

Final
Temple-Greenville Police Joint Board
Minutes of the Public Meeting

February 22, 2016

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Carla Mary at 5:00 PM. Attending the meeting were Doug Reardon of Greenville, Gail Cromwell and George Willard of Temple and Chief McTague. A large number of residents also attended the meeting, including Tedd Petro, John Kieley, Christine Robideau, and Paul Jordan of Temple, Darel Oja and Brandi Stimans of SVAS, Barbara Eaton, Henry Vaillancourt, Mr. & Mrs. Miller, Dick and Maggie Bickford, Deb and Steve Spratt, Carol Demers, and Cookie Shahmehri.

C. Mary stated that the board met to discuss on-call coverage and other police related topics.

A motion by C. Mary, seconded by D. Reardon to proceed with on call coverage for Souhegan Valley Ambulance calls was not brought to vote.

D. Oja stated that the on-call coverage should not be for ambulance calls only, but for all calls that occur outside of T-GPD hours of coverage.

G. Cromwell asked D. Oja how many time the ambulance is kept waiting for State Police response. D. Oja responded that he didn't have that information available, as SVAS did not log these incidents.

G. Cromwell stated that the problem seems to be specific to Greenville, and that she was unclear as to how big the problem is without numbers from SVAS.

B. Stimans stated that it wasn't just medical calls that were of importance, but all after hours calls. D. Oja stated that one call is just as important as a hundred, if someone dies while the ambulance waits. C. Mary stated that the problem needs to be solved before someone dies.

G. Cromwell stated that the safety of the ambulance crew is certainly of importance. She related that she had spoken with other towns in the area who rely on State Police coverage after hours, and they were not experiencing problems. She stated that New Ipswich, which is the other town covered by SVAS does not have on-call coverage.

B. Stimans stated that it was not just EMT safety that is important, but there is a life-safety issue for the community.

G. Cromwell stated that the drug problem needs to be solved on a state level. She also stated that there was a problem in that the officers did not want to work on an on-call basis.

J. McTague responded that the sergeant lives in Mass, and that all but one part time officer live out of town, which leaves only one full time officer, who lives in Temple, to cover all of the on-call hours, which isn't feasible and that if the officers were required to be on-call they would all quit.

D. Reardon stated that the real issue was that the department needs an additional two full time officers.

C. Mary stated that an advertisement needs to go in the paper right away, to fill all vacant officer positions, so that at the department would be fully staffed.

D. Reardon asked how much it costs for two full time officers. J. McTague responded that it costs roughly \$100,000.00 annually per officer, including payroll, health insurance and retirement.

C. Mary questioned whether additional PT officers could solve at least some of the problem.

J. McTague stated that we can advertise, and come up with 500 applicants, but they won't be certified, and will need have to be sent to the Police Academy, and that many of them would leave after a short time and go on to other towns that offer higher pay. (He reported that T-GPD's part time officer Eric MacDuff, who worked full time for Lyndeborough, recently resigned from both departments to work for Manchester PD.)

C. Mary stated that we needed certified officers, that would be able to work immediately.

C. Mary asked how T-GPD pay compares to other towns. J. McTague responded that studies in the past have shown that pay is comparable to other departments of our size, but that officers are more likely to be lost to larger towns with higher pay, rather than to other small departments. He stated that the legislature's changes to the state retirement system had decreased the pool of retirees that can work.

C. Mary asked if J. McTague could approached members of neighboring departments to see if they would be interested in working part time for T-GPD.

J. McTague responded that three of T-GPD's part time officers are currently employed by other agencies. He further stated that it will be very difficult to hire any officers until after Town Meeting, when the issue of the contract renewal has been decided.

C. Mary stated that hiring needs to start immediately and as stated before, that all officers will have jobs no matter what happens with the contract.

A motion was made by C. Mary to advertise to fill any open positions with certified officers this week.

G. Cromwell stated that a motion wasn't needed for this action, and that it could just be agreed that it would be done.

C. Mary requested of J. McTague that he give consideration to officers that are agreeable to working on-call, and live close to Greenville.

G. Cromwell stated that she would like the board to continue to work on the issue of on-call coverage during the course of the year.

D. Reardon requested that the minutes reflect that there was not a vote on February 1st to disband the police department.

C. Mary requested that documents and information that is shared with any board member be shared with the entire group, as it seemed that this was not happening in the past. C. Mary presented an email from a Temple Joint board member, that said the officers were not willing to cover on -call hours. This information had been discussed with the Chief and the Temple Select Board and never made available to the Greenville board members. The email sent by the Temple board member was the first Greenville board members heard that information.

C. Mary stated that the board should post an agenda, set by the chairman, one week in advance of scheduled meetings.

G. Cromwell presented additional copies of the breakdown of calls between Temple and Greenville, and stated that Temple continues to be concerned with the imbalance. She stated that it is her hope that the contract be renewed as it saves money and allows for better qualified officers for both towns.

C. Mary thanked G Cromwell for providing that information, but pointed out that it was agreed at an earlier meeting, we would evaluate and reviewed at a later date.

C. Mary stated that she would like minutes to be posted on Greenville's website. G. Cromwell stated that Temple would like to post minutes as well.

C. Mary stated that there was a concern that past minutes were not accurate, and that a citizen made claims that a vote had been taken and not recorded, and that the minutes were too vague. A suggestion to record the minutes was made. Elizabeth responded that the board receives draft minutes one to two days after each meeting, and has an opportunity to make amendments. Elizabeth stated that she is unaware of any instance of a vote of the board not being reflected in the minutes. D. Reardon suggested that Elizabeth not take this matter personally. J. McTague stated that Elizabeth is not a transcriptionist.

The meeting was opened to comments from residents.

T. Petro stated that it was clear that the members of the Joint Board were having problems getting along, and stated that it appeared that the Greenville selectmen were recommending that the merger be broken.

D. Reardon clarified that at the August meeting, Greenville had made certain proposals for changes to the contract, and G. Willard stated that maybe Temple should have its own department.

D. Reardon stated that by law the selectmen had to either recommend or not recommend warrant articles.

G. Willard stated that Greenville contracted with MRI before discussing it with Temple.

C. Mary stated that Greenville didn't want to be unprepared if Temple pulled out, based on prior comments made by the Temple Board members.

H. Vaillancourt stated that the Greenville selectmen can't deny a bias when the warrant article to have a stand-alone department was supported, and the warrant article to continue the merger was not supported.

Various residents of Greenville requested to know who had made the decision to publish the warrant with those recommendations.

C. Mary stated that it was her personal opinion as a resident that the merger should be broken, and that possibly was miscommunicated as an official position, but as a board member, we wanted the residents to vote on which option they wanted.

A Greenville resident inquired why MRI determined the cost for a stand-alone department rather than the cost to fix current problems.

C. Mary stated that the intention was not to have MRI tell J. McTague how to run the department, but to know the costs of a stand-alone department, if the residents chose that option or if Temple decided to go on their own.

J. McTague stated that this was not a result of the department not doing its job, and compared the situation to two roommates who each wanted their own apartment, but couldn't afford the expense.

C. Demers asked who specifically puts recommendations in the warrant. She stated that as a citizen, she uses these recommendations to help her decide how to vote, and was concerned with the confusion on the issue.

A resident requested whether these recommendations could be changed at Town Meeting. D. Reardon and C. Mary responded that they could be changed.

A resident inquired about changing the order of the two warrant articles at town meeting. C. Mary stated that the order had been changed.

A resident inquired as to how other merged departments had handled their contracts prior to the T-GPD merger.

J. McTague responded that this was the first and only merged department in the state, and gave a brief overview of his thought process when responding to Greenville's request for police coverage in 2004, which was that it would only work if the towns had a joint police department, rather than one town covering another, because by nature that would create hard feelings between the towns.

C. Shahmerhi requested information on the administrative fees, and why Greenville bears the entire cost.

C. Mary responded that this is specified by the contract. Greenville does the administration, and receives fees, including accident report fees, in lieu of payment from Temple.

C. Mary explained that one of Greenville's requests was that Temple take over the administration. Temple offered to pay a portion of the costs, but argued about the actual cost. Greenville agreed to forgo this request and renew the contract as is.

C. Shahmerhi stated that she didn't think it was a problem to spend money (\$2,200.00) on the study to see what it would cost to break away from Temple, because that question was now answered if it should come up again, given the 30 day clause in the contract. She stated that it protects the town and agreed that all of these years Temple could have pulled out of the agreement and Greenville would have been unprepared.

J. Kieley stated that the administrative cost deal was always that Greenville would collect the fees to cover certain administrative costs, such as payroll and insurance administration. He stated that the estimates that he had seen within the last 30 days for administrative costs did not look like a time analysis had been done, but that it was more of a "best estimate". He stipulated that he could be wrong about that, and suggested that this is something that could be looked at more closely going forward.

C. Mary responded that she was sure it was done in hindsight, as logs were not kept for these services.

T. Petro (who disclosed that he was J. McTague's father in law, as well as G. Willard's best friend), stated that he was a selectman in Temple when the original contract was developed and that at that time, Greenville had insisted on handling the administration, and that the attorneys agreed that they were better able to accomplish this. As to the make-up of the joint board, Petro related that both towns' attorneys, as well as the Attorney General insisted that it be 2 selectmen from each town, otherwise, it would not be a true partnership. He stated that Temple would never have agreed to give its officers to Greenville to be contracted back.

C. Mary stated that the merger was great for Greenville at the time, because Greenville had disbanded their department and at that time we only had Sheriff coverage for the town.

R. Miller stated that he has a lot of respect for all board members and J. McTague. He had faith that any existing problems would be fixed and was shocked to hear that the board is discussing dissolving the merger. He stated that he doesn't believe the bulk of the population wants the split. He expressed his dissatisfaction with rumors that a key issue of contention was walking patrols on Main Street. He stated that he felt this was unnecessary and could be better handled with cruisers.

C. Shahmerhi says she wants to see the board communicate better.

D. Oja stated that a meeting time of 5:00 was not convenient for people to attend.

C. Mary stated that meeting times will be taken into consideration.

H. Vaillancourt stated that he didn't want the town (Greenville) to pay more than it had to, and that Greenville has never had a better department. He noted that the police department works with the community, and that he didn't want to risk losing that.

Another resident questioned why the board was trying to fix something that was not broken.

C. Demers stated that there were many rumors, and questioned how residents could get more information. Someone suggested letters to the editor.

C. Shahmerhi asked the ambulance members how it was determined that a call was not safe and police were needed. D. Oja stated that it was call dependent. He stated that there were definitely some serious calls where it was unsafe for ambulance volunteers to enter a home without police coverage. He related that it is very difficult for members to put their own safety ahead of the needs of others, and that is very difficult to wait, knowing that someone is in need of services.

C. Shahmerhi thanked all of the board members.

D. Spratt stated that she was glad that both towns had gathered information, and have answers about what to do if the merger breaks, and that hopefully we won't have to use it.

Christine Robideau stated that it appeared that the problem stemmed from a comment that had been made, and that it was apparent to her (in her experience as a mediator) that the members of the board were not getting along, citing body language as an indicator. She suggested that a mediator could have been brought in rather than MRI.

C. Mary responded that all of the meetings had been civil, but that there were major issues facing the two towns.

G. Willard stated that he thought the contract was very well written.

A motion by C. Mary seconded by G. Willard to adjourn the meeting at 6:05 was unanimously approved.

The next meeting will be held on March 7th at 5:00 PM in Greenville.

These minutes were prepared by E. Maxcy-Humphrey