

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

December 12, 2016 Meeting

This meeting was held at the Calais Town Office Building.

SB Attendance: Chair Seth Gardner, Kim Swasey, Gene Troia, and Casey Northrup; Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

Calais SB Attendance: Chair Denise Wheeler, Scott Bassage, John Brabant, and Rose Pelchuck; Recording Secretary Lisa Stoudt

Public Attendance: For purposes of the East Montpelier Fire Department discussion: EMFD Chief Ty Rolland and EMFD President Toby Talbot (also a member of the Calais Selectboard)

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

Additions to Agenda:

- **Appointments to the East Montpelier Energy Committee**

Public Comment: None

Special Joint Meeting with Town of Calais Selectboard: Discussion of the East Montpelier Fire Department's FY2018 Ambulance & Emergency Services Budget Request and Proposed EMFD Capital Reserve Fund Use

At the annual budget presentation on December 1st, EMFD made the following funding request to the towns:

Service	Calais		East Montpelier		Total	
	FY2018 Request	% Increase over FY17	FY2018 Request	% Increase over FY17	FY2018 Request	% Increase over FY17
Fire	\$ 53,346.67	1.6%	\$106,693.33	1.6%	\$160,040.00	1.6%
Ambulance	\$ 72,668.43	12.3%	\$145,336.86	12.3%	\$218,005.29	12.3%
Total	\$126,015.10	7.5%	\$252,030.19	7.5%	\$378,045.29	7.5%

Total EMFD FY2018 ambulance budget of \$265,650 includes a contracted Plainfield payment of \$47,645 for a total combined services budget of \$425,690, up 7.0% from FY2017.

At the December 5th joint meeting of the town boards there was a clear concern that the proposed budget would not alleviate the existing onerous demands on a very limited number of ambulance service volunteers. Both boards, however, were very concerned that any budget increase beyond the proposed 7.5% would be both an unpalatable and unreasonable burden on town taxpayers. The boards floated a conceptual plan to increase ambulance service staffing by using a portion of the gross ambulance service revenues to cover ambulance staffing. Currently, items like ambulance billing, paramedic transfer costs, and defibrillator payments come out of the revenue stream prior to the determination of net ambulance proceeds. The boards proposed that some staffing costs be treated in the same manner. The understood problem with this scheme is that taking money out of the revenue stream will decrease the net proceeds, which in turn will decrease the funds available for the EMFD Capital Reserve Fund, which receives the bulk of the net proceeds.

After a brief synopsis of the December 1st & 5th meetings, the boards focused on the current staffing for the ambulance service and exactly what additional funding would provide in terms of coverage. The ambulance service operates three shifts (midnight to 8 a.m., 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and 4 p.m. to midnight) seven days a week and needs two qualified staffers available, but not necessarily at the fire station, for each shift. Currently there is one paid staffer for the 8-4 and 4-midnight shifts along with a second paid staffer daytimes Monday & Tuesday 7-4 and Wednesday through Friday 9-1:30 (times approximate). All other shift slots are covered by volunteers. The proposed 7.5% budget increase would allow the hiring of a full-time paramedic to handle the weekday 8-4 shift. This would stabilize the daytime shift, but would not, however, add significantly to the non-volunteer coverage times. Adding \$50,000 in additional payroll would allow EMFD greater flexibility to staff evening and weekend shifts, decreasing the reliance and strain on the limited stock of volunteers. The boards and EMFD agreed to move forward with the plan to use the gross ambulance service revenue stream to fund the added payroll.

Both boards emphasized that this was a one-year stopgap effort to improve the EMFD ambulance service staffing flexibility without placing an undue burden on the taxpayers. The concept will need to be revisited. The boards reiterated the desire to begin an open and frank conversation on the long-term emergency service options for the communities.

Motion: To set the FY2018 EMFD general fund budget lines at a total of \$252,030.19 and to approve the use of up to \$50,000 of annual gross EMFD ambulance service call revenue to fund additional ambulance service staffing. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Mr. Northrup. Passed unanimously.

The Calais Selectboard approved a similar motion for a total Calais appropriation of \$126,015.10.

The boards next discussed the proposed EMFD Capital Reserve Fund use to purchase two fire and emergency service vehicles in FY2018:

- Replacement of Engine 2 with a new pumper at a cost of \$466,000, to be financed over a period of 10 years
- Replacement of Rescue 2 with a used heavy rescue vehicle at a cost of \$150,000, to be purchased outright

Concerns were raised both regarding the need for the two vehicles at the cost level proposed and the ability of the capital reserve fund to handle the purchases in light of the likely decrease in the available funds for the capital fund due to the use of ambulance service revenues for staffing. All agreed that there would be no 2017 Town Meeting request to the taxpayers for an appropriation of money to facilitate the EMFD vehicle purchases. The boards and EMFD decided that the time was not ripe to resolve the reserve fund use request. EMFD will return to the boards at a later date with an updated proposal that will include the effects of the use of the ambulance service revenue stream for staffing and that will have solid figures for the truck(s) that EMFD would like to acquire in FY2018.

End of Joint Meeting; East Montpelier Selectboard continued its meeting in the Calais Town Office Building foyer.

Appointments to the East Montpelier Energy Committee

Absent board member Carl Etnier requested the board add three members to the recently revived EM Energy Committee: Dave Grundy; Bob Morey; and, Stephen Knowlton. The board decided that there was no particular emergency need to add the members at this special meeting. The request will be taken up at the board's December 19, 2016 regular meeting.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Ms. Swasey. Passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: December 19, 2016 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting