

**Town of Haverhill, NH
FIRE DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE
External Stakeholders Public Meeting
MEETING MINUTES
July 14, 2020 at 7:00 PM**

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

DRAFT / subject to review by the Committee

Live on Facebook and Zoom.

Fire Department Committee Members Present:

Brigitte Codling, Haverhill Town Manager
Darwin Clogston, Select Board Chair, Liaison
Keith Charpentier, Deputy Chief, Haverhill Corner Fire Dept.
Michael Lavoie, Haverhill Corner Precinct Commission Chair
Dennis Fornier, No. Haverhill Precinct Commission Chair
Jennifer Boucher, Haverhill Finance Officer
Phil Blanchard, (via Facebook) No. Haverhill Fire Chief

Fire Department Committee Members Not Present:

Michael Lavoie, Haverhill Corner Precinct Commission
Paul Kidder, Woodsville Precinct Commission Chair
Bob Long, Mountain Lakes Precinct Commission Chair
Jon Bouffard, St. Johnsbury Fire Chief, Resident of Pike

Members of the Public Present over Zoom: Ed Ballam, Anthony Smith, Don Vaillancourt, Kaylee Heathe

Attendance ROLL CALL:

Brigitte Codling (Lead for the Meeting and alone at home)
Darwin Clogston (I am alone)
Keith Charpentier (I am alone)
Michael Lavoie (I am alone)
Dennis Fornier (I'm alone)
Jennifer Boucher (Children are with me)

Meeting formally called to order at 7:17 PM

Brigitte Codling presented an INTRODUCTION

TM Codling stated that this is an External Stakeholder meeting for public input and presented a screen shot of the Town's website to show the Haverhill Fire Department (new 2020). TM Codling gave an overview of the development of the Committee starting from the Haverhill Town Meeting 2020. TM Codling continued that North Haverhill voted to join the Town's Fire Department and Haverhill Corner voted not to join. The Committee members are listed on the website and there are members from all precincts, with Jon Boufford (Pike) as chair of the Committee. The public is invited to join any meeting, which is held every other Tuesday at 7:00 PM.

Town of Haverhill, NH
FIRE DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE
External Stakeholders Public Meeting
MEETING MINUTES
July 14, 2020 at 7:00 PM

TM Codling gave an overview of the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, which the Committee is using for analysis of goals and direction. Other meetings for public comment will be held on Tuesday, July 21 at 11:00 AM and Tuesday, July 21 at 7:00 PM.

TM Codling introduced the Mission and Purpose statements for the Fire Department Committee. Mission Statement: The Mission of the Fire Department Committee is to develop a pathway towards building the best fire department the Town of Haverhill could field in all the districts and gain the professional input of all our current fire chiefs, volunteer firefighters, Town officials, and the general public to ensure we are acting in the best interest of the Town, as well as the current fire departments. Purpose Statement: It is the purpose of the Town of Haverhill Fire Department Committee to examine facts and elicit input from the public, for the purpose of developing a Town Fire Department, including all the structural elements needed to deliver a superiorly efficient, truly effective, and fiscally responsible fire service for the residents of and visitors to the Town of Haverhill. The Committee's work is to affect positive and progressive change in the delivery of public safety services including: Fire, Rescue, Hazardous Materials, Technical Rescue, EMS, Public Health, and Emergency Management within the Town of Haverhill.

TM Codling invited the public to comment.

TM Codling continued with examples of SWOT categories.

- Strengths: mutual aid, for example.
- Weaknesses: Utilization of equipment or improving public education, for example.
- Opportunities: Recruitment, grant opportunities, and cross training of personnel, for example.
- Threats: Misinformation, fear, change, and lack of transparency, for example.

TM Codling invited the public or others on the Committee to comment. TM Codling also invited the public to contact a Committee member with any comments or questions.

TM Codling noted that there will soon also a Survey published for residents to fill out and return.

Facebook Question: "Is it correct to state that if all three departments are to join as one, the chance for future funding via grants would benefit the Town?"

TM Codling replied that the municipal entity is a strong voice when it comes to grant funding. So, yes, there is a chance of future funding via grants especially if the multiple stations were under the blanket of the Town.

Facebook Question: "Would grant funding lessen the burden to taxpayers?"

TM Codling responded that any grant money that we can bring in as revenue decreases the need for tax dollars to be used for those services.

"Can the Town-wide Haverhill [Fire] Department actually be located in three existing stations?"

Town of Haverhill, NH
FIRE DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE
External Stakeholders Public Meeting
MEETING MINUTES
July 14, 2020 at 7:00 PM

TM Codling responded, that right now there are fire stations in the north and south and in the middle of Town, and those locations appear to be effective. And, it is impossible to provide adequate fire service throughout Haverhill with just one station.

Dennis Fournier stated, “You’ve already seen quite a bit of misinformation. That’s something we [the committee] are going to have to address.”

TM Codling responded that these public input sessions, the information on the website, and minutes of the meetings will reflect what is true and representative of the work of the Fire Dept Committee.

Facebook Comment: “I’m concerned that we’re in the historic district of Haverhill, which has a large number of historic, 200-year-old homes. What is the advantage of moving the department away from that area?”

TM Codling responded that there are no plans for moving or shutting down any fire stations. There will be an evaluation of the fire service, including response times, equipment, manpower, and ISO evaluation.

Mike Lavoie added that the rumor mill of fire stations closing has been cleared up.

Keith Charpentier stated that Benton is also in the fire district of North Haverhill and Haverhill Corner.

Facebook Comment: “Any recent thoughts regarding the sharing of firefighting equipment?”

TM Codling noted that regarding equipment that it is a goal of the Committee to look at every part of the fire service, including equipment and also manpower. For the next few months the Fire Dept Committee will be gathering data and from that, will do an analysis. Everything will be reviewed and analyzed.

M. Lavoie stated that the whole concept of the Fire Service is neighbor helping neighbor, and even though Benton doesn’t have a fire service, they pay money to the Town. It would also be helpful to clear up the fact that the Town is not going to take away funding for Haverhill Corner, which was a concern at the Haverhill Corner Annual Meeting.

M. Lavoie asked if it would be the Select Board or a vote of the Town to determine the fate of fire departments who decide not to come under the Town’s umbrella.

TM Codling stated that the Town’s lawyers and other municipal lawyers stated that it is the decision of the Select Board. TM Codling continued that public presentations and informational outreach will be ongoing as the Committee moves forward.

Darwin Clogston noted that the Townspeople have charged the Committee and Select Board to do this.

Facebook Comment: “Will there be a punch list of topics for future discussion and input from Townspeople?”

Town of Haverhill, NH
FIRE DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE
External Stakeholders Public Meeting
MEETING MINUTES
July 14, 2020 at 7:00 PM

TM Codling noted there will be two more public input sessions next Tuesday, and that a list is a good idea, we'll need specific information from the public so, a punch list of topics is a good idea.

Ed Ballam stated the he believed that when the Town voted and approved the fire department articles, that the Town had the right to build out the North Haverhill and run it as a fire department and the wording does not include the rest of the fire departments.

TM Codling read the wording of the 2020 Town Warrant Articles that were voted on and approved at Town Meeting.

Article 22 Haverhill Corner Fire Department

To see if the town will vote to accept the control of the Haverhill Corner Fire Department and all fire related assets. Furthermore, to agree to fully accept the obligation to operate and maintain the Fire Department as a Department of the Town. This article is contingent upon a vote from the Haverhill Corner Precinct relinquishing its control over the Fire Department and its fire related assets. (Majority Vote Required)

The results were listed as Yes 164, No 129. The article passed.

Article 23 North Haverhill Fire Department

To see if the town will vote to accept the control of the North Haverhill Fire Department and all fire related assets. Furthermore, to agree to fully accept the obligation to operate and maintain the Fire Department as a Department of the Town. This article is contingent upon a vote from the North Haverhill Precinct relinquishing its control over the Fire Department and its fire related assets. (Majority Vote Required)

The results were listed as Yes 165, No127. The article passed.

TM Codling followed up stating that the Town's Fire Department does not come into effect until one year from the vote, so we have one year from the last Annual Town Meeting to develop the Town's Fire Department.

E. Ballam stated there will be a lot of work to get the fire services geographic responses woven together.

Facebook Comment: "Are you saying the Haverhill Corner will no longer respond to fires at this point in time?"

TM Codling stated that the answer is "No." She continued stating that, at this point in time, we're working under the premise that all of the fire stations will remain operational.

Keith Charpentier, Deputy Chief of Haverhill Corner, stated that he is required to respond to every call regardless of what takes place.

Facebook Comment: "What extensions to hydrant access are feasible?"

**Town of Haverhill, NH
FIRE DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE
External Stakeholders Public Meeting
MEETING MINUTES
July 14, 2020 at 7:00 PM**

TM Codling replied that neither she nor any Committee member can answer that question now.

Anthony Smith stated that he sees a reversal of 30 years of fire service development in the area. He continued stating “What was wrong with the system we previously had?”

TM Codling responded that the Committee has no way of responding to questions about financials at this point, but there’s an on-going discussion throughout Town as to whether the separate fire departments were cost effective, efficient, and fiscally responsible. The articles were put before the public at Town Meeting 2020 and Haverhill residents voted to accept the two precinct fire departments under the umbrella of the Town Fire Department.

Facebook Question: “How many people voted at the annual Town Meeting to come to accept the precinct fire departments as a department of the Town?”

Jennifer Boucher stated 165 Yes, 127 No (out of 292) for North Haverhill and 164 Yes, 129 No for Haverhill Corner.

TM Codling reminded everyone that there will be two more public input sessions and to please help the Committee get the word out. TM Codling thanked everyone for joining the Committee and participating.

NEXT Public Meetings: Tuesday, July 21 at 11:00 AM and Tuesday, July 21 at 7:00 PM.

Meeting ADJOURNED at 9:09 PM

Transcribed by Joanna Bligh