Bruce Ulricson.

There were 8 people in the audience.

Meeting opened at 6:00 pm.

1. Doug read Warrant Article 5, as amended at Town Meeting. He reiterated that this committee was a fact-finding, not a decision-making entity. He would like to begin each meeting with a restatement of the committee's mission.
2. Bruce made a motion to discuss prior meeting's minutes, Richard seconded. Minutes were accepted without change. It was decided that the meetings need not be tape-recorded. Sufficient other documentation will be available.
3. Doug presented a spreadsheet of similar-size towns, comparing tax rates (highest and lowest), population, and comparative fire department costs. The Committee will need detailed accounting of last 3 years' Fire Department expenses. The select board will be asked for this information.
4. Bruce stated that State law does not require fire dept. training. The committee will ask our fire department for records of their training and certification. Specific questions would be: What if a fire fighter is injured; how many can respond to a call; what is the liability to the town; what sources exist for water? The committee would like to see historical figures documenting past calls, response time, and number of responders. Doug asked Jason Cartwright for a report on training, insurance, etc. Richard suggested that the Select Board has requested an inspection of the FD by Twin State which might answer some of the questions. There was concern that this might be a timely process which could delay the committee's progress. Jason will ask Twin State to expedite any inspection and give the committee a timeline for a report. There was discussion of what to compare training levels to - Lisbon, similar-size towns? Bruce will contact the N.H. Dept, of Safety and ask for a profile of towns with regard to training and safety.
5. Kathy questioned how firemen are notified in case of an incident. Firefighters carry pagers at all times, and there is a "repeater" on Cannon Mountain, so they can be easily contacted. The FD is dispatched by Grafton County Dispatch.
6. Susan Stanley said she had a letter from Tom Andross, who is in charge of communications at Grafton County Dispatch. She had requested the "run cards" for the Landaff FD. Mr. Andross suggested that she needed to contact the local fire chief.

7. Susan Stanley reported that some people in town want to have input anonymously. Doug said, they can send a letter to him, and their identity will stay anonymous.

8. Don Beaudin brought up the issue of retention and asked the Committee to find out what other towns do have good retention, is there compensation, etc.

Doug responded that we can find out what fire departments have good retention rates, and that the Fire Department can also talk to them. He acknowledged that retention is an issue to be addressed, but questioned the role of the committee.

8. Jason will provide the Fire Dept.'s information on costs in detail, to compare with the Selectmen's information.

9. Jason stated that the LVFA often uses its own funds for purchase items that are above budget. He mentioned several specialized items that had been purchased.

10. Sandy Brackett questioned what happens to the F.D. assets if the Department is disbanded. Richard indicated that he intends to pursue that question as the committee continues its discussions.

She asked whether the FD responds to medical emergencies. Jason stated that the firefighters do not have medical training as first responders, but will assist with some tasks such as lifting someone. He stated that there is an AED on the fire truck, and in the Town Hall. He said that periodic training in CPR and the use of the AED are available, and that firefighters are encouraged to attend.

11. Susan Stanley asked if the Landaff Selectmen could meet with the Lisbon Selectmen to obtain concrete figures. Doug stated that would be premature at this point.

12. Becky McGovern voiced concern that, in the future, local employers may not allow firefighters to leave work when needed for the FD. Doug responded that this was outside the realm of this committee.

13. Committee members were assigned the following tasks before the next meeting:
Richard:

(a) Compose a letter to the Selectmen asking for detailed accounting of F.D. expenditures for last 3 years. Doug to sign.

(b) Contact the Saco Valley Fire Assoc., who have joined three towns for fire protection, asking for their experience.

Douglas: Study the effect of distance from a fire station on homeowner's insurance rates.

Kathy: Contact the Lyman Select Board regarding their experience with the Lisbon Fire Department. They meet every other Thursday at 6:00 pm.

Bruce: Contact the NH Dept. of Safety regarding training and safety.

14. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 17, 2018 at 6 PM in the Town Hall. It was decided that future meetings will be bi-weekly, on Thursday evenings.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Sagar