

## **Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard**

### **December 3, 2020 Selectboard Special Meeting**

**This meeting was conducted remotely using the Zoom conferencing platform in two parts. Participation options were provided to the public.**

#### **Part 1 (Zoom Meeting Hosted by Selectboard)**

**SB Attendance:** Chair Seth Gardner, Carl Etnier, Judith Dillon, Amy Willis and Jon Jewett (6:55 p.m.); Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

**Public Attendance:** None

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m.

**Additions to Agenda:** None

**Public Comment:** None

#### **Consideration of Request for Extension of Advance Notice Period for AT&T Cell Tower Proposal on Jacobs Road**

On November 12, 2020 the town received the formal 60-day advance notice of a potential application for a certificate of public good from the Public Utility Commission (PUC) for an AT&T wireless communication facility (cell tower) located about 950 feet east of Jacobs Road on the Fusco property located at 750 Jacobs Road. Act 125, signed into law on July 1, 2020, provides town governing bodies and planning commissions the opportunity to request a 30-day extension of the 60-day advance notice period from the PUC, which shall (language from Act 125) grant the extension while the state remains under the COVID-19 state of emergency. Chair Gardner presented a draft letter jointly from the SB and PC requesting the extension.

**Motion: To authorize Chair Gardner to sign the letter requesting a 30-day extension of the advance notice period.** Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously (4-0; Mr. Jewett arrived right after the vote).

**[Update: At its meeting latter Thursday evening, the Planning Commission authorized Chair Julie Potter to sign the same letter of extension. The signed letter was delivered to the Public Utility Commission on December 4, 2020.]**

At the conclusion of the cell tower project discussion the Zoom meeting for Part 1 of the board's special meeting was ended and board members logged onto the Zoom meeting for Part 2.

**Part 2 (Zoom Meeting Hosted by East Montpelier Fire Department)**

**SB Attendance:** Chair Seth Gardner, Carl Etnier, Judith Dillon, Amy Willis and Jon Jewett;  
Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

**Calais SB Attendance:** Chair Denise Wheeler, Clif Emmons and Rose Pelchuck (7:30 p.m.);  
Recording Secretary Katie Lane-Karnas

**EMFD Attendance:** Chief Ty Rolland, President Toby Talbot, Sandy Conti and Albert Petrella;  
EMFD Clerk Judy Woodbeck

**Public Attendance:** EM Town Treasurer Don Welch

**Presentation of the Proposed FY2022 Ambulance & Emergency Services Budget by the East Montpelier Fire Department**

EMFD Chief Rolland and EMFD President Talbot welcomed the board members.

**Budget**

Mr. Talbot gave a short update on the current FY2021 budget status, with the only area of concern being ambulance staffing costs which are running about 15% over budget, a not unexpected situation given the known effort to increase paid staffing when possible to reduce reliance on volunteers. The staffing discussion provided a smooth segue into the budget presentation as that one issue is driving the increased budget request. The proposed total FY2022 EMFD budget for fire and ambulance services is \$615,186, an increase of \$25,633 (4.3%) over the FY2021 budget of \$589,553. The ambulance budget no longer includes any revenue item reflecting an off-the-top transfer from ambulance service revenue to the operating budget, so the ambulance budget revenue stream is limited to the contributions from the towns plus the ambulance service contracts with Plainfield (\$53,624, up 3%) and Marshfield (\$43,709, also up 3%). The fire service budget revenue remains just the appropriations from the two towns. The expected contributions for FY2022, representing the contracted one-third Calais, two-thirds East Montpelier split:

	<u>Fire Service</u>	<u>Ambulance Service</u>	<u>Total</u>
East Montpelier	\$122,076	\$223,159	\$345,235
Calais	\$ 61,038	\$111,580	\$172,618

This represents a 7.9% increase over FY2021 town contributions. The fire service request dropped 5.9%, while the ambulance service request was up 17.3%. As part of the joint town & EMFD effort to reduce dependence on volunteers for ambulance staffing, the towns agreed last year to a 3-year plan to increase the ambulance staffing line by a total of \$150,000 in three steps of 25% in FY2021, 25% in FY2022 and the final 50% in FY2023. The overall staffing increase, made up of the FY2022 step of \$37,500 coupled with related personnel costs, represents nearly all the budget line increases. Drops in other budget lines, such as insurance and vehicle repair costs, partially offset the increased staffing costs.

During the budget discussion a fire service mutual aid call was received. Chief Rolland thanked both boards for their consideration of the budget requests and then left the meeting along with Mr. Petrella.

Mr. Talbot moved on to the updated 5-year capital plan that anticipates a \$350,000 fire engine replacement in FY2022, with the cost spread over 10 years. As shown in the plan, the cost of the new fire engine will be covered entirely by the EMFD capital reserve fund, which is fueled by ambulance service revenue. At this time no direct town contribution is expected to be requested as part of the planned purchase.

Mr. Talbot concluded the presentation with a brief general service update. The current, through November, calendar year 2020 call log shows a slight decrease in call volume compared to 2019.

Both boards thanked Mr. Talbot for the presentation and the myriad services provided by EMFD to the community.

The two selectboards will meet remotely to discuss the EMFD budget requests on December 7, 2020, 7:00 p.m. The Zoom meeting will be hosted by the EM Selectboard.

**Motion: To adjourn.** Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

**Approved: December 7, 2020 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting**