Public Safety Advisory Meeting Minutes

September 26, 2017

Brad Sevaldson, Greg Uthoff, Marie Reinhardt, John Reinhardt, Susan Power, Carl Ward, Colleen Gilliam, Toby Martin

Discussion:

Toby Martin provided department reports for EMS and the Police. The Select board stated at its last meeting that they were going to prepare a response to the letter presented by Holly Giles from the Public Safety Advisory Committee. Chat with the Chief event will be held on September 28th from 6 to 8 pm at 60 Main Street, this is during the Art Walk.

Chief Martin shared on behalf of both he and Chief Lange a concern about the select board perception that department heads may be padding their budgets based on discussion at the previous board meeting. Chief Lange requested to use money from his budget to purchase an Identification badge maker. The equipment could be used by other departments, and generate revenue through the fees collected for concealed weapons permits. A comment was made by Selectman Rines questioning why the department could find money in the operating budget for this purchase when they were asked to reduce costs. Chief Lange has taken the strategy of filling shifts himself to reduce operating cost therefore saving money for the department and would like to use that money saved to purchase equipment which will generate additional revenue. The committee entered into a broader discussion about the relationship between Selectman Rines and the public safety department and how this problem impacts the selectboard, the PSAC and the town. Katherine Martin-Savage was present for the meeting to listen. She shared that we all needed to work together and that the board asked Chief Lange to research other bids for the equipment to ensure that the town receives the best price. Town ordinance states that anything over $2k requires 3 bids.

EMS plans to begin fundraising and accepting donations towards purchase of a response vehicle to be used to help bring additional EMS members to a scene and administrative work. At this time EMS needs to use the ambulances for any errands or to bring additional EMT’s and paramedics to a scene. This strategy ties up both ambulances which means they cannot respond if another emergency situation occurs in town. The vehicle will be a mid size SUV to accommodate medical equipment. It may take several years to raise enough money, estimated cost $45k. The future of EMS is mobile integrated health. Having a response vehicle will help to prepare the department for mobile health. Committee members inquired about why other vehicles in the Wiscasset fleet could not be utilized. Why are departments not sharing resources? Is there something the committee can do to help in the interim while funds are being raised? Is there a way that the committee could help to facilitate talks between departments specifically EMS and fire to share resources such as the pick up trucks in these types of situations until a response vehicle can be obtained? Chief Martin plans to develop some flyers to share about the fund raisers which will be distributed via social media.

Colleen shared information from the meeting with the chair of the Wiscasset Area Chamber of commerce, Monique McRae. PSAC was an agenda item for the chamber at their 9/21 meeting however they did not get through their full agenda. Chamber chair invited members of the PSAC to their next business before hours event on October 19th 7:30 am at Sarah’s Café for networking and information sharing. Greg and Brad will be present as chamber members and offered to share public safety interests with the members of the chamber. PSAC members have also been invited to make a presentation at the regular November chamber meeting November 16th 7:30 am at the town meeting room. The goal of attending this meeting is to collaborate with local business on public safety needs and to receive feedback from business on public safety needs and practices. Other suggestions included the potential of creating a survey to gather public comment. If the PSAC puts together a survey then the chamber will share it on their social media sites and constant contact distribution. Colleen has forwarded this information via email to Holly Giles, chair of PSAC. Chamber is also willing to share other public announcements from the public safety departments.

Discussion about recommending an independent study of public safety departments to seek recommendations on how to work together and create efficiencies for the town. Last study was done by Tide View. Cost of this study is not known by attendees. Cost will be the first question asked by select board. The Tide View study recommended a full time EMS for the town. Chief Martin is the first EMS Chief to operate a full time department for the town. Concerns about relations between EMS and fire department impacts ability to share resources such as vehicles and equipment. Chief Martin left the room to allow committee member to freely discuss this subject.

Committee determined that the first approach should be to engage Chief Merry in a discussion. Colleen will contact Chief Merry and ask him if he would be open to talking informally with PSAC members.