

**Board of Selectmen
Minutes
August 2, 2017**

Present: Mary Blanchard, Chairman
Priscilla Gimas, Vice Chair
Mary Dowling, Clerk
Craig Moran
Michael Suprenant
Leon Gaumond, Jr., Town Administrator
Debra Gauthier, Administrative Assistant

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m. following the Pledge of Allegiance.

M. Blanchard stated the meeting was being taped by the local media.

Discussion on Regional Dispatch

L. Gaumond presented the Town's recommendation on regional dispatch. He stated that when he arrived in Sturbridge there was already an ongoing review of regional dispatch with 3 other communities (Oxford, Charlton, and Southbridge). In the two years that followed several developments occurred. Notably the town of Spencer joined the study. Also Sturbridge Town officials including the Town Administrator, Chief Ford, Chief Zinther and now Chief Grasso, have all attended numerous presentations and reviews of the proposed plan. They drafted an RFP, chose a consultant, looked at possible buildings, reviewed and re-reviewed IMA's and proposed job descriptions and labor agreements. In recent weeks and months, the town of Spencer dropped out of consideration and it is apparent that the Town of Southbridge is more interested in combining their currently separate police & fire dispatches. On the other hand, both Charlton and Oxford saw the potential benefits of some improvement of efficiency and some cost savings and signed an IMA. Oxford was first and then Charlton agreed provided that the final agreement has at least three participating communities and that the IMA is agreeable to all towns. Recently the Town received the modified 'feasibility study' showing potential operating costs and possible savings for each community. The modified numbers only take into consideration the towns of Oxford, Charlton and Sturbridge. After careful consideration, the Chiefs and Town Administrator cannot support joining this regional effort with only three towns participating. Gaumond stated that the proposed plan as outlined by the consultant does not increase the efficiencies as was afforded to the towns in the original 5-town study. There is a belief that that the proposal doesn't adequately take into consideration the number of staff needed to support the effort. As such, the cost savings, further reduced by our strong desire to maintain 24 hour coverage of the station, just doesn't appear to be there. Without the addition of one more comparable sized community joining in, the Chiefs and the Town Administrator feel that the organization is such that they would not feel comfortable recommending that the Selectmen sign the IMA without additional communities joining in.

L. Gaumond reviewed the proposed savings to the Town of Sturbridge if the project were approved. The consultant assumes savings of operations to be about \$162,000 and capital to be about \$94,000 annually for a total of about \$256,000. He pointed out it does not take into consideration the costs we would incur to keep the building open 24 hours a day.

M. Dowling thanked the town officials for the work done to bring this proposal to the Town. She prefers to have Sturbridge maintain their autonomy in these safety matters until we are told by the State we cannot operate this way. She feels our operation is first-rate and does a good job. She is reluctant to regionalize unless forced to do so.

P. Gimas agreed with M. Dowling citing the staffing concerns within the department and doesn't feel we would greatly benefit from this IMA. At this time it is not in the Town's best interest.

C. Moran stated that the numbers in the revised study still refers to the original five towns and feels the numbers are incorrect. He also stated that call volume numbers may also be incorrect. He questioned the number of non-emergency calls coming into the center. He doesn't feel this will work. He also questioned the state's ongoing commitment to provide funding on an annual basis. M. Blanchard concurred on the comment on state funding for this project.

M. Suprenant felt that the studies have been consistent on cost savings and is comfortable with the numbers offered by the consultant. The savings seemed consistent between a 5 town and 3 town study.

C. Moran questioned whether or not each town would have its own dispatcher or not. L. Gaumond stated that the dispatchers on duty will be covering all of the communities in the region, not just one town. L. Gaumond refuted the concerns about the numbers; Mr. Kennedy did account for the reduction of communities when calculating the amount of state grant in developing the cost estimates by removing Spencer and Southbridge's numbers.

Motion: To decline the invitation to join the regional dispatch Intermunicipal Agreement By: M. Dowling
2nd: By: P. Gimas

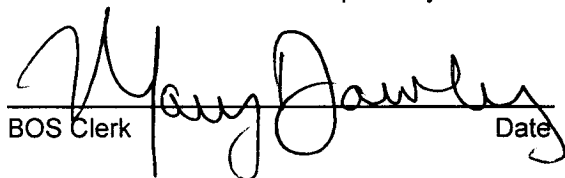
Vote: All in Favor Passed 5/0

Motion: To adjourn By: C. Moran
2nd: By: P. Gimas

The Meeting was adjourned at 11:31 a.m.

Respectfully submitted

Leon A. Gaumond Jr.

 BOS Clerk
Date 2/21/18