

**HAMPDEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
April 9, 2018
Hampden Town House**

Approved April 18, 2018

Called to order at 6:00pm

Members Present – Carol Fitzgerald & Doug Boyd, Co-Chairs, Heather Turcotte, Matt Fisher and Alan Fritts

Members Absent – none

Also Present – Richard Patullo, Town Treasurer, Tyler McQuillan, Ted and Nancy Ziebert, Jeff Farnsworth, Select Board, Pam Courtney, Atty Rose Crowley

FY19 Budget Process:

Regional Dispatch Discussion: Richard informed the committee that he is unsure of whether this will be done in a timely manner and that it will not affect the budget, the end costs will be pretty much the same either way.

Discussion of whether to adjust article two with a higher number or an article to modify the budget line. Cliff will add the East Longmeadow payment to the estimated revenues. Heather feels that this is not a savings but a cost preventative in the future. Doug asked Richard if they, (East Longmeadow) have the equipment, radio system, and Richard replied that Jeff claims ours is at the end of service, but no clarification from Jeff what the service life actually is. The fiber will be a redundancy as well. Heather pointed to the tower and that according to Jeff, the water tower, East Longmeadow antenna and receiver at the dump will run our system and enable him to abandon use of the Mountain road tower for both the fire and PD systems. Carol stated the cost savings of \$700,000 for radios and \$350,000 for the new antenna. Doug replied that there is nothing in writing, not a single document. The Board of Selectmen only need the ATM for appropriation of funding, they don't need the ATM to enter in to an agreement. Richard explained that all costs will go into one 'pot' down to one hour for the treasurer's office for payroll, two hours for the PD admin and a stipend for Jeff for the additional supervision. Any incremental expense will be split 50/50. Heather stated that she guesses East Longmeadow want is to pay half the cost of the equipment. Richard can't say there will be minimal costs and can't say that this won't cost us anymore than to go on our own. Alan asked why the merge with East Longmeadow, and Richard responded that it's cheaper to merge with us than for them to start a civilian dispatch on their own. He added that a negative for them is that they will now have to have a greeter in the station to handle walk-ins. East Longmeadow claims that they are within 10% of our call volume and Doug replied that doesn't seem plausible. Carol asked if the call volumes were monitored and categorized, medical, fire, etc. East Longmeadow is starting a part time ambulance service with private coverage during off hours. Doug remarked that there are a lot of potential complications. Are we getting credit for out space that's being used? Richard replied yes, but they're bringing in IT versus our heat, lights and power. Carol stated from a process standpoint she would like to keep the budget clean, have a warrant article outside of the budget. She noted detail will be needed. Richard stated if vote is for appropriation we have to have number. Cliff is working on breaking out/separating dispatch and personnel costs are documented along with a list of non-personnel costs, what & how they are accounted for. There will be a need to document the process, health insurance, workers comp, FICS, payroll processing – fiber optic cost, console rental, IT number as of today, facility #. Richard added that this would have to be done at town meeting if there is a budget. Advisory cannot look to ratify a contract, it isn't within their authority. Carol replied that it should be a separate warrant, she doesn't want to jeopardize the whole budget. For new growth Richard suggested \$100,000 and both Carol and Doug responded that Norman had suggested \$80,000. Richard also eluded to the free cash number being good and informed the committee that the \$20,000 appropriated for the bond rating didn't have to be used. He went on to say that the first quarter MVX billing was more than all of the estimated receipts. In regards to the schools Carol asked if Richard had received anything in writing and he has received a spreadsheet, Doug added that the underpayment was not included in the assessment letter. The current assessment letter is what the school committee voted. Carol informed him that we have created a separate line to show.

Issues:

IT: we need an assessment of what we have versus what we should have. Richard responded that there is no overall policy on how equipment is managed. Doug wondered how much we are spending on ink with all of the printers that are next to all of the pc's in the building. Carol added that we need one point of contact and Richard responded that there are four computer consultants now working in the building

Sidewalks: Per CPA, there are too many unknowns to bring forward. Apparently, there is a sidewalk committee.

Townhouse Renovations: These have not been brought forward. The old PD space pretty good size, this will require an article. Richard informed that we are using 700 sq. feet now, and Doug replied that it doesn't make sense to not utilize the space. Doug wondered what the future of the building was with a million dollars needed in repairs including an elevator. Richard responded that money can be spent without hitting the 30% that would trigger the bigger expense.

Administrator Position: Alan remarked that there was no job description and Richard asked why an administrator and not a manager. Doug replied because of the authority level and changes in the towns charter. Richard responded that the town manager would only have the authority that the BOS allows and that he hoped they would be granted the authority to actually do the job and not be micromanaged. Doug replied that the administrator implies a lower authority. Carol interjected that whatever you call it, her understanding was that the charter or bylaw would have to change if delegating authority to another position. Richard stated that is the position is outlined in charter/bylaw then the position wouldn't change with changes in the BOS. Somebody needs to be responsible. Alan stated, independently elected boards, Carol asked if they were really independent.

Doug informed the rest of the members of the two primary themes in the 2006 DLS report, one was IT, the other a town administrator.

On another topic, Richard is concerned with how the Fire Department is paying call firefighters only twice per year including regular employees. Carol stated that they need to be paid within seven days of the end of the pay period. Question on whether the FF are riding the Wilbraham ambulance and if they are being paid and what shift they are doing so on.

Richard let the committee know that Vadar had budget/green sheet capabilities which could be useful in the future.

Regional Dispatch Discussion with BOS and Jeff Farnsworth

Doug opened the conversation stating the details are not in place. The expense part is clarified, whatever expended has to be authorized for ATM. We have to have basic costs associated with plan.

Jeff's responded by stating the conversations should be done by the last week of the month, that East Longmeadow and Rose Crowley are looking at the details. Payroll and personnel costs are pretty well solidified, minor equipment allocations, what the values of ours versus theirs, "down to a pretty small list"

Doug inquired new equipment versus old equipment

Jeff – straight replacement in today's dollars \$900,752 for hard equipment, microwave roughly until the engineers come out, \$60,000 per leg/4 legs, could possibly remove one.

Doug \$900,000 plus these legs, is this the new amount that will be needed if we don't regionalize, is this future savings?

Jeff stated first and foremost - taking the equipment piece off of the table, combining dispatch entities is keeping current with best practices and it keeps our dispatch in our facility in our town, beyond that, there is the economy of scale we share or buy double of the radio system, it will be written in the contract to merge the system. It is a three to four-year cycle to replace the Motorola system as these handheld radios are not even produced anymore. This opens up the opportunity to funds from regional facilities – we could purchase and piggy back onto the East Longmeadow system. The hard part, engineering based on what ifs. Jeff feels they need to be on a solid track. Carol asked the life span of the EL system and Jeff responded that it is five years old with a life expectancy of 12-15/16 years being typical, hard to quantify. Richard asked how old our current system is and Jeff stated 18 years old and regional monies are 'out there' Doug questioned Rose Crowley on the terms of the contract to which she replied three years and Jeff added with an auto renew. There are escape clauses built in, 18-month escape clause, 30 months if we want them to leave. Doug questioned with the three-year renewable that we end up with retiree health insurance, tail obligations, long term financial implications. Richard responded that those have been addressed in meetings and Rose will come up with language. Jeff stated they took a handful of working agreements, now need to tweak those to work for us. As for getting off the ground with a July 1 inception Doug asked what other up front costs there were?

The BOS has signed onto the Community Compact - waiting to hear if EL is going to do the same with the hope that it may cover all of the \$36,875 cost, the other hard cost is \$2500/month equipment lease for the console. Jeff stated that the 911 support incentive should cover the cost. Matt said that someone will need to be prepared to answer residents questions. Jeff responded by telling Matt that Tyler is going to be coming in and doing an in-depth story and meetings will be held at the Senior Center. Carol asked about the downsides and Jeff replied that the state could come in and tell us that we are going to go 'here', Doug quipped that it was like 'avoiding an arranged marriage' Jeff went on to say that the only thing I've heard – have John Hancock on this, union leader or union membership – signed on to this. Carol asked what the employees think of this – Jeff responded that they think it will increase their workload. Call volume per Jeff, EL handles 12,600 and Hampden handles 11,800, within 10%. Seems counterintuitive with the industry and activity in EL and being closer to the city. Jeff stated it comes down to accountability, he insists on knowing what every one of his employees is doing all of the time, all these are logged. If someone calls for a burning permit, that is logged as are home checks for vacationers. EL doesn't track calls if an office stops to do radar he doesn't call in. Heather asked how they can come up with a number if they aren't tracking calls, can't compare apples to oranges. Will EL track what we do? Jeff responded that we will only document what EL wants us to track. Question of how many calls versus how many trackable calls. Doug replied that it could get dicey with two different protocols in the same department, they're our employees. Richard offered that they are not the same measurement. Doug asked, what, if any liability does the town have by dispatching for another town. Jeff informed him that there was only a \$150/yr increase in insurance. Heather asked if they spend \$500,000 on equipment will they, EL, expect Hampden to cost share? Richard added that EL has not explicitly said that we can use their equipment for free. Revisiting call volumes, Alan stated 12,600 calls per year – to which Jeff replied any calls into dispatch get documented, EL has 12,600 calls to dispatch. Our actual 911 call numbers are lower. We track everything, they do not.

John Flynn asked what we are documenting that they aren't to which Jeff responded that he couldn't put a number on that. John replied that people are going to ask why EL is three times larger with the same number of calls. Richard asked what is the number the state counts and Jeff replied actual 911 calls, much lower numbers. Richard said that would be a more credible narrative. Doug advised bringing to town meeting enough of an outline to vote the warrant. He went on to point out that this is actually two separate articles, one for authorization and one for negotiation. Rose pointed out that any type of auto renewal would require authorization at ATM Richard described the first article needing to be an article that empowers the BOS to negotiate with a second article that would authorize the spending.

Doug suggested as a path forward that meat be put on the bones to which Jeff responded that would be a good idea, he would drill down and finalize numbers. Richard doesn't think this will open for July 1. Carol, you have four weeks to prepare information to convince the town to vote yes. Richard told Jeff that he didn't need the number for this year, that it won't help get town approval and that he should explain that which he could absolutely promise. Jeff responded with the statement he could keep people here and improve service, Richard commented higher level of service, improved service. John Flynn added that it is going to look like it will cost us more money and advised that Jeff show the offset to the budget to people. Richard stated that Cliff will have to get up and explain, John added that it may open us up to more grants in the future, and Richard continued adding 'potential savings'.

Carol asked about the EL ambulance to which Vinnie responded (it has) 'nothing to do with us right now'. John asked who dispatches and Vinnie answered that EL FD has it own dispatch. Richard asked about dispatching ambulances in both towns and Vinnie stated they've already purchased their own ambulance

Doug then asked when the warrant would be closing. Pam stated that per Rose she would like to post the warrant prior to the advisory public hearing. John stated the warrant would close at their next meeting on April 17th. Doug asked about Town House remodeling, dam repair and IT, citing that we don't know how much we are spending on IT and John replied that they had no appropriation or plan for one going forward. Richard suggested fall town meeting.

Ted questioned the \$900,000 for radio equipment. Jeff explained they would be simulcast – smaller areas, and that an engineering study needs to be done. He went on to say that they are 'working every angle possible to mitigate cost.'

Alan stated that we need a job description for a town administrator before we appropriate money. Pam offered that article is just a placeholder and that both she and Jane have job descriptions. Carol asked the BOS when their meeting was next week, (04/17 at 6pm)

General discussion:

Admin to put PH notice together tomorrow for signatures and posting.

Next meeting scheduled for 6:00pm on April 18, 2018

With no further business, Carol made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:49pm, Heather seconded, all in favor 5-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindi Connors, Admin Asst