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Fire Services Study Committee

May 31, 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.
2. The minutes of the previous meeting were discussed. Doug pointed out an omission, and asked to have it included in the final minutes. The correction will read as follows: In response to a comment from a member of the audience, that the Lisbon Fire Department was a manned fire department, a correction was made that this was not so, but that the Lisbon Fire Department is a volunteer fire department, just as Landaff. There were no further changes. Bruce moved and Richard seconded to approve the minutes as corrected. The motion passed.
3. Doug apologized to Mike Ransmeier for his misunderstanding of Mike's comparison, at the last meeting, of the transfer station contract to a possible contract for fire services. Doug pointed out that the comparison of a fire department contract with the contract for the transfer station is only applicable with respect to an assessment by population.
4. There was a discussion regarding the possibility that Lisbon would include interest incurred for the capital investments, such as the new fire station, in their budget, and then divide that between the three towns. Based on 16%, Landaff's share of Lisbon's 2017 fire department budget of \$88,586 would be \$14,173. Their budget for 2018 is \$71,905 and Landaff's share would be \$11,905. Mike Ransmeier commented that the interest expense would be an expense of the Town, not the Fire Department. The Committee felt that Lisbon should be asked how the base charge would be calculated, and that any variables should be disclosed. Mike Ball questioned who would pay for Lisbon per call charges. Mike Ransmeier stated that, if the charges are submitted in a timely fashion, they could be submitted to the homeowner's insurance. If the charges are not billed in a timely fashion, the Town of Landaff would be responsible to pay the charges. He stated that Lyman has been disappointed by a lack of timely billing by Lisbon. Richard suggested that the Committee request authorization from our Select Board to request information from the Lisbon Select Board and Fire Chief. Doug stated that specifics of any contract are the responsibility of our Select Board, and that the Committee needed to work through our Select Board to clarify those issues. Richard stated that we would not be involved in any negotiations, but only seek to learn how Lisbon authorities expected any contract would work. There was a question regarding Lisbon's continued interest in a contract. Mike Ransmeier stated that Lisbon was still interested. He further stated that it was expected that the Committee would speak directly with the Lisbon authorities regarding any questions about a proposed contract. After discussion, it was decided that the Committee will request a letter from the Select Board to authorize discussions with Lisbon officials.

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Mike Ransmeier indicated that he will forward the request to the Board. Bruce suggested that the Committee wait to talk with Lisbon until after the scheduled meeting with the Lyman Select Board.

5. There was discussion regarding requesting the Landaff Fire Chief, and other officers, to meet with the Committee to answer questions about the department. A meeting with Jason and other fire department representatives is scheduled for July 12. The Committee will provide Jason with a list of areas of concern in advance of the meeting, so that he has time to prepare. Kathy stated that we need to compare the qualifications of both, the Landaff and Lisbon Volunteer Fire Departments.
6. Kathy spoke regarding the meeting, on June 18, with the Lyman Select Board. She said that Donna Clark has indicated that she can answer any financial questions, but that it would be good to have those questions submitted in advance. Kathy also reported that the figures on the comparison of Landaff and Lyman fire department expenses, which was provided by Mike Ransmeier, do include dispatch fees. She also mentioned that Lyman has fire wardens who carry radios, and thinks we should ask how this interacts with other fire services. Richard suggested that Lyman might provide information about impacts on homes located further than five miles from the Lisbon station, since Lyman is a widely dispersed town.
7. Doug suggested that the Committee work on the development of a worksheet where taxpayers can calculate how any proposed changes would affect them. He said that it could be used to compare any changes in the tax rate with any changes in their insurance rates. Landaff has a total Town valuation of approximately \$50,000,000; a budget savings of \$5,000 would amount to 10 cents per \$1000 of valuation. On a property assessed at around \$216,000 this would be a total saving to the taxpayer of about \$21. Richard reported on information that he has received from Hunkins and Eaton Insurance Agency. He was given a quote for a property valued at \$320,000, both within and beyond five miles from a fire station. The price within five miles was \$580; beyond five miles \$644, an increase of approximately 11%. He was also told that an alarm system linked to the dispatch system could be required. In the case of higher priced homes, \$500,000 and up, the alarm system would be required if they were more than five miles from the station. It has been suggested that, if the Landaff FD is disbanded, the town would get an ISO rating of 10 which could result in an adverse effect on insurance rates. The agent thought that that was certainly a possibility, but that we would need to contact the ISO rating agency to answer that question. The Committee directed Richard to draft a letter requesting that information from the ISO. The agent stated that the current rating of 9 is the same as for in-town locations without hydrants. The agent also stated that if the rating was changed, she had the ability with some insurance companies, but not all, to manually enter information showing that there was still a fire station within five miles. Kathy reported that her insurance agent has stated that there would be no change, but they would not put this in writing.
8. Bruce, Kathy and Richard reported on their fact finding visit with Tilton-Northfield Fire Chief Mike Sitar. Bruce stated that Chief Sitar said that firefighter training was the most important issue in a department. Their department uses a "buddy system" with a team ready to assist or rescue firefighters that might become trapped. The Fire District is a governmental unit which is independent of either town. Citizens from both Tilton and

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Northfield meet to vote on the budget and conduct other business. Each town is assessed using a formula based on their average number of calls.

9. Chief Sitar stated that even certified firefighters will not enter a burning building to save a person unless there is a reasonable chance of success, and that their own lives will not be put into excessive danger. He said that even with non-certified volunteers, a town is well protected against law suits.
10. Asked about the ISO rating system, Chief Sitar said that factors considered in the rating process are: 50% fire department, 40% water supplies, and 10% dispatch. He said that the Tilton-Northfield Fire District was able to change the ISO rating from 7 to 4. They did so by adding water capacity and by accurate record keeping. He said that it was vital to keep detailed training records. Bruce suggested that the Committee obtain training records from both Landaff and Lisbon.
11. Richard updated the Committee on his efforts to contact the Saco Valley Fire Department. He has left a message on their published number, but has not had an answer. He spoke with the Chatham Town Clerk today, and she provided another number. He will pursue that contact.
12. Becky McGovern suggested that the Committee invite several fire chiefs from surrounding towns to meet with the Committee. All agreed that this was a good idea, and agreed to set up a meeting. They will work on questions and issues that might be discussed. They will also invite Jack Anderson, chairman of Twin State, to attend.
13. There was a discussion regarding upcoming Committee meetings. It was decided to move the scheduled June 28 meeting to June 18 in order to discuss results of the Lyman Select Board meeting while it is still fresh in mind. The June 28 meeting will be cancelled, with the next regular meeting scheduled to take place on July 12.
14. Mike Ransmeier requested that Jason provide a current roster of LVFD members. He said that it should include dates of birth. Jason said that he could provide a roster, but had concerns regarding the release of sensitive personal information such as birth dates. Doug stated that the Committee will take this under advisement. Mike also requested a list of certified firefighters. Jason said that there were at least two, and that it was possible that two more could be certified in the near future.
15. Jason presented a record of calls for the month of April, in response to Susan Stanley's request. The printout was provided by the Grafton County Sheriffs Department.

Upcoming meeting schedule, as revised by the Committee:

Thursday, June 14, 2018 @ 6:00 PM Regular Meeting

Monday, June 18, 2018 @ 6:00 PM Meeting with Lyman Select Board, in Lyman

Thursday, June 21, 2018 @ 6:00 PM Re-scheduled from June 28

Meeting adjourned at 7:06 PM

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Respectfully submitted,
Heidi Sagar