

**Town of Haverhill, NH
FIRE DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE**

Internal Stakeholders Public Meeting

**MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, August 4, 2020, at 11:00 AM**

(All attendees participated by videoconference because of the COVID-19 pandemic)

DRAFT / subject to review by the Committee

Fire Department Committee Members:

Jon Bouffard, St. Johnsbury Fire Chief, Resident of Pike (Committee Chair)
Darwin Clogston, Select Board Chair
Keith Charpentier, Deputy Chief, Haverhill Corner Fire Dept.
Jeff Robbins, Woodsville Fire Chief
Phil Blanchard, N. Haverhill Fire Chief
Michael Lavoie, Haverhill Corner Precinct Commission Chair
Paul Kidder, Woodsville Precinct Commission Chair
Dennis Fournier, No. Haverhill Precinct Commission Chair
Bob Long, Mountain Lakes Precinct Commission Chair
Brigitte Codling, Haverhill Town Manager
Jennifer Boucher, Haverhill Finance Director

Committee Members PRESENT:

Jon Bouffard (Meeting Facilitator)
Brigitte Codling
Phil Blanchard
Darwin Clogston
Keith Charpentier
Jennifer Boucher
Jeff Robbins

Members of the Public Present: Ed Ballam, Nathan Heathe, Anthony Smith, Kevin VanNorden, Renzo Chumbes, there were three others who logged in anonymously.

Meeting began at 11:05 AM

Bouffard presented an INTRODUCTION

Bouffard discussed the phases of the project management of creating a fire department in the Town of Haverhill that serves all precincts. Currently, Bouffard stated, the Committee is in the Development phase and noted that by a March 2021 deadline before Town Meeting, the Haverhill Fire Department should be up and running. Bouffard presented the goal, mission statement, and purpose statement. The Committee set up public meetings of external stakeholders and is now implementing internal stakeholders' public meetings this morning and this evening, Tuesday, August 4 at 7:00 PM. The Committee is gathering input from the community and from fire department personnel to incorporate into the Committee's development plan.

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Bouffard opened the floor to comments.

Question 1: Nathan Heathe asked what the implementation plan would look like. Bouffard responded that that is what the Committee is doing right now. The Town and the Precinct voted to develop a Town Fire Department. Bouffard suggested that the participants give their input as to what it should look like and what direction it should go.

Question 2: Heathe asked that, in the design phase, is there a record of the number of votes, the Yays to Nays, taken to move this project forward. Bouffard responded that that information is available. TM stated that the vote results are can be found in the Annual Town Meeting Minutes on the Town of Haverhill's website.

Question 3: Anthony Smith questioned if the upcoming survey would be positive and if he could offer a question for the survey. Smith continued to state that the reason for this Committee is to put the fire department under one emergency services building so the town can go after grant money. TM reminded Mr. Smith that statement was never stated, nor implied, and not accurate. Mr. Smith continued to ask why the Select Board did not write the articles [at the Town Meeting] that explained what they were doing. Discussion ensued. TM read the Warrant Articles that were voted on at the Annual Town Meeting, the group expressed that the articles seemed very clear as to what was being voted on. Smith further stated he would like a question to be added to the survey: "Did you as a voter understand when you were voting on this that you were creating or attempting to create a single Town fire department?" After some discussion, Bouffard stated that the Committee will probably not add that question to the survey because the vote has already been made.

Question 4: Smith asked if a SWOT analysis will be done to examine the current operation and the intended operation of the fire departments to see which one is better. Keith Charpentier noted that the SWOT analysis is up on the Town's web site and can be accessed. Bouffard stated that the SWOT analysis was developed by the committee which includes all three fire chiefs. The Committee will be evaluating data from the ISO rating reports during development. A discussion of consolidation of departments, use of available assets, financial savings, and ownership of fire trucks ensued.

Question 5: Heathe asked about ISO ratings and whether mutual aid is taken into account for ISO ratings. Bouffard replied that it depends and is very limited. Heathe noted that IOS ratings may not be entirely accurate. Phil Blanchard stated that recently he went through the ISO rating process, and he believed that a countywide fire department does not get discounted as much as individualized district departments. Bouffard specified the advantages and disadvantages of ISO ratings relating to number of personnel.

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Kevin VanNorden and Ed Ballam noted that they will join the evening meeting to ask their questions.

Bouffard called on each Committee member to ask if there were any further discussion points:

- Clogston noted that at the Select Board meetings speakers are limited to 3 minutes, and it may be beneficial to institute that rule at the evening meeting. Ballam countered that comment noting that because this is the first meeting of internal stakeholders, it is best to have disclosure and full discussion. Bouffard stated that the speaking limit for the evening meeting will be set for 5 minutes per person, and there was consensus from the members present.
- Jennifer Boucher stated that the ballot count for the Fire Dept Warrant Articles were as follows:
 - Haverhill Corner: 164 (Yes) and 129 (No)
 - N. Haverhill: 165 (Yes) and 127 (No)

Ballam stated that at the Haverhill Corner Precinct Meeting, the vote was a unanimous voice vote to hold off on joining until the Town could present a plan.

(NOTE: The N. Haverhill Precinct Meeting, the vote was nearly unanimous voice vote to join.)

Adjourn

Bouffard adjourned the meeting at 12:11 PM.

Transcribed by Joanna Bligh