

Selectmen Present: Paul Carlson, Chairman
Karen Quigley
Frederick Koed
Ralph Dormitzer
Edwin Carr

Other Present: William R. Griffin, Town Manager
Jennifer Oram, Selectmen’s Clerk

Chairman Paul Carlson called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

Town Manager’s Report

Town Manager, William Griffin, asked the Board to declare the old piano in the auditorium as surplus property so the Town can take sealed bids for the sale of the piano to an interested party. **Selectman Ralph Dormitzer moved to declare the old grand piano as surplus property. Selectman Frederick Koed seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (5-0).**

Reappointments – Mr. Griffin asked the Board to make two reappointments. **Selectman Karen Quigley moved to reappoint Mr. Liam O’Connell for a three year term to the Open Space Committee. Selectman Dormitzer seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (5-0). Selectman Edwin Carr moved to appoint Selectman Frederick Koed for a one year term to the Norfolk County Advisory Board. Selectman Dormitzer seconded the motion (4-0, Selectman Koed abstained).**

Repurchasing of Graves – **Selectman Dormitzer moved to authorize the purchase of two graves located at Woodside Cemetery from Betty Brooke for \$500 per grave, for a total of \$1,000. Selectman Koed seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (5-0).**

Selectmen’s Comment Period

Selectmen Quigley thanked the Cohasset Mariner for the article they did on the water quality. She also thanked the Water Department and the Board of Health for scheduling the public forum. She encourages the public to mark their calendars and to attend.

Selectman Carr stated that he and Mr. Griffin attended the Senior Center luncheon and it was a great event.

Selectman Dormitzer addressed a letter from the FAA that was in the Board’s packet. He summarized the content for the Board.

Selectman Koed thanked Mr. Griffin for all of the paving being done before winter.

Chairman Carlson thanked the Golden Living Center for their donation to the Senior Center.

Minutes – Selectmen Carr moved to approve the minutes of October 19, 2009 as amended. Selectman Quigley seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (5-0).

Tax Classification Hearing - Deputy Assessor, Mary Quill, as well as Board of Assessor members, Mary Granville and Michael C. Patroli, addressed the Board. Ms. Quill explained that calculations are done to see if the Town would want to do a uniform tax rate for the residents and businesses, or split it and have the businesses pay a higher tax rate. She reviewed the calculations and stated that the savings the split rate would give the residents would not be worth it as the increase would be severe for businesses. She and her Board recommend a uniform tax rate of \$11.22. **Selectman Dormitzer moved to adopt the uniform tax rate of \$11.22, Selectman Carr seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous (5-0).**

Public Hearing – Verizon Cable License – Patricia Martin, Chairman of the Cable Advisory Committee, Attorney Robert Hillman and Mr. Rick Colon from Verizon addressed the Board. Attorney Hillman reviewed the details of the license explaining that it is nearly identical to the license given to Comcast. He stated that the PEG support is identical to Comcast and the Cable Committee recommends the Board approve the license. He stated that Verizon is very eager to start offering service in Town. Selectman Dormitzer stated that he was in favor of competition and then asked Mr. Colon a series of questions regarding contract language. Selectman Dormitzer asked about the customer service end and if people will be able to get a human being on the line. Mr. Colon stated that indeed their customer service will improve, and that the benefit of competition in Town is that if a customer is unhappy with the service, they now have a choice. Ms. Martin then stated that as soon as this agreement is signed, the committee will start purchasing equipment and working on the cable access studio. **Selectman Carr moved to grant the license as presented. Selectman Dormitzer seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (5-0).**

Annual License Renewals – Selectman Carlson moved to approve renewal for all annual licenses except for those who have not met the fire department safety inspections. **Selectman Carr seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (5-0).**

Schedule the Annual Town Meeting and Election – Mr. Griffin and Town Clerk, Marion Douglas, have recommended that the Annual Town Meeting be held on Saturday, March 27, 2010 at 9AM. They also recommend that where Easter falls on the following weekend, that the annual Town election be held on Saturday, April 10, 2010. Selectman Quigley asked that articles not come in as late as they did for the Special Town Meeting as she felt the Board was voting on too many articles on Town Meeting floor. In addition, she asked if the CPC could try to have their recommendations in much earlier as they filed much too late for this meeting. Mr. Griffin said that the Chairman of the CPC called and that they are establishing a much earlier deadline. **Selectman Dormitzer moved to schedule the Annual Town Meeting for Saturday, March 27, 2010 at 9AM, with a deadline for petitioned articles being Monday, January 11, 2010. The election will be held on Saturday, April 10, 2010. Selectman Carr seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (5-0).**

Regional Emergency Communications Center Intermunicipal Agreement – Chairman Carlson opened the discussion by reading aloud a statement. He stated that the Board is meeting only to discuss the agreement, not the station operations. Mr. Griffin then reviewed the history of the many meetings that have occurred over nearly two years. He stated that from the beginning, the Police and Fire Chiefs have emphasized that the goal of the center was to improve the quality of service. As the meetings progressed, it was discovered that grant funds were available for construction, equipment and operations. He added that as of now, Hingham has signed the agreement. Also, in regard to the station itself, how it will be run when the center is up and running will be considered with the input of the new Police Chief. One option that has been presented is closing the station at night, it's an idea and one option, but has not been decided on. He asked that the Chiefs be heard. Chief Silvia addressed the

Board. He stated that the fire chiefs went into these discussions with one goal; to create a dispatch center better than what they have presently. He stated that they have had many great meetings, with other members of the police department present, and the process has been open. Former Police Chief Hussey then addressed the Board and said that he feels that the concerns people have regarding the station and the dispatchers are very legitimate, but that when the time comes, they will be involved in that discussion. He said that the agreement needs to first be signed so the money can begin to flow so the center can start being built and the discussions on how it will be manned can occur. He said that Boston is dispatched from one center, so he does feel that the four towns can be handled in one center. He does think there will be savings, how much will be determined by how you man the station, but he feels that the center will provide an increased level of service. There was a brief discussion on hypothetical situations that the center could handle. Selectman Dormitzer asked if the response from the proposed center would be better than the existing. Chief Silvia stated that if there was not going to be an improvement in service, then there would be no reason to look into regionalization. Chief Hussey stated that one regionalized dispatch center is going to be better for the Police Officers on duty; communication will be faster and Mutual Aid will be available at the touch of a button.

Chairman Carlson asked if any other Departments or Town boards wished to speak. Officers James McLean and Christy Tarantino addressed the Board, along with Russ Taylor of the Police Benevolent Association. Officer McLean asked the Board to go on record that the new center would be a large savings for the Town and that was why the Town was moving forward. Selectmen Koed stated the main reason both the Fire and Police Chief would want to implement a new center would be to increase public safety. Chairman Carlson stated that in the end if the center would cost more money, but would be better for public safety, the Board may feel it is still the way to go. Office McLean asked if the department will be able to keep the equipment it has presently and if it turns out that the agreement does not work out, can the Town pull out of the agreement. Mr. Griffin stated that within the agreement the process for pulling out is spelled out. Chief Silvia said that the equipment the Town has now will remain in Cohasset and the Town will be able to conduct radio operations if need be in an emergency. The Town would not however, be able to have 911 operations in this case. Officer McLean asked if the Board could take the same attitude as the Town of Scituate and take a “wait and see attitude” and not rush into this binding agreement. Officer Christy Tarantino added that by waiting, they could then make an informed decision. Selectman Koed asked for someone from the dispatch center to speak as it is his understanding that some did not feel they were part of the process. Dispatchers Chris Grant and Kelly McCarthy addressed the Board and stated that they sent a letter as a union requesting to be invited to the meetings. Mr. Grant stated they received a letter denying the request. Selectman Carr then asked Mr. Grant to review how the present dispatch center handles medical calls. There was further discussion about the concern of closing the station at night. Selectman Koed asked how many people come in annually to the center. Mr. Griffin reviewed a list that Acting Police Chief Brian Noonan compiled from the log from January 1, 2009 to the beginning of November 2009. In the dispatch log there were four hundred (400) entries, thirty-one (31) of which were people actually coming in with an inquiry.

Mr. Griffin then reviewed the finances of the agreement. He stated that Hingham gets the grant funding as it is the location of the center. He explained that the grant monies come in two different phases, first the building and then the equipment. Once those steps are rolling, then the communities can start meeting to determine how the center will be run; most likely by the spring. Officer Tarantino stated that he felt this was a win, win for Hingham and that he didn't understand why Cohasset has to act so quickly. Chairman Carlson explained that signing the agreement this evening triggers the release of funds to start building the center. He also clarified that there has never been the intention to “close”

the station. This has not been decided. Mr. Grant asked if there was a guarantee that all of the Town's present dispatchers would retain their positions. Mr. Griffin explained once again that the combining of the four towns will be handled by a merger. He stated that he and the Chiefs did meet with the dispatcher union and that the discussion did center around seniority.

Officer Patrick Reardon asked if the center will be funded [by grants] forever. Mr. Griffin said that he would never say anything would be covered forever. He explained that presently there is a .75 cent charge on everyone's phone bill that goes toward the support of 911 services and this is where the funding is coming from. Presently the four towns are receiving \$140,000, however when you regionalize, that amount quadruples. Selectman Carr stated that he will look into and confirm exactly how long the 911 charge will be taken, but he does feel it is a long term commitment. Officer Reardon asked if the regionalization has been discussed during the interview process for the new Police Chief. Mr. Griffin stated that virtually each candidate has made mention of it. Officer Reardon then stated that he felt that moving the dispatchers out of the station to a new location would impact morale.

Chairman Carlson asked if any other representatives would like to speak from other Towns. Fire Chief Mark Duff of Hingham addressed the Board. He stated that there was no doubt in his mind that this center will be better for residents. He feels that the increase in better communication will allow for much faster dispatch of mutual aid. He does feel that each community should keep a small dispatch center for back up in the event of an emergency situation (i.e. a blizzard).

Chairman Carlson asked if any Cohasset residents wished to speak. Mr. Charles Santoro of 27 Linden Circle reviewed his extensive background in training dispatchers all over the country. He addressed his concerns regarding the state funding equipment and training for the dispatchers, he also expressed his concern about the possibility of the station not being manned at night. He stated that he feels the dispatchers have been doing great and why change something that he does not feel is broken. Mr. Leland Jenkins of 198 Jerusalem Road addressed the Board and reviewed the history of 911 for the Board. He also reviewed the history of the present department and stated that years ago, the fire department used to handle the dispatching. Ms. Chrissy Sladen of 140 Doane Street had a medical emergency over the summer. She drove herself to the fire station where no one answered. She went over to the police station where they were able to help her. She gave another example of how the police in Town know where her house is even though it is hard to find. She feels that having dispatchers locally give the town a small town feel.

Sergeant Jeffrey R. Treanor would like to request that any future discussions regarding the dispatch center include Mr. Santoro. In addition, Sergeant Treanor stated that they (the police) have been left out of the loop and would like an olive branch extended.

Mary Snow of 317 North Main Street asked if signing the agreement could wait until after the new Police Chief started. Mr. Griffin stated that to stop the process now would not make sense. He does feel however that how the town addresses the issue of the station should certainly wait until a new chief is in place.

Selectman Dormitzer stated that this issue is a tough one and that he has heard many important issues raised during the discussion. He realizes there are operational issues, but he feels that those can be resolved and ultimately the Town will be getting a better service. He does feel it will come down to jobs. He is mindful of the issues, but would like to see this happen.

Selectman Koed feels that it will be a better level of service for the community. He agrees with Selectman Dormitzer in that he does not feel the operational issues are insurmountable. He feels it will be better for the Town.

Selectman Carr stated that he too feels it will be a better level of service. However, he expressed concern about the people affected not being involved in the discussions. He thinks that everyone should work together and that they should proceed.

Selectman Quigley stated that she had heard a lot of good questions and concern; however she did not consider any of them as insurmountable. She feels that the overall change would be better for the Town and dispatchers, while at the same time providing a better level of service to residents.

Chairman Carlson said that he had learned a lot this evening. He stated that as he looks at the issues raised, he feels that they can be solved. He is impressed by the argument of improved service, additional training and he feels there is time to deal with the issue of manning the station. These issues are not what are being considered tonight. He is in favor of signing the agreement.

Selectman Quigley moved to approve and sign the agreement for the Regional Emergency Communications Center Intermunicipal Agreement. Selectman Dormitzer seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (5-0).

Selectman Carr moved to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Koed seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (5-0). Meeting adjourned at 10PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Paul Carlson
Chairman