

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING**

**SEPTEMBER 10, 2007 - 6:00 P.M.  
LONGFELLOW MUNICIPAL CENTER**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairperson Diane McCutcheon, Vice Chairman Paul Savage, Selectmen Tom Petrowicz and Charles Poulin

**BOARD MEMBERS RECUSED:** Selectman Karin Furno

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Executive Secretary Helen Coffin

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The Meeting is called to order at 6:10 p.m.

The Board meets with Fire Chief Mullaly as a follow-up to his performance evaluation and to discuss any other matters involving the Fire Department that the Chief would like to discuss with the Board and vice versa.

Chief Mullaly informs the Board of a mechanical problem with the ladder truck. The truck hasn't been inspected for 5 years and the rollers failed the recent test. The cost is approximately \$4700. The Chief suggests paying the repairs via a Reserve Fund Transfer. Savage questions whether the Town can collect any funds from the Town of Uxbridge or the state from the funds made available for the mill fire. The Chief will look into this.

***Motion by Savage, second by Petrowicz to authorize the Chief to have the repairs done on the ladder truck. Motion passes by unanimous vote.***

The Chief states that he doesn't agree with his performance evaluation. McCutcheon advises that the Board members each put considerable time into the completion of their individual evaluation forms and that the Board is always available to help the Chief with whatever he needs. The Board has suggested in the past that the Chief look into taking a management class.

Savage states that the Chief's performance last year was not indicative of forward movement. There continue to be issues with morale, personnel management, and a lack of both information and communication.

Petrowicz has heard from department employees that there are trust issues. He is uncomfortable with the past misuses of fire equipment and directions/orders not being followed. These are serious issues that need to be addressed and acknowledges that these issues are affecting the Chief's performance evaluation.

McCutcheon reiterates that a lot of time was spent completing the Chief's evaluation, and the Board members are very aware of morale and personnel issues within the department. The evaluation is solely based on experiences and incidents from the past year (2006). Some Board members have been telephoned, visited and stopped in the street by members of the fire department to discuss ongoing issues in the department. Some of the general issues are: EMTs not taking shifts, employees collecting stipends for positions not in effect, lack of training, coffee hours at the station in the morning, highway department conducting business in the station, HIPPA violations, and inappropriate/unprofessional conversations taking place in the station.

The Board agreed that putting on another full-time member would only exacerbate the problems. The Chief needs the support of his staff in order to improve morale. The staff deserves downtime and the Chief should consider this. There appears to be a severe lack of communication. The Board does not want to micro-manage the Fire Chief but over the last couple of months the verbal complaints have become frequent and the leadership appears nonexistent.

The Board wants to communicate all of the issues they have heard to the Chief; but it is now his job to do something about them. The Board is happy to facilitate meetings with the Chief if necessary. They do not want to find out at next year's evaluation that the Chief hasn't moved forward. This is a pivotal year for the Chief – he needs to start moving forward and change the culture of the department.

The Board would like the Chief to come up with a plan on how he will move forward addressing the following specific issues to begin:

- Savage - talk with captains and lieutenants to learn if they are on the same page and of the same beliefs as the Chief;
- McCutcheon - if those employees state that they are, ask them to help improve morale;
- Poulin – identify who isn't listening to orders and directions;
- Petrowicz – consider a 'staff only' access to the building, identify business hours and/or eliminate the morning coffee hours.

The Fire Chief states that he has concerns that he wasn't included in the previous contract negotiations.

The Board feels that the Chief should have made it his responsibility to find out when the meetings were and to attend them.

The Fire Chief feels it was not fair that he wasn't able to see the previous written complaints made regarding him.

McCutcheon states that the contents of written complaints remain confidential; and that the Board outlined for the Chief in detail, at the time, what the issues were that needed to be resolved. There are concerns of the Board that some of the employees who had

written complaints have now left the department but there are still complaints coming from different people.

The Board would like the Chief to let them know when he would like to meet again. The Chief should work on the issues over the next three months; however, if more complaints come in over the next three months, the Board will put a plan in writing going forward.

The Fire Chief leaves the building.

The Board briefly discusses the status of the Business Retention Grant and would like to hold a meeting at 6:30 before the next meeting to discuss the signage.

***Motion by Savage, second by Petrowicz, to adjourn the Meeting. Motion passes by unanimous vote.***

Respectfully submitted,

Helen M. Coffin

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Diane O. McCutcheon, Chairperson

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Paul J. Savage, Vice Chairman

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Thomas Petrowicz, Selectman

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Charles Poulin, Selectman

**APPROVED AND SIGNED 10/1/07**