

MINUTES OF HAVERHILL FIRE COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday, November 12, 2012
Draft Subject to Review, Correction and Approval at Following Meeting

Members Present: Rick Ladd, Howard Hatch, Don Hammond, Mike Lavoie, Deb McDanolds, Shawn Bigelow, Mike Bonanno, and Richard Morris

Members Excused: Dick Guy, Rich Clifford, Brad Kennedy, and Chris Demers

Staff Present: Glenn English, Town Manager and Karen Hyde, Clerk

Call Meeting to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM

Rick Ladd again passed out basic information. The second sheet was the Fire Department budgets for 2012, which showed the total and individual budgets. The first sheet showed 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 amounts of money provided by the Town for the operational equipment. The Other Op Revenue column was the amount of money raised locally by the Haverhill Corner fire department for equipment and supplies, not including what they raised for a party; it was strictly operations or equipment which they might put in a truck or generator. The average cost is \$2,334, which is over the four years. He had also attached the minutes of the last meeting to his informational packet. The last sheet of the packet is the sheet that is used to realign the formulas, both equipment and operations, during the last budget go around, which was increased from the preceding years.

Howard Hatch asked where Woodsville and North Haverhill's other op revenue was. Rick Ladd said that was a question to ask the North Haverhill people who were there; Dick Guy from Woodsville couldn't make the meeting as he was at a training as was Brad Kennedy. He referred to the minutes of the last meeting, specifically the last paragraph, where he asked the 3 fire departments to bring in the figures of what has been spent on generators, radios, etc. over the last 5 or 10 years. He stated that he got the figure from Haverhill Corner, but not from North Haverhill or Woodsville. Don Hammond stated that they had taken a vote at their meeting and it was unanimous that what they raised was their own business and no one else's. This was the unanimous vote of the 21 members of the department. Howard Hatch stated that they would be getting nothing out of the committee unless they laid things on the table. Rick Ladd stated that they wanted to get an honest understanding as to what it was costing to run that portion of their department. Shawn Bigelow stated that they make a lot of money fundraising and they are able to keep their budget low because of the fundraising. Rick Ladd asked what the risks would be if they didn't add in these dollars to the formula. Would fundraising stop? Mike Bonanno stated that less people would likely get involved in it.

Mike Lavoie stated a few years ago he and TM English had the conversation that it was difficult to determine what the true costs of the fire departments was because each department raised money and to some level, injected money into equipment. He stated that nobody wanted to see how much money they were raising; they were trying to determine how much money it actually costs to run their departments. Nobody is looking to take money away; they just need the real numbers to fund the fire departments. The committee doesn't want to know what they are spending their fundraising dollars on; the committee only wants the dollar amount. Don Hammond then responded that his department probably spent \$5,000 a year of what they raised for equipment and/or supplies. They spend approximately \$1500 a year on foam. Mike Lavoie stated that that was what the committee was looking for; what is paid for above and beyond what the taxpayers pay. Rick Ladd commented that the task of the committee was to determine what the actual supplies and equipment costs to run these departments and how they can fairly split that money out to all who receive that service, not just those in the precincts who pay quite a bit more than

those outside the precinct. They are trying to level the field. He stated that the Haverhill Corner figures that they had presented were fairly close to what they actually spent. Mike Lavoie commented that the Town Manager and the Selectboard needed the figures of what it actually costs.

Rick Ladd asked TM English if they had all these figures, if they could find out how much more this would cost the taxpayers. TM English thought that it would be about \$12-\$14 a person. Howard Hatch brought up the fact that Haverhill Corner and North Haverhill own their fire stations; Woodsville rents theirs from the precinct, but they are not actually paying rent. Woodsville Ambulance does pay rent for its space in the fire station. Mike Lavoie thought that was a number that should be added to the equation.

Rick Ladd said that he heard what Howard Hatch heard at the last meeting, which was that Woodsville did not do any fundraising. He thought that they needed to find out what they charge Woodsville Ambulance for rent or find out what it actually costs to run that department. Howard Hatch wanted to know who owned the fire trucks and the response was the departments did.

Rick Ladd commented that one of the reasons the committee was formed was that people in the precincts were paying twice. They were there to equalize these costs. He also stated that the first thing they needed to do was address the formula. That was their task from the Selectboard, which was to address the supplies and the equipment and equalize these costs to all the people in the Town of Haverhill. One of the questions that was asked was whether each fire department was going to get the same amount. According to the formula, Woodsville and North Haverhill had more assessed value.

Rick Ladd stated that this was an interim step; it's not perfect and it would not solve all the problems, but it's going to make it better for the departments and those living in the village districts. They cannot keep asking people to pay twice. He said that you find out what your total costs are; this is what needs to be raised by the Town and then you spread it out where it goes. Someone may say that they don't want to pay for the ladder truck in Woodsville, but if they're paying a little bit less, they are going to go with this scenario until the next step. Don Hammond commented that if they went to one district, the pay would have to be the same for all three departments. This is not what the committee is all about. He stated that the reason Woodsville's budget is so much higher is because they pay their firemen. He said that they get money up front before they even set foot to go to a fire. Rick Ladd felt that this would be an issue in the future, because what is going to stop a precinct from saying that now that it's going to be done through the Town, we're going to submit our budget proposal for the precinct and jack up officers' pay. Howard Hatch made the comment that some people were being paid to come to the meetings and others were not, which was refuted. Rick Ladd said that he thought people were there because they wanted to make this work. There would be a lot of issues to come out of these meetings, but they could either stay where they are or make some movement forward.

TM English stated that he didn't think that the law provided for the creation of three new districts. His reading of the RSAs said that a fire department can only be controlled by a village district or a Town. The question of can the Town have a board of fire commissioners was asked. Rick Ladd stated that yes, you could have them appointed or elected. There could be one budget and a board of fire commissioners. Shawn Bigelow asked if anyone knew how Hanover did their fire departments. He knew that they had actual tax districts for their fire department. Rick Ladd commented that they could have one fire ward and that fire ward for the entire Town could either be appointed by the Selectboard or elected at Town meeting and then he commented that this is beyond the task of what they were there for. These are issues that will have to be dealt with later on.

Howard Hatch asked about the people who were supposed to be there at the meeting, specifically the people from West Newbury. They couldn't make it because of training that was going on on both sides of the river. He asked if there was any chance of what they were doing there would work here. Rick Ladd commented that they would like to have them come and speak with the committee and find out how they did pull theirs together into one. He said that when he talked with Doug Merrill about this; Mr. Merrill said that it was a rough road.

Rick Ladd asked Don Hammond if \$5200 was a good figure to start with and Don replied that it was a good average. Rick then said that they needed to get some figures from Woodsville and that he would write a letter to Woodsville requesting this information so that the committee could move forward with splitting up the funds. Howard Hatch then asked if this was going to be split up per capita by person or by structure and the response was by structure. Rick commented that there would be a lot of questions to come out of this, but most of them would be afterwards. He, himself, was concerned about some of the capital equipment that they are purchasing and how they go about doing that. The Town is putting the money in, yet the decision is being made in the precinct and they are all fighting the same fire. But all these questions are after the formula.

The date of the next meeting is Monday, November 26, 2012 at 6:30 PM.

Adjourn Meeting: The meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM

Minutes transcribed by Karen Hyde