



## TOWN OF DEERING

762 Deering Center Road  
Deering, NH 03244

### *Board of Selectmen*

Meeting Minutes – 15 December 2022

Members present: Chairman Roy Watson, Vice Chair William Whisman and Selectman Jill Smith.  
Also present: Interim Town Administrator Peter Flynn, Fire Chief Jeffrey LeBlanc

Meeting called to order – 7:00 pm

Pledge of Allegiance

#### **Item 1: Action on Consent Agenda**

- Employee payroll – 5 December and 12 December 2022
- Accounts Payable Manifest - 7 December and 14 December 2022

Mr. Watson motioned to approve the Consent Agenda, Mr. Whisman seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 3-0.

Minutes of 1 December 2022, Mr. Watson motioned to approve, Mr. Whisman seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 3-0.

#### **Item 2: Public Hearing**

Guest speaker – Great Brook EMS did not show up for the meeting. He was to explain the contracted services.

Mr. Whisman explained the rules of the Public Hearing.

Mr. Watson passed on the public comments for this meeting to get right to the public hearing on the previous discussion for the Fire Department /EMS Study Committee regarding facility improvements and Fire EMS Service Staffing. Mr. Watson explained the board hoped to provide the residents with as much information as possible. Mr. Watson explained that Selectman Jill Smith had found some discrepancies regarding the chart presented by the committee showing three options for Fire/EMS coverage.

Mrs. Smith presented an amended chart with an additional column in yellow representing Full-time EMS. This was raised as a question. The original chart had three columns – Per Diem/On-Call EMS & On-Call Fire (current) / 24-7 EMS & On-Call Fire / Contract EMS & On-Call Fire. – Please see attached chart for updated chart from December 2022. A resident had pointed out the wages were underestimated, and the Fire Chief said there should be two members working for a full 24 hours. That is 336 hours a week and estimated \$26.00 per hour. The numbers on the chart were adjusted along with their medical/dental benefits and retirement benefits. We would have to pay into the NH retirement plan at 29.78%. The chart has all the adjustments of these numbers. In the prior version there were CIP costs whether we had full time or not. In this latest addition we're trying to show only what the cost increase would be over what we're paying now.

Mrs. Smith explained the variables of each column. She went on to explain the Capital Costs and the differences between columns. There would be an increase in costs under improvements with full-time coverage because the Donovan Station would need to be upgraded. She went on to explain the Total Costs Before Credits – Anticipated revenue and the difference between part-time, full-time, and contracted services. You'll see in Offset Funds (Ambulance revolving) Any money that does come in goes into a revolving ambulance fund and we would like to

take that money (\$175,000) and offset the cost to replace the ambulance. We do have a trust fund for Fire and EMS Department Vehicles replacement and a suggested amount to be used would be \$100,000.

Mrs. Smith went on to explain the rest of the chart, noting the percentage and actual dollar increases of each column. The chart also shows the increase amounts per \$1000. Examples are provided on the charge of typical home values in Deering.

Note: Calculations do not include adding funds to the Fire Dept Building CRF for future building needs.

EMS Full-Time is calculated at a (2)-person team covering 24x7.

Fire Full-Time is calculated at a (2)-person team covering 24x7.

Therefore the 24/7 EMS & 24/7 Fire reflects (2) teams of (2), or 4 personnel, on at a time.

Mr. Watson went onto say we're trying to close in on final proposal for the Town Meeting. Mr. Watson discussed that if we were to go full-time there would be grants available that would off set the costs for up to three years. He also mentioned a move Full-time to a third party and then after a year moved back to in-house then we would have to re-certify all our equipment. That could be a mitigating factor.

Mrs. Smith brought up the need to replace an ambulance which has an 18-month lead-time and aged out buildings that need upgrading. We do not have enough money put aside for a new building. We have large expenses that need to be figured out. Do we want to stretch out payments? The air filter systems were also brought up and how they're being addressed.

Mr. Watson opened the floor to comment.

Joanne Cobb, Tubbs Hill Road, addressed the Primex report with the past safety issues that were brought up in the study 7 years ago. What has been addressed and what is left to be addressed on the list? Mrs. Smith explained the \$75,000.00 is approximate and addresses the following items: 3 Exterior Doors, 6 Replacement Windows, updating insulation in the attic, installing exhaust system for the apparatus, updated duct work on the heating, water filtration systems. The estimate does not include sprinkler system or smoke detector system. Mr. Watson explained these are just fixing deficiencies.

Mr. Watson explained that if we did go to a third-party contractor then we'd have to build separate bunk and bathroom facilities.

Mrs. Smith mentioned the list of items showing what has been completed and what needs to be completed.

Steve Diers, Clement Hill Road - What if we went with contract ambulance? Can we keep our ambulance? What happens if the contract isn't renewed? Mr. Watson raised the issue where would we store it?

Mr. Watson asked the chief to speak on this. Chief LeBlanc said there was the issue of storage that we're facing now. The chief then spoke to ordering a new ambulance in March and the 18 months wait to get delivery. Could we cancel if we ordered and then decided we didn't want it. Possibly since there is such a high demand. Even if we ordered in March, we wouldn't see it until 2025. He referenced Cheshire ordered 8 ambulances and have only received two.

Gary Smith, Peter Wood Hill Road, questioned the \$225,000.00 for the contracted services. He said that number was going to change to \$369,000.00 and Mrs. Smith explained that the amount was based on revenue and even if we didn't meet the revenue goal, they would absorb that from their structure. The numbers are based on their revenue. The rate is guaranteed for one year.

Stephen Fogelson, Old County Road - Does the \$225,000.00 include 2-person 24/7 from Great Brooks?

Mr. Watson confirmed. Mr. Watson asked about the 1 person that was allowed at one time and Chief LeBlanc explained that was during the health crisis. It is 2-person per ambulance again. Mr. Fogelson asked about the

availability of the Great Brook EMS proposal and Mrs. Smith explained it is available on the town website under Fire Dept. Study Committee.

Discussion over the old ambulance. Could we sell it? How much would it sell for? How much to repair? Chief LeBlanc \$125-150,000 for repairs and it probably wouldn't meet safety requirements. He also said it would cost too much to ship if sold third world.

Fire Chief LeBlanc recognized by the board to come up front and answer questions. Mr. Watson explained that chief has been working in Deering for 8 years and 3 years as chief.

John Shaw, East Deering Road - Looking at the first column, what's the total cost of the first column? Mrs. Smith pointed out those are costs projected if you subtract out last year's budget to get the increase in this year's taxes. The first column is what we're doing now and replacing the ambulance and putting in the ventilators.

Carl Roycroft, Tubbs Hill Road, spoke about moving to a small town and wanting to keep it a small town. He also referenced if we start adding more personnel, that will lead to more personnel and more equipment and then a new fire station. Don't stir the pot. We don't need to increase staff.

John Shaw - Why do we need full-time? What did we miss? Mr. Watson explains from what he understands we have a problem not being able to respond to as many calls as come in. We're asking the Chief to try take resources we have now and allocate to high-risk times. We don't have the staff to answer all calls. Mr. Watson says we don't have the proper facilities. We have trucks worth \$500,000.00 sitting in buildings now worth as much as the fire trucks.

John Shaw - I understand but why do we need full-time? Mr. Watson said he's trying to get the information out to the people and so they'll be able to make an informed decision.

Chief LeBlanc - Last year 2021, we missed 29 calls. Nobody showed up. Out of that, about 12%, nobody responded from the Fire Dept. 11% of the time nobody responded. 50% fire department coverage. 2022, missed 42 calls where nobody has responded - 16% of calls. Calls increased by 10.48%. Demand is going up but ability to provide services is going down. John Shaw asked if the calls were answered by other towns? The Chief said eventually. Steve Diers - to say that nobody showed up is not true. Someone showed up from other towns. The Chief asked how long are you willing to wait? Mr. Watson asked the Chief to explain the timeline to answer calls from phone call to dispatch to the home.

Peter Beard, Deering Fish & Game Road - The problem is you don't have the help and you can't get the help. The Chief said that's correct. Not many people work in town. Call times are getting longer because people work outside of Deering. The Chief is looking for direction.

Jeremiah Smith, Locke Farm Rd - Do we not have insurance on the vehicle? Fire Chief - It covers the vehicle but not all of it. Discussion ensued over the calls being answered. Does the analysis show the response times will improve with these changes? Fire Chief clarifies that this was not a study the fire department came up with. It was a committee of town's people. He asked how much risk?

Katie Lavoie, Fisher Road, asked for data, need time frames, who answered what calls, etc. Put it on a pie chart. Asked to see actual numbers. Mr. Watson said this isn't our last go round and any information you would like, please email the Town Administrator and we will carry over to another meeting. Fire Chief talked about metrics and time situations. Ms. Lavoie - Every time we talk, we have more questions. Looking at the numbers, how can someone on a fixed income afford this?

Karen Reid, East Deering Road - Ms. Reid mentioned the golden hour regarding answering calls and getting medical attention. Ms. Reid asked if there was a way to coordinate with other towns to minimize response times. Fire Chief said he went to surrounding towns to see if they were interested in collaboration. No one was

interested. Ms. Reid asked if they said why. Fire Chief said they felt it would decrease their current resources for their struggle. Ms. Smith asked who he spoke to - was it the fire departments or their board of selectmen? Fire Chief said he approached the Town Administrator and the Chief and both said no.

Mike Stone, East Deering Road, stated as part of the committee they found it is much harder to hire per diem and full time.

Ms. Smith brought up that Deering isn't paying very well. If we were to have a more competitive rate and more hours, would it be doable? If we bump up that rate and maybe get more. Fire Chief answered that other towns paying \$31-45 an hour and Deering pays \$15.00 hour. Deering recently lost 2 per diems for more money.

Steve Diers, looking at the numbers, they don't look right. Took the numbers from the previous town administrator and they weren't right. It went from \$619,000 to \$1.7 million. How do we present this to the town? Where's this all going to lead to?

Mr. Watson, how do we keep the town rural and taxes low? Spoke of Deering being Keystone – main road between towns and could there be a need for more ambulance services and maybe that Great Brook is thinking Deering could be a huge revenue stream. We must get as much information to the town residents as possible.

Gale Lalmond, Reservoir Road - In 30 years this issue has come up time and time again. And nothing against new people come into town. They want the country, but they want they want the same services as a city. People must decide what they want and what they need and how much they can afford. Are you driving people in or out. This is nothing new. Where do you draw the line? You're going to take risks. It's a small town. Figure out what you can live without.

Lou Ellen Beard, Fish and Game Road - Looking at all these numbers you need to remember that Deering has less than 250 calls a year. And it's been that way for some time. Some people won't stay because it's not busy enough. Fire Chief said it's 284 calls and Ms. Beard said the Capital Aid report said 242. How do people get emergency help without calling 911? Fire Chief said some call the fire station directly. People stop by for blood pressure checks.

Peter Beard - the contractor option looks good, but the problem is it's only for one year. Can we negotiate a longer contract? Mr. Watson thinks \$225K is a heck of a bargain.

Stephen Fogelson - If we went with Contracted services, what happens to the Ambulance Revolving Fund? Could the Trust Fund be used to offset some other costs? Mr. Watson - there could be some restrictions. Another benefit of the Contractor column is that it frees up \$350,000.

Resident commented it's bad when someone is trying to get your business and they don't show up for the presentation. Was Great Brooks the only one to apply for the contract. Why didn't he show up for this public hearing? He said he was tied up.

What about ARPA and fund raisers? Mr. Watson explained that other departments don't do fund raisers. There hasn't been much of the ARPA funds. Mr. Watson also stressed that if we went full time then we'd get 3 years funded by the government. The Fire Chief said if we went full time and got the Safer Funds then that buys us 3 years to figure out what to do in the future. Cannot be contracted services. Safer grant covers wages, insurance, etc. for full time employees.

Jeremiah Smith - research the Safer funds. It will be easier to chew on for the residents. We think it might work but we can't guarantee it.

Lori Martinage, Lake Shore Dr - Is there a difference in benefits structure between Fire and EMS? The difference is full-time and part-time.

Fire Chief explained that the EMS and Fire would be cross trained, so you'd only need 2 people each shift whether they are Fire or EMS. Ms. Smith asked about the number on duty, and it was assumed 2 Fire and 2 EMS on at the same time. This changes the number dramatically on the 24/7 Fire and 24/7 EMS Column.

Lori Martinage - With the additional staff will we be able to increase the revenue stream by offering our services if needed to other towns? Discussion ensued regarding how services are charged. Right now, the Fire Dept. doesn't charge more than the insurance covers so the town residents aren't getting additional invoices for services. Chief LeBlanc warned that outside contractors may end up charging the difference between what the insurance pays and the actual cost of using the service.

Mrs. Smith provided an updated chart with the new numbers for column 3 now that there are only 2 full-time employees on at a time. The amount dropped from \$7 per 1000 to \$3.78 per 1000 with fulltime chief.

Fire Chief - using our people to help other towns leaves our town without coverage.

Fire Chief talked about things EMS can do in addition to their regular calls. Home calls, blood pressure checks, etc.

Mr. Whisman - Who does the training for new employees? Per Diem must come in trained. Talk about Fire and Police getting trained here and then moving on to other towns. Deering is a stepping stool. Taxes I can't stand paying them. Mr. Whisman and Mr. Watson talked in passing prior to a meeting discussing this small town having no revenue but taxes. In 10 to 20 years if Deering tries to keep up with the Joneses, in 10 to 20 years we may not be able to pay the taxes. Will we get sucked into Hillsboro. These are questions we need to ask. We're losing good people to other towns. We're stuck where we're at.

Gale Lalmond, people come here and then they leave. It's the nature of the beast.

Mrs. Smith - Great Brook reviewed our metrics and anticipate revenue of \$185k. Why aren't we able to grab that much revenue - what can we do differently? Chief Lablanc said we discussed two years ago, and we decided to not aggressively seek residents to pay. We accept whatever the insurance companies pay. Discussion regarding how Medicare pays.

Elizabeth Kirby, Deering Center Road - what do other towns do? Do they take a stipend? How do they handle the ambulance calls? Which towns and chiefs did you talk to? Chief would not say what towns he talked to. The Chief said some towns are charging 70%.

Steve Dier asked about getting exact number of what type of calls. Likes that the board is trying to keep taxes low.

Ms. Smith wants to go after the quotes and get the health and safety issues and use the ARPA funds. Ask the Chief to get quotes on the ambulance and to write up a warrant article for the ambulance so we know what's needed for the CIP.

Discussion on next meeting. Ms. Smith suggested the 29<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Whisman said no to meeting on an off week. Next meeting January 5<sup>th</sup>. Get Great Brook to the meeting.

Ms. Smith suggested adding one more column with increased Per Diem hours and Chief LeBlanc said we could but what are the changes of getting more Per Diem if we just lost two? The Chief said people liked working in Deering, but they needed full-time.

Public hearing needs to be done before the end of January.

Dave Delorey, part-time resident, Locke Farm Road, asks to speak. Someone shouts from the crowd, he's not a resident. Mr. Watson, he's a part-time resident, should we allow him to speak? He sat through the whole

meeting. Jeremiah Smith - you need to keep that standard across the board at all these meetings. Mr. Watson, is it part-time or full-time resident? What does it have to be? Mr. Whisman, he must be a resident. Mr. Delorey - do you want to hear some valuable information, or do you just want to shut me up? Mr. Watson - we must be consistent across the board. At one of the last meetings someone stood up to speak and we did not allow them to speak. You've got to be a resident. Dave Delorey - so you want to shut me up. Mr. Watson - we require you to be a resident. Dave Delorey - I attended about half the FD Study meetings. Mr. Watson, if you want to stand up and be recognized as part of the FD study committee. Mr. Delorey: I understand. The board has a censorship option. I thought it was a public hearing where the public could speak. Mr. Whisman - the rules are residents only. Are you a registered voter in Deering? Jeremiah Smith - it doesn't say that. Mr. Whisman - I said that in the beginning. You must be a resident of the town to speak. Jeremiah Smith - right and you're not the chair, he is. Mr. Watson - you must be a resident. We'll go to the board - remember this future. Discussion ensued. Did anyone make a motion on this? If we have a public commentary limited to people that have legitimate interest? No, you make the rules. There should be a logical rule without wiggle room. Take a vote on it? Board needs to make a motion on. Nothing in the policy book. Mr. Whisman suggested making a motion now. Peter Flynn suggested thinking first before going to motion; things come up. Mr. Whisman - you can always make an exception. Mr. Whisman made a motion to allow only town residents to speak at any public hearing unless the chairman or a vote of 2 of the 3 selectmen allow an exception to a non-resident. Mr. Watson - that's legal, right? Mr. Flynn - yes. Mr. Whisman - alright, I make a motion. Mr. Watson - I'll second that. All in favor? Mr. Watson and Mr. Whisman said Aye. Mr. Smith opposed. Mr. Whisman: 2-1

Mrs. Smith - Full disclosure the gentleman is my father. I'm voting no because I think we have people that come here that have expertise that we could benefit from, and we should be open to listening to that kind of input and we would be remiss if not.

Mr. Watson - we should be able to make the decision on the fly. It should be codified as something that's easy enough for the next person to pick up. If you want to get on the meeting agenda, you need to request prior to that week's closing.

Gale Lalmond - I'm not opposed to information that may help the town; I just don't want non-residents having a say in what's going on in our town. Mr. Watson - I think that's the gist. If you're coming in front of the board, you should be a stake holder.

Mrs. Smith - My father did help build two fire stations, but we didn't have a policy, so I understand.

Mr. Whisman motioned to close the public hearing. Mr. Watson seconded. All in favor say Aye. Passed 3-0.

### **Item 3: Steve Folgson - Review of the Budget Advisory Committee Recommendations**

Mr. Folgson presented a written report to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Folgson provided the BAC members names - John Shaw, Steve Diers, Lou Ellen Beard, Bob Carter, Sharon Simpson and Selectman Jill Smith.

Very difficult year to set a budget because of uncertainty of inflation. Some prices were far exceeding 8%. Fuel prices, electricity costs much higher than 8% increase. The department head and committee heads did a pretty good job at taking that into account. The budgets at 8% reflected a continuity of the past. Not many new purchases. Main driver of the budget and increases is wages. Across the board the department heads requested an 8% increase in budget to account for a potential 8% increase in wages. The BAC doesn't set wages, but we set the budget to accommodate those increases.

Final figure is a 6.6% increase and \$143,500 over last year. This results in a total budget of about \$2.3 million.

This does not account for the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) costs. Once again, we did not have a CIP. We've never had a CIP during my time. This budget can only go so far.



General recommendations for improving efficiencies or tackle some of these costs. We had some struggle with the information that was being provided. There were some discrepancies the town provided reports and figures that the department heads provided. It appeared the root cause may have been the mis allocation of certain expenses throughout the year. The department heads think that the expenses are going towards one line item and then potentially not gone to that line item, so we advise to keep an eye on that. Mr. Whisman – asked for an explanation. Mr. Fogelson explained how they thought one invoice was paid and it wasn't.

Trust Fund issues - Department heads weren't sure how to access funds. BAC formally encourages the BOS to work with department heads and how to access those funds.

It became obvious that each department is responsible for negotiating their own fuel and costs. The BAC thinks are inefficient and a lost opportunity to have a town wide negotiation. The BAC encourages the BOS to put in place a town wide negotiation.

One major expense is cost for vehicle maintenance and repairs. The effort to hire a town mechanic should be revisited. The BAC recommended a new rate - \$30 an hour. The BAC recommends the BOS doing a cost analysis with regards to inhouse mechanic and outside servicing. Not sure exactly what the town spends every year. If we knew this, then we could determine what a wage cap should be. Need data.

Finally, we had some confusion of the role of the BAC. There isn't really a stated purpose. The BAC found an old charge document from 2008 that isn't current and encourages the BOS to come up with a current statement of purpose and help guide future proceedings for the BAC.

Any questions?

Mr. Watson – Would the BAC come up with some sample language of what they would like included in the charter or mission statement. What the differences are between what there is now and what we can do to make the BAC a more relevant organization. Maybe have a sub-committee delve into the budgets of each department. A deep dive. See what we can do to get a current charter. Make sure there is a good policy in place.

Mr. Whisman – good job BAC.

#### **#4 2021 Audit Update present by Interim Town Administrator Peter Flynn**

During the past few meetings Mr. Flynn couldn't find the audit and then it was found, and it wasn't complete. Then the Representation Letter was completed and presented to the auditor. The final paperwork was sent in, and the audit was completed in the next couple of days.

Mr. Watson – From what I understand there is more than one available auditor. Would you say this was a positive or negative experience?

Mr. Flynn – it was neither positive nor negative. I came in too late to make a judgement. It might be easier to request proposals for the service. That's my recommendation tonight.

Mr. Watson in favor of having competition. Maybe find other possibilities.

Mr. Flynn – They can be part of the bidding process.

Ms. Smith – Did they let you know when the Management Letter would be ready?

Mr. Flynn – I think there's a letter in there. I'll get that for you.

## #5 - Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Flynn – I didn't put a lot on the agenda due to the public hearing. I am updating contracts and we are living up to the conditions. I found some situations that could have been dangerous if they hadn't been caught. Without going public, we got it under control and it's working out well. There are a lot of contracts. For various services.

Committees and Board memberships:

Still working on getting all the members names on the committees and boards. Mr. Flynn is trying to find out who is attending and there are a lot that aren't attending or serving. There should be a policy.

Mr. Flynn is working on this and promises to have this for the next meeting. Mr. Watson stated Ms. Smith developed a road map and forwarded to Mr. Flynn.

Calendar of events that take place. Deadlines for signing up and when budgets must be prepared. M. Flynn enclosed a list to the Board.

Other than that, we're catching up with the details of running the town. A new employee in charge of finance. She has made a whole lot of difference and a terrific find. She's also a treasurer in Frankestown. She's a bonus.

Mr. Flynn – we request a non-public.

Mr. Whisman – Shout out to the BAC. Worked well as a team. Outstanding job.

A shout out to the road crew. A shout out to Fire Dept Study Committee. A shout out to all the employees and board members.

Mr. Watson – thank you to Rob Cilic of East Deering Road for providing help with the visuals and Ms. Smith for her extracurricular for bringing the professional printed materials for this presentation and other situations.

Mr. Watson made a motion to go into Non-public Session RSA 91: A-3 II-part A and B at 9:22pm. Mr. Whisman seconded the motion. Passed via roll call vote – Mr. Watson-yes, Ms. Smith-yes and Mr. Whisman-yes 3-0.

9:00pm-Board came out of Non-Public Session

Mr. Whisman moved to hire Greg Chlapowski as a Highway Department Driver/Laborer part time pending the usual background checks. All in favor 3-0.

Mr. Watson moved to go into non-public per RSA 91-A-3, a) and (b). Mr. Watson-yes, Ms. Smith-yes and Mr. Whisman-yes.

Board came out of Non-Public at 9:20PM

Mr. Watson moved to give permanent status to Wyatt Gould as he completed his probation for six months. Mr. Houghton recommended Mr. Gould receive an additional \$2.00 per hour. The Board agreed. All voted in the affirmative 3-0 for both requests.

9:35PM- Mr. Watson moved to adjourn the meeting and all voted in favor 3-0.