

Law Enforcement Study Committee Meeting Minutes

Johnson / Hyde Park / Wolcott

Date: Nov 18, 2020 @ 6:30 pm

Location: by Zoom

Time: Nov 18, 2020 06:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Present via zoom: Duncan Hastings, Peter Gallo, Jim Olsen, Diana Osborn. Absent: Chris Jones

Meeting called to order at 6:32 p.m.

Agenda:

Any changes, additions, or deletions to the agenda.

There were no changes to the agenda

Public Comment opportunity.

There were no members of the public on the zoom meeting.

Appointment of temporary secretary to record minutes.

As there were no volunteers to take the minutes, the Chair, Duncan Hastings agreed to take the minutes until a determination by the boards can be made regarding a minute taker. Brief discussion over minute taker versus zoom transcript. Preference would be for a minute take as direct transcripts would be very bulky and more difficult to deal with.

Review and approval of meeting minutes from 11/11/2020 first meeting.

The minutes for the 11/11/20 meeting were approved with no changes.

Basic ground rules for conduct of meetings. Zoom format. Public participation.

The Chair spent a few minutes outlining how he planned to run the meetings. Will operate under Open Meeting Law. Suggestion made to cc Hyde Park Village Manager on notices etc. Chair agreed to add to cc list, but cautioned he thought this was not necessarily his responsibility as chair and that each committee member and or the Town Administrators for the towns might be in a better position to circulate information to the people they think should have it or who might request it.

Public comment and participation will be at the beginning and end of each meeting, but not during our discussions of agenda items.

Review and further define the mission of the Committee.

Selectboard charge: "To study options for maintaining quality law enforcement coverage in a financially sustainable way." Discussion about what this meant and what the committee should study. While not part of the Selectboard charge, the committee assumes it will submit a written report to the Boards.

After discussion the following initial questions were agreed upon as ways to inform our knowledge and understanding of the issues.

- 1) Do we have a good understanding of what is currently being provided (and the cost) by LCSD?
- 2) Closely related to question 1, what options exist for change under the current model which might provide desired levels of service, and accountability in a financially sustainable way?
- 3) Do we have a good understanding of the range of other options (and potential costs) which might be available?
- 4) What are desired levels of service necessary and what are voters willing to pay for?

What information do we require to do our work?

Copies of current and recent contracts.

Copies of the past five years budgets (which show the cost shares)

Understanding of fiscal ramifications of law enforcement budget and increases to the contract towns.

Who owns the patrol cars and equipment used by the contract towns?

What are the crime stats and responses telling us? We need the stats.

Is the LCSD currently staffed appropriately?

What are our first steps?

Diana Osborn agreed to investigate options for law enforcement, including options to change the terms of the current contracts. She will report back to the board with her results.

It was decided that representatives of each town would reach out to their respective town official and obtain a current contract and one from five years ago. Duncan, Peter, and Jim will do this.

Jim had made an initial contact with Roger. He agreed to ask Roger for general crime stats, any performance metrics he might have such as response times and response outcomes, current levels of staffing dedicated to the contract towns (including any unfilled positions), responses by LCSD for law enforcement assistance to other law enforcement agencies in non-contract towns.

Duncan agreed to reach out to the three towns and ask for financial impact information, such as what is the individual impact on property taxes for the current costs (how much does the “average” taxpayer pay for the service) ? What is the percent of cost law enforcement services to the “General Budget” (not including highways)? What is the actual cost of service expressed as a portion of the tax rate?

It was decided that this is an ample list for our next meeting.

Additional subjects discussed: Community survey? (likely at some point) Survey of the three Select boards? (yes work in progress) Survey of Sheriff’s Dept? (critical to have Roger attend a future meeting)

What resources do we have?

I think we can expect to have to do much of the legwork ourselves...

Public Comment/Participation (10 minutes)

There were no members of the public.

Any other business

Next Meeting

Our next meeting is schedule for the first Wednesday in December, which is the 2nd at 6:30 p.m. We have said we would meet on the first and third Wednesdays, at least to begin with.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:45 by unanimous vote

Submitted by Duncan Hastings 11/19/20

Approved on 12/2/20