



**TOWN OF
BROOKLINE, NEW HAMPSHIRE
SELECTBOARD**

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*Minutes
Selectboard
Wednesday, January 31, 2018*

Selectboard members present: John Carr, Brendan Denehy, Tom Humphreys, Val Ogden and Eddie Arnold along with Town Administrator Tad Putney. Also present: Ambulance Service members Garry Arruda, Deena Hall, Jessica Shea, Jay Kramarczyk, Francis Gavin and David Muse, residents Melanie Levesque, Ann Somers, Judy Cook and Peter Cook.

6:00pm John opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Discuss Future Organization of the Ambulance Service

John opened with a statement. He then explained that we want to discuss our next steps and let the Board bring forth facts and then we will take questions and ideas from residents to understand their perspectives. **Brendan** said that he and John had an opportunity when Wes Whittier retired to look at the Ambulance Service. We went through the process with the rest of the Selectboard looking at the ambulance service and the structure. He said when you're looking at a new hire, you have to look at where things are, and where things are going. **Brendan** said he thinks we would all agree that there are basically two structures that have to be looked at. One is the current model that has served the town tremendously since the founding of the ambulance service in the 1970's and if we continue with this model, we will hire a director. Moving forward we have to look at the fact that these are volunteers and evaluate if that resource is still going to continue to be there for us. We need to talk to the people and talk to the ambulance and fire departments. **Brendan** said the alternative structure that most other towns are moving to is a combined Fire and Ambulance rescue model in which case the person hired to manage the ambulance would report to the Fire Chief. He said in his mind that is the discussion we need to start having tonight. We need to talk to the Ambulance Service and the Fire Department and the citizens of Brookline. **Val** said things went down a path that required an attorney and that wrapped up right before Christmas. The Board could not talk about any of it being that it was non-public, but now we would like to look at how we can take what we have and make it better for everybody. **Judy Cook** said she looked at the Town Report and the Ambulance Service takes far less tax dollars and does far more work than the Fire Department. She said we've had three studies over the past that had the same outcome regarding billing for ambulance services and she said you can't charge for the ambulance until they change the laws regarding insurance. **Peter Cook** asked why the position has not been posted. **Brendan** said you can't build an ad without knowing what the responsibilities

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are going to be for the position. **John** said we haven't ruled anything out or made any decisions. That is why we are here tonight, we want to take positive ideas from the people and we don't want to rush things. **Tad** said we have been dealing with some issues and have been fortunate to have an acting director who has been handling things for the past four months and that is a long period of time. We've been relying on the day to day efforts of the volunteers, but we are at the point where we need to come up with a plan and tonight is the first opportunity to have a dialogue and come up with ideas. **Allister Guthrie**, advanced EMT, asked if the Selectboard would come and meet with all of them. **Brendan** said yes that is a very important step and he views the ambulance as an integral part of this and we would like to set that up. **Judy** said in 1976 the town had no ambulance service and you had to wait for a Nashua ambulance. A volunteer ambulance service was started by Ann and Phil Winter and somehow they acquired a used ambulance. That went on for a number of years and then the town grew and **Judy** said she joined in 1983. It was a small group of people and then they hired Bart Hunter as ambulance director. She said by the time Wes was hired, the town took over the ambulance and since then the number of calls has gone up with the population and now there are about 20 volunteers. **Val** said there is a lot to consider here. **Judy** said we've had this discussion of merging ambulance and fire years ago and the fire department wanted nothing to do with it. She said they were not interested in the medical side of an emergency call. **Tad** said, speaking to the fact that the position hasn't been posted yet, the Board wants to consider separating the emergency management responsibilities from the ambulance director position. **Jay Kramczyk** said he is not sure why this is so controversial and dramatic at this point and said he appreciates what the board is trying to do with weighing all the options. He said we think the Fire Department does a great job and the Ambulance Service has a wonderful relationship with them that maybe wasn't the case several years ago. **Jay** said this is a worthwhile discussion and he thanked the board for having it. **Graham Loff** said what he doesn't want is to end up with worse services than we have now, adding that he had been a victim of a fight similar to this in California and it is the reason he moved to a small town. **John** said no one wants worse services and we are not looking to get rid of the ambulance service. **Brendan** said that one of the things that struck him the last time we looked at the ambulance service was speaking with a dispatch employee who said his biggest fear was setting off a tone and no one responding. He said he appreciates the care he and his family have received from the Ambulance Service and wants to see it continue. **Val** said the President said in his state of the union address that Police, Fire and Ambulance personnel carry this country on their backs and we should be grateful. **Gary Arruda** said the Selectboard should tread lightly and get as much information as it can because he has seen what happens when uninformed people get involved. **Francis Gavin** said if we are looking at six months before the position is filled, then we need to get interim help. **John** said he hopes the end of March or April is a reasonable timeframe. **Tom** asked how many volunteers have we gained and how many have left in the last five years. **Richard Gribble** said we have gained as many as we've lost, so it's a wash. **Peter** said there are three studies that have had a consistent result and layout consistent numbers regarding the idea of billing. **Eddie** asked **Tad** to obtain the results of those studies. **Richard** asked why the meeting was scheduled for tonight. **John** said in order to keep moving forward on a timely basis. **Jessica Shea** said the Board talks about deciding, but the volunteers have a say and you

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can't make decisions without involving the volunteers and/or a committee of townspeople. **Eddie** said he would like to see a bigger audience and have a public hearing for further discussion. **Judy** said you need to have public hearings on this or you are going to have angry people. **Ann** said she would support a public hearing. **Francis** said until we find a new director, we could put someone in the position for the interim. The Board identified February 13th and 15th as possible dates for a meeting with the Ambulance Service. **Tad** will speak with Jan about which is better. Then there was discussion and agreement that Tuesday, February 20th at 7pm would be the public hearing. **Eddie** said he likes the way the Ambulance has been run and would like to see it move forward, but is concerned about the pool of volunteers. In response to a comment from **Gary**, **Tad** suggested we hold off on the ambulance billing issue until we figure out the staffing of the Ambulance Service.

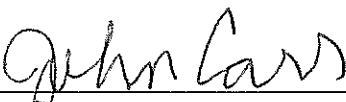
Eddie identified the following options:

- Merge the Ambulance and Fire Departments
- Maintain the current Ambulance structure
- Maintain the current structure, but separate Emergency Management
- Hire an interim daytime Ambulance attendant
- Create a Study Committee
- Implement an Ambulance Billing System

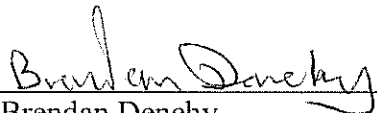
Brendan moved, seconded by Eddie, to adjourn the meeting; Voted Yes 5-0.

7:35pm meeting adjourned.

Minutes submitted by Sharon Sturtevant.



John Carr

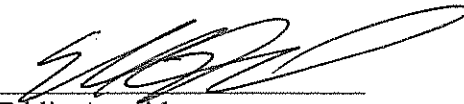


Brendan Denehy



Tom Humphreys

Valerie Ogden



Eddie Arnold