

**MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING  
TOWN OF GORHAM  
MONDAY, APRIL 4, 2016 6:00 PM  
TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM**

Gorham Selectmen present: Grace LaPierre, Terry Oliver, Patrick Lefebvre

Also present: Robin Frost, Town Manager; PJ Cyr, Police Chief; Chad Miller EMS Director; Adam White, Dana Horne, Mike Waddell, Kirsten Lukasak, Arthur Perry, Cagney Hatch, Henry Sanschagrin, Phil Cloutier, Jennifer Cloutier, Jeff Schall, Stephanie Kennedy, Paul Santos, Wanda Tanguay, Jess Lozeau, Rich McClure, Mike Pelchat, Diane Holmes and others.

**1. Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Lapierre at 6:00 pm.

**2. Appointments:**

a) **Keith Roberge – OHRV Use:** Keith Roberge came in to ask about whether the Town had received a response to the letter sent to Commissioner Rose regarding access from Jimtown Road via the rail trail to the OHRV trails. TM Frost stated that she had received an email from Trails Bureau Chief Chris Gamache, which indicated that a response would be sent out by the end of this week. Mr. Roberge asked the Board for a copy of the letter sent to the Town of Randolph that reassured them that the Town has no interest in promoting the opening of the rail trail through their town. Chairman LaPierre and TM Frost recalled that the communication was verbal to the Selectmen of Randolph. Mr. Roberge also asked when the public hearing for OHRV use from the park and ride to the Pike property occurred. TM Frost will look this information up for him.

John LaPierre asked why this issue has taken so long. He wondered why the Town Officials had not gone to Concord to get this taken care of sooner. He asked the Board what more “these people” had to do to get an answer.

Mr. Roberge asked the Board to send a letter to the Coos County Commissioners, as well as Senator Woodburn to get them to support the opening of that portion of the rail trail. He also asked if the Highway Safety Committee would weigh in on this. Chief Cyr, who was Chair of that committee when the options were discussed, stated that a letter was prepared. **On a motion by Selectman Lefebvre, seconded by Chairman LaPierre, the Board directed TM Frost to prepare letters to the Coos County Commissioners and Senator Woodburn to get their support for this opening and to send an additional letter to Commissioner Rose asking for a meeting with him as soon as possible on this matter.**

Selectman Lefebvre stated that he would travel to Concord for the meeting, if need be. Mr. Roberge stated that the Board should make Commissioner Rose come up here instead of us always having to travel to Concord. Several people, including the Board members stated that if we wanted the meeting to happen soon, a trip to Concord would be a better plan. Mr. Roberge also wants the Board to advocate for coordinating the daily hours of operation with the Berlin

hours. Chief Cyr stated that there is a group of law enforcement officers and other interested parties meeting on April 14<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm to see if there can be a concerted effort to establish uniformity with some of these issues.

Henry Sanschagrin said that this has been going on for four years now and a solution needs to be found. Everyone involved has been responsible for delays. He feels that the people along the rail trail that live in Braeburn Park should have no say in this matter because they do not own the land, only the trailer that sits upon the land. He insisted that noise and dust will not be an issue for anyone. He wishes he could be more involved in these meetings that will be taking place.

Mr. Roberge asked to be placed on the agenda for the meeting of April 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **3. New Business:**

**a) Bathroom Facility at Libby's Pool:** TM Frost reported that Recreation Director Jeff Stewart has two proposals for building the new bathrooms at Libby Pool. TM Frost asked the Board to agree to accept the lowest proposal assuming everything else in the proposals are the same. **On a motion by Selectman Oliver, seconded by Selectman Lefebvre, the Board voted unanimously to accept the lowest proposal for the new bathrooms at Libby Pool.**

**b) Patriot Properties Agreements – New Software:** TM Frost presented the Board with the two agreements to move forward with the purchase, installation, and support for the new assessing, collection, and financial software through Patriot Properties. **On a motion by Selectman Oliver, seconded by Selectmen Lefebvre, the Board unanimously agreed to authorize Chairman LaPierre to sign these agreements with Patriot Properties on behalf of the Board.**

**c) EMS Agreements – Coos County, Town of Randolph:** The EMS Agreements with both the Town of Randolph and Coos County were signed by the Board. They had already been signed by the Selectmen and the Commissioners, respectively.

**d) Representation Agreement - DTC Lawyers:** TM Frost explained that this agreement is a non-exclusive general representation agreement, which just means that we can ask general questions of Attorneys Chris Boldt and Eric Maher without executing a new agreement for each question. **On a motion by Chairman LaPierre, seconded by Selectman Oliver, the Board agreed to authorize Chairman LaPierre to sign the agreement on behalf of the Board.**

**e) Evans Street – Access to Map U19, Lot 11:** TM Frost explained that Roger and Lorraine LaJoie recently purchased a piece of property at the western end of Evans Street. They spoke with DPW Director Austin Holmes and asked him to create the access to the property. Director Holmes asked TM Frost to look into the situation and it was found that Evans Street was never built out fully at that end of the development. TM Frost sent the information to Town Counsel to see what the options might be for the Town. Mike Waddell stated that the Town should not set a precedent and should discontinue that part of the road and give it to the property owners. The Board will review Town Counsel's opinion when received.

**f) Appoint Alternate Representative to Planning Board, Budget Committee: On a motion by Selectman Oliver, seconded by Chairman LaPierre, the Board voted unanimously to appoint Selectman Oliver as the alternate Selectmen's Representative to the Planning Board and Selectman Lefebvre as the alternate Selectmen's Representative to the Budget Committee.**

#### **4. Old Business:**

**a) Fire/EMS Merger: Selectmen Lefebvre made a motion to leave the Fire and EMS departments as is and hire a fire chief, which was seconded by Chairman LaPierre..**

Selectman Lefebvre felt the top priority is to hire a fire chief and have them do EMS shifts, if they would like to make themselves available for that. Chief Cyr talked about the work of the committee that was established to review the feasibility of a merger. The committee was made up of Town department heads, the Town Manager, one volunteer/call member of each of the Fire and EMS departments, the High Sheriff of Coos County, and a community member. After the initial vote and recommendation, the committee was asked for more information and Sheriff Marcou resigned. His position was filled by Auxiliary Patrolman Brian Lamarre. The vote was still 7-1 in favor of moving forward with a merger of the departments. Asst Fire Chief Dana Horne stated that he didn't remember a vote after Officer Lamarre was on the committee and Chief Cyr stated that it did happen. With all of the capital projects in the works and additional money needed to keep up with these projects, the committee provided the Board with a feasible option to reduce the impact on the tax rate. The lowest cost moving forward is to merge the departments and hire a fire chief from within. Locally, Statewide and Nationally, this is the model that departments are moving to. The committee met with the Whitefield Fire Chief and though there were some serious issues when merging departments, he would recommend doing it again. Chief Cyr said that he realizes that change is difficult. More and more we are looking for ways to cross-train people so that when an incident occurs, the town is better served by people who can do a variety of jobs. He has police officers who are getting certified as EMR's. He asked the Board how they could just choose the option that costs the taxpayers more. He feels that four full time people with a chief hired from within would be operationally more efficient and cost the taxpayers less as well. Last week there was an incident where the Police Department was asked to search for an 89 year old woman who had wandered away from her home. Several departments came together to search for her and everyone worked together as a team. This incident had a good and successful outcome. He went on to explain that we already have a Town employee, Chad Miller, who would fit the position. John LaPierre said that he assisted the Fire and EMS departments a week ago Friday night and they worked well together, so why make the change. Jeff Schall stated that he has seen the list that shows whether the members are for or against the merger and the majority on both departments are for the merger. They work together well now and the firefighter jobs and EMS jobs will not change. Mr. Schall said that Diane Holmes well-articulated the benefits of a merger at the last meeting. Dana Horne stated that the financials show only a difference of \$7k. That is true for one option. The option with four full-time employees and hiring a fire chief from within saves the town \$65k. Firefighter/EMT Phil Cloutier stressed that it works well most of the time, but merging would even be better. He also stated that there is a concern that Chad Miller, the current EMS Director, would not be the right fit for the Chief position. He would support Director Miller as the Fire Chief. Adam White stated that a merger would not set well with the Fire Department. There

will be friction on the fire department between the full time firefighters and the call members. He says that the whole full time issue bothers him more than anything else. He would like to keep it as is and said, "You guys do your job and we will do our job. That's the way it should be." Mr. White went on to say that the Fire Chief needs to have fire experience. Director Miller does a great job with the ambulance, but Mr. White has never seen him in an active fire situation. FF/EMT Cloutier stated that the Board should not make this decision based upon whether Director Miller will be the Fire Chief or not. FF Mike Pelchat stated that he is for the merger because it makes sense to have cross-trained people available at the station. FF/EMT Diane Holmes is not concerned who is going to be in the positions. She would like to look forward to where these organizational structures should be several years from now. She would like to move the departments into the future. We have changed many times already; she was on the ambulance when it was entirely volunteer and she went through the change to having full time ambulance personnel. FF Stephanie Kennedy likes the way it is working right now. She thinks it will be a growing tax burden in the years to come, if merged. Henry Sanschagrín doesn't understand about the 1996 vote to combine the departments. Are they legally merged already? Chairman LaPierre stated that we are waiting for an opinion from Town Counsel on that subject. There was a discussion about the 1995 and 1996 Town Meeting warrant articles. The minutes were too brief. Mike Waddell remembers that discussion at Town Meeting that the departments would still remain separate. He said that the Board needs to make a decision and move forward. There was talk about liability and life insurance.

Terry Oliver stated that we have been doing this for a long time. The Fire Chief is the one who should be making the decision. The Board agreed that the new Fire Chief will have the final say as to whether the merger should happen or not.

Chairman LaPierre called for a vote on the stated motion. **The Board voted unanimously to keep the departments separate for now and move forward with hiring a Fire Chief.** TM Frost clarified with the Board that the new Fire Chief will have the authority to merge the departments, if they see fit. The Board concurred.

**b) Public Works Office Building Update:** TM Frost told the Board that we were still waiting for word from USDA about the grant application that we submitted. DPW Director Holmes and TM Frost met with David Laurin, the architect, and made some minor changes to the drawings. Chairman LaPierre asked if the estimated cost of construction went down any and TM Frost said that while every attempt will be made to keep costs to a minimum, Mr. Laurin stands by his latest estimate for this commercial building.

**c) Emergency Operations Plan – Final:** TM Frost stated that the Local Emergency Operations Plan was completed and a copy will be placed in the Board's mail envelope for all to review.

## **5. Public Comment**

Henry Sanschagrín is not happy about the website, particularly the online property lookup feature. The property card is too small to read and you cannot enlarge it. Mr. Sanschagrín stated that the problem needs to be fixed on the website. He also mentioned that posting minutes on the website gets behind. It was agreed that the minutes need to be posted more expeditiously.

Kirsten Lukasak asked what the timeline was for moving forward with the Fire Chief hiring. TM Frost stated that there is no timeline set as yet, but the posting would be done very soon.

Mike Waddell cautioned the Board against giving away their authority with regard to the merging of departments. He feels that the Board and the Town Manager need to remain involved in the decision.

## **6. Other Business:**

**a) Town Manager's Update:** TM Frost offered kudos to all the emergency personnel who were involved in the search and location of the woman who wandered away from her home last week. It was a job well done by all.

TM Frost mentioned the Shelburne ambulance issue. The directive to the EMS department for right now is that they should respond if toned out to Shelburne. It appears that Shelburne did not think this through and have assumed that things would just fall into place without any communication. Jennifer Cloutier, who is the Dispatch supervisor in Berlin, was at the meeting and has not yet heard anything from Shelburne as to a new procedure that involves her department. The decision the Board has to make is whether the Gorham EMS department will continue to respond to calls for service in Shelburne, if no other service is available to go. Rich McClure, an auxiliary officer with Gorham Police Department stated that he feels we should not respond unless there is an agreement in place. TM Frost stated that it is not fair to the Town of Randolph and Coos County, both of whom have signed contracts with us. This is a slippery slope for the Town. It is also not fair to potentially leave the taxpayers and residents of Gorham without immediate coverage while the ambulance is in a Town that has no contract for these services.

The Board decided to have a work session on this subject on Friday, April 8<sup>th</sup> at 10 am.

**b) Selectmen's Updates:** Selectman Lefebvre asked Chief Cyr what he had found out about getting a grant for a School Resource Officer. Chief Cyr said that he emailed both Superintendent Bousquet and Gorham Middle/High School Principal Backler and neither felt that an SRO was necessary at this time. Superintendent Bousquet was interested in the grant availability, however, and Chief Cyr did some research on a couple of sources for grants.

**c) Approval of Minutes (March 21, 2016):** On a motion by Chairman LaPierre, seconded by Selectman Oliver, the minutes of the meeting of March 21, 2016 were approved as prepared.

**d) Sign Manifest; Abatements and Exemptions (if necessary):** All documents were signed.

## **7. Non-Public Session: RSA 91-a:3, II c**

**At 8:15 pm, a motion was made by Chairman LaPierre, seconded by Selectman Oliver to**

**go into Non-Public Session under the provisions of RSA 91-A:3, IIc. Roll call vote:  
Lefebvre – Aye, Oliver – Aye, LaPierre – Aye**

**The Board came out of Non Public Session at 8:35 pm on a motion by Chairman LaPierre,  
seconded by Selectman Oliver. Roll call vote: Lefebvre – Aye, Oliver – Aye, LaPierre –  
Aye**

No decisions made in Non-Public Session.

**8. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm.

**REVIEWED AND APPROVED:**

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**Grace LaPierre**

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**Terry Oliver**

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**Patrick Lefebvre**