

Selectboard Joint Special Meeting with East Montpelier Board and East Montpelier Fire Department Minutes

Thursday August 13, 2020 at 7 pm via Zoom conference call

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), Sharon Winn Fannon (Vice Chair), John Brabant (Member), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Toby Talbot, Ty Rolland, Carl Etnier, Albert Petrella, Lela McCaffrey (Fothergill, Segale & Valley), Bruce Johnson, Jon Jewett, Seth Gardner, Judith Woodbeck

1. Call to Order: Toby Talbot called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm. Denise Wheeler called the Calais Selectboard meeting to order at 7:09 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Lela McCaffrey from Fothergill, Segale & Valley and the group reviewed the end of the fiscal year reports (through June 30, 2020).
 - a) Fire Budget: Questions about overages in a number of categories were raised: Building Two (major services and garage door accident fix), Bookkeeping (Lela was brought on for creating reports and improved financial record keeping), Station Two Heating (the annual fuel fill happened twice in the same fiscal year). Dry Hydrants were a significant expense but were covered by a grant. Lela McCaffrey noted that the overages are not large dollar amounts although they may be significant percentages. "Net ordinary income" shows a surplus of \$11,680 above budget. Toby Talbot noted that Fire and Ambulance have to be looked at together to understand the picture.
 - b) Ambulance: The Vehicle Repairs line item was approximately \$15,000 over budget and almost \$12,000 of that was due to repairs on the old ambulance before it was traded in. Salary is approx. \$24,000 over budget (which brings payroll tax over budget as well, as it is a portion of the salary). Salary was anticipated to be over budget and understood by the towns. Medical supplies overages are significantly COVID-19 related (\$4-5,000 of PPE) and the Department is looking into whether there is reimbursement for these COVID-19 expenses. Total ambulance revenue is approx. \$148,000 and prior to distributing, \$15,000 of ambulance insurance expenses were paid. The loan proceeds totaled \$136,000. In total, \$63,000 was gained and split between contingency and capital funds. The contingency fund is at \$27,000 but a \$33,000 payment due to overages is due to be made (when fully funded, the contingency fund is at \$40,000). The Department noted that an unanticipated CARES payment had been received based on the prior year Medicaid funding (approximately \$5,000).
 - c) The group reviewed the adjusted balance sheet. The total current asset amount is \$177,474.79 and the total liabilities and equity the same amount. All revenue goes in to the

Ambulance savings account, and funds get transferred to the checking account to pay for expenses. Toby Talbot explained that due to COVID-19, some end of year fiscal tallying has been sidetracked and clarified that the reports show the status as of the end of FY20, and do not reflect FY21 figures. East Montpelier, Marshfield, Plainfield and Calais have all sent their first payments.

- d) Collection Rate Sheet: The FY20 amount billed minus adjustments was \$155,283.60 and the amount received \$154,178.3 (99% of what was billed was collected). This is a picture of just a window of time, and the collection rate may dip lower; the 99% is from the previous twelve months.
5. Chief's Update on the Coronavirus: the EMFD building has changed processes and procedures as a result of COVID-19. These changes include processes at the hospital (with changes such as exterior tents, cordoned off ER, specific guidelines and protocols in transport, etc.) and carrying over to the station. The PPE has involved investing in Tyvek suits, gloves, masks, goggles; orders have taken a very long time to come in and that wait time hasn't quite eased up yet. All 911 calls involve the dispatch completing COVID-19 questionnaires and callers screened verbally over the phone by 911 for symptoms. This informs how staff are dressed. On calls, one individual goes in to assess the situation and gather more information to avoid over-exposing crews, who have worked hard to stay safe. COVID-19 patients have been transported by EMFD and exposed staff have been monitored but remained healthy. Weekly status updates are provided to the State as well as to the Fire Academy and plans are in place in case an agency goes down anywhere across the State. Guest houses and camps are full of out of state visitors and the State has constant reminders for staff to remain cautious. There is a lot of paperwork and red tape for applying for government funds; they are working on accessing hazard grant pay, allowing coverage for March and April along with a provision on the volunteer side. It remains unclear exactly how any of this will unfold and the Department is learning as they work through applying for any available funds.

The State has made efforts to extend licensing requirements for EMS workers. The Department is working diligently to get hybrid classes working over Zoom. Three new EMTs were just graduated, but it took extensive efforts due to the difficulty of learning hands-on aspects of the work during the pandemic. The Chair thanked the Department for their hard work through a challenging time.

The Chief reported that patients have mostly been cautious, wearing masks or putting one on when provided by the ambulance. Call numbers are running on track or a bit higher than usual; burn permits had been very low in the spring as we navigated early response to COVID-19 but permits are picking up now. There have been more brush and woods fires that required response. March and April, during the height of fear factor of going to the hospital, had about ten less transports each. There is a community mask program that will be administered by the towns (Toby Talbot is the contact person for Calais), giving masks in the quantity of 25% of the population of the town to people who need them.

The Chief assessed the new station's ventilation system, along with extremely low occupancy and outdoor training sessions, as overall very comfortable. Everything is disinfected when new staff come on at 8 am and 4 pm. Aerosolized paint sprayers are used to disinfect the trucks; masks and specialized sealing safety glasses or sealed goggles are used and standard

procedures are much different than they used to be. Fluid exposure potential is assessed and large shields can be worn on top of the PPE. The Chief expects that these procedures will continue for the foreseeable future.

The Department implemented a “third-rider program” and initiated a standard for third-riders to train and begin responding. Three people are participating, and several people have applied for the next few months. The group reviewed the call log (2020) which is at 351 for fire (low as noted earlier due to the burn permits moratorium in the spring to allow for resources being allocated to COVID-19 response). Grand total for transports is 269. The Chief noted that Plainfield and Marshfield have been good partners; several hazmat calls have brought in some additional revenues.

6. EMFD Coordination with Schools: The Department is working with the school on what COVID-19 ambulance response to ensure a coordinated effort. The Chief noted that schools are working diligently to put plans in place and he doesn't have an official opinion. His role will be a logistical one, looking at what the ambulance response will be to the school, such as how a 911 call from the school is handled at dispatch in terms of COVID-19 clearances, etc.
7. Defibrillators: The defibrillators (most recently purchased in 2010 and 2014) currently cost \$519.85 per month for one unit (the 2014). Exceptional deals have been made available this year as companies get older units off the market. EMFD entered into a deal whereby the two defibrillators get traded in, allowing \$71,000 worth of materials for \$29,000. This will lower the monthly payment while the Department gets newer units. If there was a great technology breakthrough in the future, the seller would exchange these models for the improved technology without increasing the cost. The same company offered a power *cot* system (not power *load*) at a 15% discount, adding \$225 per month (one cot, at \$17,000), preventing staff back injuries going forward that are a major cost. This is a “high level ready-to-go series” that can widen on the side rails, fold the bottom of the cot up to support legs, and raise the cot to waist level using battery. The Department bought one cot.

Sharon Winn Fannon echoed the thanks for serving the community while dealing with an emergency and maintaining safety for self and others.

8. Update on Dispatch: The Chief explained that the new dispatch contract was brought into place for a one-year transition. There are committees working on the question of how dispatch will move forward in the future. Barre City is trying to make some changes in terms of second-alarm fires and decisions made by dispatchers. There has not been great movement one way or another and the future of dispatch remains unclear.
9. The next meeting will be the budget meeting on Thursday, December 3, 2020.
10. Other Business/Old Business/New Business: None.
11. Adjournment: Rose Pelchuck made a motion to adjourn at 8:10 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0 (John Brabant had left the meeting).

Date: 8/13/2020 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary

Approved by the Selectboard at the 8/24/2020 meeting

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