

West Ossipee Fire Commissioners Meeting
Sunday, July 12, 2009
Central Station

Commissioners Present: Joseph Goss, Henry Ela, and Paul Jay

Others Present: Alan Gould, Bob Wood

Minutes Taken By: Marilyn Bolduc

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 am by Commissioner Goss.

The July 5th meeting minutes were reviewed and a motion to accept the minutes was passed 3-0.

Bob Wood of Municipal Resources (MRI) introduced himself. He gave his qualifications as a retired fire chief from Durham, NH/UNH and did an interim term as fire chief in Center Harbor.

Alan Gould introduced himself. He is the CEO of MRI and was in Public Safety for 29 years.

Mr. Wood stated for the record that the Ossipee Selectmen did not want a municipal fire department or to take over the fire precincts. MRI will not be looking at EMS/ambulance service or at Medstar.

Commissioner Goss stated in the guidelines presented to the selectmen, the precincts wanted the ambulance to be included in the study. There has been lobbying to keep the ambulance service private and out of the study.

Mr. Wood asked the commissioners to give a brief overview of their backgrounds. J. Goss has been a commissioner for 28 years and was on the Budget Committee for 10 years. He joined the Junior Fire Department of Freedom, NH in 1976 and worked his way up in the department. P. Jay has been a commissioner for 15 years. He was a career level certified instructor, EMT Intermediate. He is now on disability. He was on the Center Ossipee Fire Department for 9 years as an active firefighter/rescue for 7 years. He was an administrative officer and captain on the Rescue for 6 years. He also served in the military. H. Ela started on the East Conway Fire Department in 1972 and joined the West Ossipee Fire Department in 1992. He also served in the military.

Mr. Wood explained the process of collecting information. He has met with Ossipee Corner and Center Ossipee Commissioners and Fire Chiefs and with Chief B. Eldridge. He has met with the Ossipee Selectmen. He will be meeting with other town officials in Ossipee and the surrounding towns. He wants to get a broad scope of the precincts then compare them with other towns of comparable size. He will be meeting with department members and explain to them what is going on and answer their questions. He wants to keep moral up. There is no hidden agenda; he's here to observe. Commissioner Goss said the fire precincts are not just fire and rescue and would like the study to cover the full scope of the duties performed.

Chief Eldridge has give Mr. Wood a copy of the department's policy manual and job descriptions. From the commissioners he is looking for the precinct's history and it financial status.

Presently, the precinct's reserve fund has been used to purchase Engine 4. Normally, the precinct does have a reserve fund. West Ossipee Precinct has the lowest evaluation of the three precincts. West Ossipee runs a tight budget with very little to no surplus funds at the end of the year. The town collects the tax then distributes 1/12 monthly to the precinct. Advances can be request if necessary. In

November, 2008 West Ossipee Precinct did take an advance due to inaccurate information received from a municipal association employee regarding a lend/lease with a back out clause. A policy is now in place that all requested information must be in writing and sent to the precinct by certified mail. An attorney has been retained to review all the information. Mr. Wood said that contracts/leases can be sent to DRA for review.

The precinct was incorporated in 1949. The precinct uses the Local Government Center (LGC) for its insurance carrier.

Mr. Wood asked if the precinct had made use of the classes offered by LGC. The commission is familiar with the training classes and will be using the CDL licensing class so all department members will have CDL licenses. Mr. Wood stated that LGC also has an excellent Skid School Class.

The commission has monthly meetings before the 10th of each month to approve payroll and payment of invoices. It is usually attended by the chief. The precinct has a Purchasing Policy in place and all purchases go through the chief. Any purchases over \$500.00 must be approved by the commission.

Hiring Policy -- Applications are submitted to the chief and his officers for review and references are checked. Qualified applications are presented to the commission to sign off on. The number of personnel is determined by the chief. As of this time, a hiring freeze is in place due to budget constraints.

Junior Firefighter Explorer Program -- A junior firefighter program was started this year. The members are extremely active and are insured under the department's policy. The program has 6 members. There were 19 applicants for the program.

This year the precinct adopted a new Policy and Procedures Manual and established job descriptions for each position in the department.

Jewell Hill Construction Timetable -- The precinct is waiting for the bond check to be issued. Due to paperwork not being filed with the State in the 1940's, the precinct now has been officially established under RSA 52 by the passage of Senate Bill 75. Once the construction starts, the building should be done in 4 months. It's a pre-engineered building which is ready for delivery. The radiant heat tubing will be laid and the floor and aprons will be poured. The well was donated and is already in the ground. The precinct business offices will remain at Central Station. The cost of adding offices with the required sprinkler system was too expensive to add to the building at this time. It can be added in the future. The decision was made to keep the impact of the construction on the taxpayer as low as possible. The building will have a vault to store precinct records.

Future building updates being considered are converting the old Jewell Hill Station into offices and adding onto Central Station. Even with the new building at Jewell Hill, Central Station will always remain to facilitate effective coverage for the precinct. Jewell Hill will always house a Class A pump truck. This helps with the area's insurance rates and reduces response time to the Deer Cove/Ossipee Lake calls. Jewell Hill will house the seasonal rescue equipment. Central Station covers calls on Route 16, the Windsock development and the northern portion of the precinct.

The Route 16/25W intersection is the third busiest intersection in the State. The future of West Ossipee shows there is a huge growth potential along Route 16 and around the Route 16/25W intersection. There is approximately 500 acres for a commercial hub. The State has considered a roundabout to handle traffic flow. If the State reconfigures the intersection, the precinct's Central Station will have to be relocated, as in Holderness, NH with the help of the State.

Capital Improvement Schedule -- There is no written plan. There is a list in the Commission's meeting minutes. There are no plans to make any major purchases in the next three years until debt load is paid down. The commissioners strive not to increase the precinct's debt and overburden the taxpayers. Due to the fact that Engine 3 had to be taken out of service as replacement parts are not available to correct the problems, Engine 4 was purchased. The precinct looked for a used pump truck that would last 3-4 years. This is the first time in the history of the precinct that a Tax Anticipation Note has been taken.

Chief Eldridge described to Mr. Wood the precinct's boundaries in an earlier meeting. West Ossipee precinct covers from the center of the Lovell River to the northern town boundary. It also covers Ossipee Lake and bays to their shorelines. There has been preliminary discussion within the West Ossipee precinct to changing the boundary on Ossipee Lake to the mouth of the river leading to Broad Bay. Center Ossipee precinct would take over coverage of the bays. This would facilitate faster response time. As of this date, there have been no discussions with the Center Ossipee Precinct.

West Ossipee purchased an airboat for river rescues and winter water rescues. Center Ossipee precinct has a boat for water rescues. The two precincts work together on lake rescues. West Ossipee precinct has no issues with its southern boundary at the Lovell River.

West Ossipee has control of the Ossipee Lake Dam in Effingham. The towns of Freedom, Effingham, and Ossipee jointly maintain the dam and flood management plan. The State takes care of major repairs and holds the liability insurance on the property.

West Ossipee Light District -- The precinct has three street lights: 1) Nichols Road and Route 16, 2) Jewell Hill Road and Route 16, and 3) Route 41 and Route 16. Future light installations being considered are Route 41 at the railroad crossing by Medstar due to high ATV and snowmobile traffic and Deer Cove Road and Route 16. PSNH has notified the precinct that the current lights will be upgraded to energy efficient lights. The Town Main Street Project is looking into installing lights on the Route 25 W bridge over the Bearcamp River.

West Ossipee has no water precincts. There is a water precinct in the Bluffs development. There is the possibility in the future that ownership could come to the precinct. There are no plans to take it over. Due to the huge liability, it would be reviewed in depth.

The precinct strives to deliver the best service possible. At the last annual meeting, the commission presented the voters with an overview of the bond issue. Why the construction was needed, the scope of the construction, future possible upgrades, the efforts made to keep the tax burden as low as possible, and the impact to the current tax rate. The 2009 annual meeting was the best attend meeting in the history of the precinct. All the voters' questions were answered and the bond vote passed 28-4.

Due to changes in the laws and mandates by the State, the precinct has been going through many changes this year. All new policies, procedures and job descriptions have been reviewed by the precinct attorney.

Questions for MRI -- The precinct would like to see status reports. Mr. Gould said the commission could call his office at anytime and he would let them know if a status report had been sent to the selectmen. The commission could then go to the selectmen's office to review it. He also stated that at the end of the study a draft of the survey would be sent for a review of the facts. MRI wants all the facts verified before releasing a final report.

The meeting with MRI ended at 11:17am.

The commission reviewed the mail folder. The folder contained an email regarding the status of the bond. There was a draft manual for writing safety manual for the precinct. A motion was made to give copies of the manual to each commissioner to review and to appoint a committee; passed 3-0

A motion was made to have the safety committee be made up of 2 sitting commissioners, 2 department members and 2 precinct residents; passed 3-0.

Manifest -- The manifest was a list of invoices to be paid, but did not include the backup invoices. After review of the list, the following was addressed:

1. Items that were "starred" were over \$500.00 and should have had a purchase order submitted to the commission for approval, but were approved for payment.
2. Items marked with a line needed additional explanation to the commission before they are paid.
3. There are invoices for Nextel and Verizon Wireless. Why do we have 2 wireless companies and would it be more cost effective if all the services were carried by one wireless company? This needs to be researched.

A motion was made to have Melissa Ferland change her outgoing message on the department's phone to reflect her job title as department secretary and not administrative assistant as it currently states; passed 3-0.

A motion was made that Melissa Ferland to turn over the West Ossipee Precinct post office box key to the current precinct clerk. All mail is to go to the precinct clerk for review and distribution; passed 3-0.

A motion was made the when a Manifest is presented to the commission backup invoices will be attached and a person to answer the commission's questions will be present; passed 3-0.

Commissioner Ela stated he had seen a picture in the Carroll County Independent showing the sunken airboat. At the July 5th commissioner's meeting, Chief Eldridge stated that this incident was being kept low keyed. Commissioner Ela wanted to know if anyone had approved the submission of the picture to the paper. Commissioner Ela will follow up with Chief Eldridge on this matter.

A motion was made that any future photo submissions to newspapers will be approved by the commission; passed 3-0.

The Carroll County Independent has a good picture of the West Ossipee Honor Guard with the Junior Firefighters marching behind them. The commission was proud of their first and second place awards, respectively, in the July 4th parade.

Review of the expenditures since 2005 did not show a lot of heavy expenditures. Only one item stood out, the high cost of freight on orders from Firematic. When placing future orders, an effort to negotiate lower freight rates should be exercised or another vendor with lower rates found. The precinct has done a lot of business with Firematic and with this history hopefully they will lower costs so we may continue with them.

The next meeting of the commission will be on Sunday, August 9, 2009 at 8:00am in Central Station.

A motion was made to adjourn; passed 3-0.

Meeting adjourned at 11:55am.

Minutes Approved: _____

Commissioner Joseph Goss

Commissioner Henry Ela

Commissioner Paul Jay