

SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES SEPTEMBER 11, 2000

Present: Brian G. – Chair, Jim P., Lee S.

Absent: Steve L., Don A.

Guests: Dan Ayers, Copley Hospital, Bud Geary, Morristown Rescue, Dick Sargent, George and Dot Cook, Morristown Rescue, Mary Ann Wilson, George Vaupel, Morristown Rescue.

Meeting of the Selectboard convened at 6:30 PM.

GENERAL FUND:

Lee moved and Jim seconded a motion to pay Warrant #00-39 in the amount of \$9489.70. Passed.

GUESTS:

Brian started the meeting by stating that the Selectboard has been receiving regular updates from Bud Geary regarding the critical staffing situation at Morristown Rescue. A long-range solution is needed, and the intent of the initial meeting is to start fact-finding.

Bud Geary indicated the present status of the Squad is thirty members, twenty-five of which are active. They are able to cover all but one weekend a month. They have regularly pursued new help but have not had much success. He predicts without a change, the existing volunteers will burn out in another year and the Squad will be forced to subcontract services.

Dan Ayers inquired what the greatest need is. Bud Geary indicated that during the weekday they have minimal coverage due to work commitments. Dan Ayers inquired what the appropriate number of volunteers would be. Bud Geary indicated a total of forty to fifty people would adequately fill the schedule, provided they were available for day shifts. Bud indicated the pressure is in not having any back up coverage for volunteers. Bud Geary and George Vaupel are the Monday – Friday Crew Chiefs. They have one backup from time to time. There should be at least three to four Monday-Friday Crew Chiefs. Brian clarified that without Bud and George the Squad would need to supplement with hired services.

Lee inquired whether other members could be encouraged to take days. Bud Geary felt that all volunteers are giving what they can to the schedule. George Vaupel stated that the Squad needs to make more effort to recruit members. Bud stated they constantly need to recruit.

Brian inquired about the operation of Stowe Rescue Squad as an example. George Cook stated that Stowe does not have set crews and routinely announces their staffing needs over the radio system.

Brian discussed the possibility of expanding the volunteer pool by involving the Fire Department. Jim stated that two firefighters are presently trained in emergency services. Lee stated that many members of the Fire Department have advanced first aid training, but their numbers are short during weekdays as well, and they would be a limited resource. George Cook stated that they have always had set crews but that flexibility such as in the Stowe example may be attractive in recruiting new members. George Vaupel felt that the broadcasting of the need for positions would lower community confidence in the Squad. Bud Geary indicated that response is sometimes delayed in Stowe due to their arrangement. Jim and George Vaupel would object to operating that way.

Dick Sargent inquired about hiring an attendant and charging for calls. Brian indicated the Board has previously discussed the idea and it has always been shot down, as they didn't feel one person would be enough. Dick Sargent asked how the Board feels about charging insurance companies for calls. Brian stated that the Board has opposed charging but wants to support rescue services – funding a position may be an alternative.

Dot Cook stated that they have the same problem year after year. They need to make a big change and fund a forty-hour position. It could be five eight-hour shifts or four ten-hours shifts. The attendant could do administrative work when not on a call – public relations, billing, recruitment. George Vaupel stated that they have one and one-half persons in Stowe. Jim stated that with additional responsibilities the paid position would be justified. Dot Cook stated that it would free members and the Rescue Board to get other work and projects done. Jim suggested that a plan would be needed for the paid position with the volunteers filling in the gaps. George Vaupel stated that long-range planning involves recruitment. Brian stated that with the labor force so tight there are just not enough people available to volunteer. George Vaupel stated that they need three to four people for day shifts. Dot Cook stated that they need more than three to four in order to cover absenteeism and turnover.

Brian asked if the Monday-Friday twelve-hour shifts were contracted out to Lamoille Ambulance would Rescue be willing to cover the night and weekend shifts. Bud Geary indicated that they would probably accept that plan. Jim asked what the situation would look like in two to three years. Would there be burnout because only nights and weekends would be an option? Would it be a temporary or permanent solution? Brian stated that he feels it could be a permanent private sector solution. Dot Cook stated that she has no problem with a paid day position but rather than hiring Lamoille Ambulance, suggested hiring one local person. Jim stated that they need to decide whether to keep the local flavor of the service or to hire paid services. George Vaupel asked if Bud Geary would consider the position. Bud indicated that he would be interested in considering the position but would have to give it a lot of thought. Julia Compagna asked what would happen if Bud Geary became incapacitated in the position? Dot Cook stated it would be

no different than having a police officer down. Brian indicated the pool of replacements for police officers is much greater.

Dan Ayers stated that Copley Hospital sees Rescue as a resource for the community. If Rescue needs support from the hospital they want to assist if possible. There is some compensation available in the hospital setting, and different roles Rescue could play. They are currently under a contract with Lamoille Ambulance for two more years. He stated that whether Rescue is funded by the Town or self-funded, they need someone to administrate the operation. He suggested examining the demographics of the squad members and conducting a membership survey as to why they participate. Bud Geary responded that the majority wishes to help those in need. Dan suggested Johnson State College students as a possible resource for recruitment. He also suggested some sort of incentive for volunteers. Lee stated that even with a pay incentive, weekday volunteers would be critical. George Vaupel suggested tapping into retirees for volunteers. Lee asked Dan Ayers if Copley employees could be a source for volunteers. Dan stated that they would support employees volunteering during off-duty, but like any other employer cannot spare them during the workday. Bud Geary stated that he was hoping for more of a detailed proposal from Copley regarding their involvement with the Squad. Dan indicated that Copley is willing to work with the Town and the Squad in developing a detailed proposal, but that they need to know what limits the Selectboard is going to place upon options.

Julia Compagna inquired whether the Selectboard had ever considered funding a position through the use of a subscription plan. Brian indicated that money has not been the issue, but rather the lack of people. George Vaupel suggested hiring two people to fill in the holes. Bud Geary indicated that this plan would cover the next few years, and that they wouldn't necessarily have to be full time positions. George Vaupel suggested starting with one employee and re-evaluating in a year. Brian suggested that if services were contracted, volunteers could work for Lamoille Ambulance. Dot Cook stated that the Rescue volunteers would not want to work for Hoag (Lamoille Ambulance). Jim indicated that as well as the employee experience not being pleasant, Lamoille Ambulance sometimes experiences shortages in coverage in this area. Dot Cook stated that hiring out to Lamoille Ambulance will end Morristown Rescue, interest will drop off. She stated that hiring locally could prevent this. Jim suggested comparing the cost of hiring two local people to the cost of contracting with Lamoille Ambulance. Brian stated that they have two volunteers now and can barely keep it going – it would still be just a patch. George Vaupel suggested adding one or two full time people. Dan Ayers stated at least one and a half persons are needed to cover downtime.

Lee asked how other towns are set up? George Vaupel indicated that Northfield has one full time person, Stowe has one and one-half, and Barre Town has one. Lee inquired whether one full time person, with no transport activity could keep busy? George Vaupel stated that there are many tasks, and that the administrative position may disappear. Jim, Dot and George indicated there is always the scheduling, hepatitis program, public education and in-house training to be done, as well as the teaching of first aid courses. Brian stated that the person would have to be at least an EMT. George Vaupel stated that

they would need to be an EMTI as well as driver qualified. Bud Geary stated that for the long term they would need more than one. George Vaupel suggested starting with one, and then revisiting the issue in a year. Brian asked if they anticipate the need for a paid department in the next few years? George Vaupel stated that the paid person could actively recruit new members. Dot Cook stated that she did not see the need for a paid full time squad in the near future. George Vaupel stated that he could never see eliminating the volunteer component, that it would be a combination. George Cook stated that they would need to identify the characteristics and skills necessary for the position as it would have broad responsibilities. Dick Sargent inquired whether this would have to be brought up at Town Meeting for a vote. Brian indicated it would and that it would be effective with the fiscal year starting July first.

Bud Geary asked if the Selectboard is concerned with the deadline given by Hoag (Lamoille Ambulance). Brian stated that Mr. Hoag has notified the Selectboard every year that he is not going to cover the Rescue gaps unless funding is appropriated in the budget to compensate his services when insurance does not cover. Every year he has continued to provide coverage despite the lack of an appropriation. Bud Geary asked if Rescue should continue scheduling under the assumption that Lamoille Ambulance will cover? Brian indicated that as there is no other plan at this time, it is the only option and they should maintain the same procedures for now.

Brian asked Dan Ayers if he had any suggestions for recruitment? Dan indicated that Copley is experiencing the same labor problems as everyone else and had begun recruiting employees from outside the area. Brian asked if Copley would consider committing its sales force recruiters to assist Rescue with volunteer recruitment. Dan Ayers stated that they have a person who is the volunteer contact specifically for recruiting. He stated that he would have to contact Warren West, but did not think there would be a problem with piggy-backing Rescue recruitment onto Copley volunteer recruitment. There would need to be a structured approach and he suggested that Pete Cramer in the Physical Therapy Department might be of assistance. (7:40PM – George and Dot Cook, Richard Sargent exited the meeting). Pete Cramer has also offered to help with recruitment at JSC. George Vaupel stated that the Squad had actively recruited at the Copley Health Fair. Mary Ann inquired whether the Copley volunteer coordinator is a full time position. Dan Ayers indicated that it is a full time position. Mary Ann inquired if an administrator were hired would patients be charged for services? The Board indicated that the Town would still provide services. Mary Ann stated that the required responsibilities would make a big difference in the salary requirement to fund the position. Mary Ann stated that she thinks it is time for a full time Rescue person, and that the recruitment efforts should be dovetailed with the Copley volunteer coordinator. Bud Geary stated that he is at his limit of volunteering. Brian stated that recruiters would need to have someone available to answer insider questions.

Brian indicated that if a position is funded it will be advertised as are all other positions. The most qualified would be chosen. Bud Geary indicated he agrees with the approach. Lee asked if one full time person were funded, could the Squad struggle through with the rest of the coverage? Bud and George Vaupel indicated that they could get through with

proactive recruitment assistance. Lee suggested that they need to be creative with their scheduling.

Julia Compagna inquired if the Police officers are trained and respond with jump kits? Brian indicated that they provide twenty-four/seven coverage equipped with jump kits, but that they are often busy dealing with traffic at the scene, etc. Brian stated that at a minimum the Squad needs to get assistance with recruitment. Dan Ayers stated that he is fairly confident Copley can help with identifying and marketing volunteers. Jim and Bud explained the volunteer training process. Brian inquired whether they thought it was a deterrent to volunteerism. They do not feel it is overly burdensome. Julia Compagna inquired whether high school seniors or the 911 Explorers could be a resource. Bud and George Vaupel indicated they could be of limited assistance. Brian asked if Rescue could commit someone to work with the Copley volunteer coordinator right away. Bud Geary indicated they would come up with someone. Dan Ayers stated that the Copley emergency department personnel might be interested in serving. Brian suggested that Rescue contact Pete Cramer to initiate the recruitment process. Brian stated that the Selectboard would examine the paid position further. Lee stated that he is leaning toward one full time position and increased volunteerism. Jim agreed with Lee. Brian suggested that Rescue identify immediate needs and get Pete Cramer on board. Dan Ayers also suggested that Dr. Blowers, Pete Cramer and the volunteer coordinator could help strategize the effort. Brian asked if the Rescue administrative assistant would be receptive to the idea. Bud Geary indicated that he thought she would be willing.

The Selectboard thanked everyone for coming. Mary Ann suggested offering the use of the Copley PT Department facilities as an employee benefit.

Lee moved and Jim seconded a motion to adjourn at 8:30 PM. Passed.

Julia Compagna, Scribe
Minutes filed 9/12/00

Brian Greenia, Chair
Minutes not approved