

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting Minutes
Meeting Room A
Thursday, July 28, 2022
3:00 pm**

Present: First Selectman Jay Swan, Selectman Chandler Paquette, Selectwoman Charlene Perkins-Cutler

Others Present: Board of Finance Chairman Michael Dougherty, Dick Baron, Dave Elliot, Eric Young, Jared Morse, Ed Higgins, and Members of the Public

1. **Call to Order** - First Selectman Swan called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm

2. EMS Services

Jay Swan turned the meeting over to Jared Morse to review the current situation with EMS in the Town. There were recently 3 incidents that occurred during 2nd shift which experienced a delay in response time. In some instances, it was up to 20 minutes before an ambulance arrived. He noted that a 5-minute response time is normally adequate. All of the fire chiefs in attendance noted that there is a shortage of trained personnel nationwide. They have paid shifts available, but no one to fill them sometimes. They staff weekends with paid individuals because it is busier then. The pool of available personnel is small.

Attorney Ed Higgins was in attendance, as requested by Jay Swan. Ed is involved in the program for the cooperative agreement for EMS Services between Thompson and Putnam. The two towns have an agreement to provide coverage. Woodstock may benefit from this type of program. Ed Higgins noted that Putnam had similar issues before they entered into the agreement with Thompson.

Eric Young noted that staffing is as such: 68% of the time, they use "duty" crew, which are paid, full time positions. 32% of time, they rely on a volunteers or on mutual aid. Mutual aid responders could be stationed in Putnam or Thompson. For some calls, they rely on Southbridge. When they needed to rely on KB Ambulance, the response time was quite long. Dave Elliot felt it was important to have a dedicated ambulance for Woodstock.

Chandler Paquette asked if offering more money would help? Eric Young thought it could help, but many people are interested in having benefits too. There are people that drive an hour to get here. The pool of people they are pulling from is limited. Dave Elliott thought increasing the hourly wage and offering benefits would be helpful. The hourly rate is \$17.25 per hour. KB offers full benefits. If ambulance staff could be town employees, they could be added to town benefits.

Putnam/Thompson had brought in Bob Holdsworth, who is a knowledgeable consultant, to perform an assessment of the situation. Putnam and Thompson ended up splitting the cost for EMS services. It was approximately \$280,000 from each town. They have 16 full time people providing 24/7 coverage. The positions can be hard to fill though. The pay is \$19/hour.

The Town of Pomfret has contracted with KB.

Mike Dougherty noted that there isn't any funding available right now, unless we dip into ARPA funding. ARPA is a one-time grant. Anything started the first year with ARPA has to be funded by the town going forward. Mike also knows Bob Holdsworth. Bob created a report in 2019 for NECCOG regarding EMS Services in our area. Mike suggested that we contact John Filchak at NECCOG for a copy of the report.

Dave Elliot mentioned there is an emergency fund for EMS which is approximately \$70,000. Mike Dougherty said there is a process that would need to be followed to be able to use that money.

Ed Higgins asked if we could revisit a fire tax for emergency services/ambulance services?

The Selectmen said they would like to have the consultant come in to talk to them. They would also like to see the 2019 report. Jay will ask NECCOG for that 2019 report. Ed will talk to Bob Holdsworth also to see if he would be interested in helping Woodstock.

Charlene Perkins-Cutler made the motion to adjourn and Chandler Paquette seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 4:22 pm

Submitted by Carla Savoie