

Town of Canterbury
Selectmen's Meeting
December 7, 2015

Selectmen Present: Bob Steenson
Cheryl Gordon
George Glines
Town Administrator: Ken Folsom

The meeting was called to order at 5:05PM.

I. Appointments

Eversource

Eversource representatives Donna Keeley, Brian Bosse, Sarah Hoodett and Consultant Pat McDermit.

Donna, Brian, Pat and Sarah identified each of their rolls in the project. Donna reported that they have filed an application to DES which was deemed complete in October 2015.

Maps were presented to the Board indicating the proposed pole locations, design and height of each structure. Pat identified some of the benefits to the project, including fewer structures (buried lines in the North Country), lower energy costs, and \$200 million to support community betterment. Pat submitted a spreadsheet illustrating the amount of local tax payments.

Corinne Pullen asked if the Town would receive the same tax revenue if the project provided buried lines. Craig Pullen asked what the Town would need to do to have the lines buried here as well. Pat explained that the tax value would reflect the cost of the project. If the lines are buried it would increase the cost of the project. Donna suggested that any concerns with the project should be addressed at upcoming Dept. of Energy public hearings but if residents has specific questions that the can be directed to Eversource. She also explained that nothing will change what was filed with the DES, but the DOE can attach conditions to a permit. A brief discussion was held on employment for this job. Brian explained that they are making every effort to secure NH companies first. Donna stated that public hearings will be held starting next year and that the complete application is on their website.

The Board thanked them for attending.

Joe Halla

Joe and others attended the meeting to discuss a petition. Bob read the petition *"The Citizens of Canterbury who have signed below request that the Board of Selectmen dissolve the Canterbury Police Department as it is unnecessary and police protection can be provided by the State Police and/or the Merrimack County Sheriff"*

Bob explained that it is not under the authority of the Selectmen to dissolve the Police Department. This would have to go to Town Meeting.

Joe reported that within the last year, people have come in the store with complaints with the Police Department. This petition is more of a wakeup call to the Selectmen and for people to speak their mind in a forum and not be intimidated.

Joe expressed concerns with the professionalism of the Department and extended periods of down time at the Library and Golf Course. Joe further explained that these may be small incidents, but when you look at them in a group, it's a large problem.

Joe stated that the Police Department has no supervision or oversight from the Board of Selectmen. Bob explained that the Selectmen are not qualified to supervise Police operations. Nancy Hacking questioned what was meant by the Selectmen are not qualified. Bob explained that the Board cannot tell them how to do investigations. They can give them their expectation at their annual reviews and follow up. The Department does have a Standard Operating Procedure Manual. Bob explained that if you look at the statistics and number of calls from the Police Department year to date, there is a significant amount of Police activity. Bob further explained that the one thing in the petition he takes an issue with is that the Police Departments unnecessary. He believes the Police Department is very necessary and the idea that 100 percent Police coverage is available through the State Police and Merrimack County is not realistic. He believes that some of the signatures may be under the misconception that there is coverage available full-time. The Board checked and have reports from NH State Police (Troop D) that indicated that not all of their shifts are being covered. They do a terrific job of supporting the local communities, they are available for back up and assisting in investigations. After reviewing the numbers, and how thin the State Troopers are it may give an excellent argument for expanding the police coverage in Canterbury. Bob personally can't support that Canterbury does not need a Police Department. With what is going on with Chief LaRoche, this is an excellent opportunity to take a look at what they can do, how they can do it. Bob stated that he feels it is somewhat unfair to overly criticize individuals that work really hard to protect us.

Diana Scott asked who funnels the complaints. Bob reported that the Selectmen follow up, but there have only been a few people that have come in and expressed concerns. We can't fix what we don't know about.

Cate Ahern expressed concerns that she had personally filed a complaint and was told that no one would believe her because of her reputation in Town. If she had a problem she wouldn't call the police. The Board was not aware of any complaint she filed.

Nancy Hacking stated that she has heard the issues and that she doesn't hear the Board say we will look into that. Bob explained that the Board needs to have specifics to be able to respond.

Harry Heath suggested that call logs be completed daily.

Keith Brown stated that the Town needs a Police Department and we need to trust them. Right now they are not trusted. The Selectmen need to find a way to manage the Police Department and find someone to deal with these issues. He supports the Police, "they screwed up and the Selectmen need to figure out a way to fix it."

Bob explained that the Selectmen are in a tough spot with Chief LaRoche, at the present time we are unable to go forward until his legal issues are resolved.

Jim Sojka suggested that the Board engage MRI to prepare the standard operating procedures and contact them to do evaluations and training. He also mentioned sending the officers back to the Academy. Bob reported that 2 of the officers are recent graduates of the Academy.

Toni Halla explained that she had told Bob and former Selectman, Jim Bassett about an incident that happened to one of the workers at the store, and nothing was done. Toni expressed concerns that John was hired after she notified Bob and Jim of a situation. She doesn't trust the department nor Bob. Bob reported that when John was hired as Chief we had an open process, advertised nationally, and engaged the LGC to review applications, conduct background checks and to score the candidates. The Selectmen conducted the interview process, John came out of that as who they considered to be the best fit. John's legal issues predate his employment with Canterbury.

Sue Decato asked if people complained to John, were any of the complaints directed to the Selectmen. Bob explained that if John had a specific event that he thought that would come up to the Board, he would let them know, there is no other way of knowing if there were any other complaints brought to his attention. Bob explained that when Sue came to the Board about the shooting range for the Police at the Department, the Board did take action and moved it elsewhere.

Hugh Fifield stated that he didn't feel that Canterbury needs as many officers as it has now, the department has exploded.

Doug Carson explained an incident he had with one of the officers in July 2014. He found the officer to be rude and very unprofessional. Doug stated that the officer swore at him and threatened to Taser him. He feels that the officers should have a psychological profile. Doug explained that he had written a letter, but never gave it to the Selectmen. He gave it to Toni at the store.

Barbie Tilton expressed concerns that she has placed several calls about vehicles speeding on Pickard Road. To this day, no one has responded. Another time, she needed a VIN verification. One of the officers showed up, Barbie had the number written down. The officer didn't check the information.

A question was asked if the Department is under staffed, why are they doing details. Bob explained that the Town is not left uncovered while they are doing details. The Town makes a significant amount of revenue from the details.

Olly Fifield proposed an amendment to the petition to read "To *appoint a committee to review the Police Department to check their efficiency and cost and to report at the Town Meeting in 2016*".

Anne Berry stated that she is in agreement with many of the comments made tonight. She explained an incident that happened to her daughter while swimming at her grandfather's pond. The pond is on private property, a police car pulled in and sat there. When her daughter started to approach the cruiser, the officer left.

Anne explained that she had done some research on surrounding towns and what their Chief's wages are and Police budget. Bob explained that Warner and Chichester are good comparatives. They are similar in size with major roads.

Judy Haigh expressed concerns with the lack of response to several calls she had made to the Sergeant and Chief. Then she complained to 2 Selectmen verbally and in writing to the Town Administrator. Bob stated that the Selectmen will respond to concerns, but that the complainant will most likely not know of the outcome because of it being personnel issues. Bob stated that if they don't know about it, they can't address it.

Cathy Donohue asked to have some type of form created for citizens to fill out.

Chris Scott stated that there needs to be a change in the Department from the top down. He asked the Board to look closely at the calls for service and if there are any problems to hold them accountable. He feels that the proposed committee will find deficiencies in the department and lack of leadership. Howard Moffett believes there is a problem and it is incumbent upon the Board to take action. He is not hearing that the Board is recognizing the problems and they will deal with it.

Roy Glines stated that when he was Police Chief he lived in Town and was on-call. He feels that if a person lives in Town and is the head of a department, they may be more aware of the tax dollars being spent. The Board needs to manage the department, there is no forceful oversight. Roy also questioned when the officers are doing details, do they then come to work a shift in Canterbury? What is their effectiveness if they have they already done 8 hours at another job? Roy questioned the level of service given. A brief discussion was held on the cruisers being seen out of town. Bob explained that there are limits on the of hours that the officers can work and there is a policy on Police Detail mirroring the State Police Policy.

Nancy Hacking asked if two of the officer are related and is that allowed. Bob explained that yes Randy and Kyle are father and son. Neither are in a supervisory position and the Board had a long talk with the Chief prior to hiring Kyle.

Adrienne Hutchinson asked if the Selectmen could redirect excess funds in the wage line that have not been expended because the Chief is on unpaid leave that could be used for consultants and if the Board would be willing to do so. Bob replied yes, the Board would be willing but doubtful this could be accomplished by the end of the year.

Charles Kupperman asked the Selectmen if they polygraph the officers. This is not something currently being done, but the Board would consider it.

Willy Nelson reported on an incident he had with the Police. Willy was plowing Harry Heath's driveway and hit the mirror on the cruiser. The Officer followed him home and kept him for 2 ½ hours waiting for a State Trooper to do an investigation. Willy reported that the officer wanted to handcuff him. Willy had offered to pay for the mirror. Officer Randy DiFruscio reported that it is standard operating procedure that when a cruiser is involved in an accident another agency is called to cover the incident.

Bob reported that the Selectmen are making a renewed effort to move forward and have John LaRoche resign.

Lorraine Heath reported that her house was broken into. The Sergeant responded, to this date he has not followed up. She doesn't believe that we have a decent police department. Robin Preve expressed concerns with some events that happened. She described one particular event that happened with the alarm at the Sam Lake House. She was extremely upset about the length of time it took Ernie to respond. Robin felt that his response to her was with a poor attitude. Robin asked why aren't the residents being notified of break-ins, etc. She would like to see some type of notifications of occurrences happening in town. Robin explained that there is a note on the front door of the municipal building stating the hours. Someone had written "why don't you ever answer the door or phone" on the note. Robin said this was on the door for better than a month.

Nancy Hacking asked the Selectmen to take action. She would like to see police logs published similar to what other towns do. Bob explained that Ernie can pull that data and we can have it posted on the website.

Laurie Lockwood asked if they could pay a higher salary for the Chief, they may find an applicant with better leadership and may get more of the department. Laurie stated that she has witnessed some horrible unprofessional behavior in the Police Department.

Joe Halla stated that a lot of what he brought up is an embarrassment to the Town.

Bob explained that the Board has heard some good ideas tonight and will move forward.

Cheryl stated that the Selectmen will need to get this right and find someone to lead the Department and have the proper training. Get some outside expertise come in and tell them what is needed to continue.

George stated that he agrees with what Cheryl and Bob had said and they will be moving forward and take actions.

II. Administrative

The Board signed: A/P Manifest
 P/R Manifest
 Intent to Cut – Tax Map 203 Lot 1
 Timber Tax Levy – Tax Map 229 Lot 17
 Timber Tax Abatement
 2015–2016 Heating Fuel Contract – Irving Oil (1.84 gallon)

III. Approval of Minutes

Bob made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2015 Selectmen's meeting as written. Cheryl seconded the motion. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.

Bob made a motion to approve the non-public minutes of the November 17, 2015 Selectmen's meeting as written. Cheryl seconded the motion. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.

IV. New Business

The Board reviewed a request to purchase Town owned land on Hall Road. Ken will respond to the request.

The Selectmen reviewed correspondence from Best Septic notifying the Board that they have filed an application with DES for land spreading.

The Merrimack County Budget was reviewed. The proposed budget represents a 3.9% increase for a total of \$83,810,793

George made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 PM. Cheryl seconded the motion.

The next Selectmen's meeting will be held on December 21, 2015 at 6:00 PM at the Meetinghouse

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Stout
Administrative Assistant