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Fire Services Study Committee

June 21, 2018
Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present:

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

There were 3 people in the audience.

Meeting opened at 6:05 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 June 14, 2018 meeting were discussed. Susan Stanley questioned the accuracy of paragraph 4 in reference to the reported toning and arrival times for the brush fire. It was agreed to change the sentence: **Mike Ball reported that the fire was toned at 2:03, Lisbon appeared at 2:13, Landaff engine at 2:14, and Landaff tank at 2:19.** The revised sentence reads: **Mike Ball reported that the fire was toned at 2:03, Lisbon toned at 2:08, Lisbon engine arrived at 2:20, Landaff engine arrived at 2:23, fire was knocked down by homeowner by the time fire departments arrived.** There were no additional changes, and the revised minutes were approved.
3. There was discussion of the recent meeting with the Lyman Select Board. Richard presented a report of the meeting. In answer to the list of questions submitted by the Committee, the Lyman Select Board Chairman Jim Trudell said that the town had contracted with Lisbon for fire services for decades. The contract is for a one year period, and there is no termination clause for either party. As expected, they have seen slight increases over time, but they feel that Lisbon has treated the town fairly. They provided a fire agreement history from 2001 to June 18, 2018. There was a cap on per call billing until 2016; there is presently no cap on amounts that can be billed for per call charges. The actual amount of per call charges for 2016 was \$4,358.00, 2017 \$9,397.75, and 2018 to date \$3584.50. The Select Board thought that on average the town has about 10 calls per year, but stated that they are not involved with the fire department in a hands-on manner. They believe that the citizens of Lyman are satisfied with the fire protection provided by Lisbon. They are not aware of any complaints. They are also not aware of any increases in insurance premiums due to distance from the fire station. As Lyman has never had its own fire department, there has been no change in risks for structures located more than five miles from the Lisbon station. They were aware that distance was a question asked by insurers. The town has not discussed going to the same population formula as the transfer station agreement, but thought that it would probably cost more. Charging per call

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charges to a homeowner's insurance was only attempted once. That claim was filed too late to be paid, and the town has not since pursued charging homeowner's insurance. The forest fire wardens are primarily concerned with forest fire issues, and have little equipment. There are 37 miles of town roads in Lyman. When asked if they felt that fire coverage is better with the contributions of the Landaff FD, they replied that were not involved enough to know the answer. They hadn't really considered a back-up plan in the event that Lisbon stopped providing service. They again said that the town is very happy with the service provided by Lisbon, and feel that they are treated fairly. They thought that if Lisbon ceased providing service, the town would rely on mutual aid and look for another department. They have never required mutual aid due to Lisbon being tied up, so they could not comment on whether the response from mutual aid would be satisfactory in such an instance. It seems that the town has not had issues with repeat calls due to homeowner negligence; however they said that the town does not bill homeowners. Lyman has never considered forming their own department, and the board felt that it would be difficult to recruit enough members. Mr. Trudell also expressed his opinion that towns would benefit from a more regional outlook. He favors cooperation and suggested possible arrangements for sharing of equipment.

4. In answer to audience questions, Doug replied that the Committee's purpose is to find answers to those questions and to summarize those answers at the end of the project.
5. In response to statements that have been made regarding difficulties involved in re-establishing a FD, in the event of a disbanding of our current FD, Doug said that this would be worth researching. There was discussion of how much is invested in FD assets, including specialized hoses, air tanks, personal protective equipment, and other tools. Doug suggested obtaining an inventory of all FD assets. The Committee would like to have an estimate of replacement costs that would be required to re-establish a FD in the future. The Committee will request this information from the fire department.
6. Doug said, we need to schedule a meeting with the Lisbon Select Board. There was discussion of questions for Lisbon. Richard will contact them to set up a meeting to be scheduled after July 12. The Committee is in the process of finalizing a list of questions, and will provide that to the Lisbon Select Board prior to the meeting.
7. Susan Stanley brought up the 2018 budget for the F.D. and suggested that we should use an average of several years, and include the Capital Reserve contributions when comparing costs. She is concerned with misinformation and fears. Doug assured her that the Committee agrees, concerning the FD budget, and is looking at the last three years total expenses and capital appropriations.
8. There was discussion of the July 12 meeting with the Landaff FD. The Committee is in the process of finalizing a list of questions for that meeting. Those questions will be provided to the FD prior to the meeting.

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9. Doug expressed his opinion that the main question to be answered is, whether our fire service is better with the present Landaff FD. He feels that we need look at costs, and determine if there is value in having more equipment, men, and local knowledge of sources of water supply. He stated that we don't have any control over the Lisbon FD, but we do control our own FD. He stressed that, through the Mutual Aid agreement, we presently have all the resources of the Lisbon FD. He said that the Committee will present all the facts, and in the end it will come down to the personal preference of the voters.
10. There was a discussion regarding coverage under the Mutual Aid agreement. Doug explained that when a FD is busy on a call, equipment and personnel from other towns are moved to that department's station to provide coverage.
11. Doug mentioned that the need for a new fire station is a big factor in the decision of the voters. The community needs to consider a new building or renovation. In considering the advisability of a new or renovated station, Kathy expressed concern with the ability to recruit younger firefighters to keep an active FD. Kathy wondered if there has been any consideration of just rebuilding the doors to accommodate the larger equipment. Mike stated that the FD has considered that possibility.
12. Doug posed the question, without a capital investment, would we still want our own FD, and what about with capital investment.
13. Susan Stanley asked, what is the next foreseen capital investment? The Committee will pursue that in its talks with the FD.
14. Richard provided a summary of insurance issues to the Committee for possible inclusion in the report to the town. The following wording was agreed upon: Due to the complexities of the insurance industry, it is difficult to accurately assess all factors involved in a change of fire service. It would be advisable for homeowners to check with their agents regarding their particular circumstances.
15. The next meeting is scheduled for July 12, at 6:00 PM at the Landaff Town Hall.

Meeting adjourned at 7:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Sagar