

SUNDERLAND SELECTBOARD MINUTES

Place: Town Offices, 12 School Street

January 30, 2023

Attending: T. Fydenkevez, C. Drake-Tremblay, N. Waring, G. Kravitz

Others: Finance Committee: J. Elias, S. Smiarowski; Eversource Rep-Pole Hearing, Z. Smith-SCEMS

Director, J. Remillard-SCSC Director,

Meeting: Hybrid: in person with portions recorded by FCAT

Meeting called to order at 6:38PM

MINUTES

Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to accept MINUTES of 01.17.2023, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0.

BUSINESS

- POLE HEARING Opened at 6:41PM. Eversource petition requesting permission to grant a location and permission to install and maintain below the surface of the ground in the public way, hereinafter named a line or lines for the transmission of electricity consisting of associated wires and equipment. Location: Hadley Rd, Sunderland. REASON: Due to increasing electrical loads the two existing direct buried electric circuits down Ferry Rd to the overhead river crossing need replacing. Two larger 1000mcm copper cables will be installed in a new manhole and conduit system. Details offered that two (2) cables would be run on Ferry Rd which is a dirt road to include installation of four (4) manholes constructed of precast concrete. 45" pole height would remain the same. Eversource and Karl's Site Work will be doing work. Only one pole is being moved and roadways will be returned to their pre-existing condition upon completion. Mr. Fydenkevez approval should be contingent on proper notification given to the Highway Superintendent for inspection and work is scheduled with the abutting land owners to not interfere with agricultural schedules and access. Eversource to present a construction schedule to the town prior to work. Pole hearing closed at 6:53PM. Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to grant Pole Hearing request as presented by Eversource starting at Hadley Road and left on Ferry Rd, contingent with compliance of 1) all work reviewed and authorized by Highway Superintendent and 2) all land owners are consulted to work around their planting and access to their fields, as it is a road, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0.
- SOUTH COUNTY EMS (SoCEMS) BUDGET PRESENTATION: SoCEMS Director Zoe Smith presented FY24 budget which was approved by the South County Board of Oversight. Budget represents a \$1.5million 24-hour ambulance service for Sunderland, Whately and Deerfield, and offering Intercept coverage to other communities, as needed. After fee collections, grants, etc., the cost to the 3 towns is \$680,628. An established formula implemented when service began consists of property values and population; Sunderland's portion is $31.47\% = \$214,239$. This is an increase of \$4,000 over last year. Mr. Fydenkevez noted at their last meeting, some Deerfield residents stated that everyone knows Sunderland has more calls than they pay for. The SoCEMS Board of Oversight gets a variety of information at their meetings but one is talking about the numbers. There are two types of calls primarily to the 3 communities of Sunderland, Deerfield and Whately and then calls made for mutual-aid or Intercepts. Sunderland has used approximately 26-27% of the call volume and Deerfield has had about 55-56% of the call volume so the comments were inaccurate. When the SoCEMS was established, several factors were used to create a fair and equal formula which has been working well. Ms. Smith reviewed the service billing and collections practices. Per law, SoCEMS bills all patients the same rate for the service and then payment is based on insurance and collectible fees. Not all fees will be collectable for a variety of reasons. SoCEMS has an 80% collection rate from medicare/medicaid and 90% collection rate from private insurance. Collection services are performed by an independent medical billing service with ambulance collections experience. Salary increases noted in the budget are due to hiring of two new Paramedics, which reduces call-staffing and increases full-time staff from 8 to 10. Employees are appointed by the Town of Deerfield and follows their personnel bylaws. Call volume has increased 10% over last year as well as mutual aid calls. Capital: a

new ambulance is needed which they have been saving for and quote received previously was \$260,000. However, updated quotes are now \$375,000 and vehicle would not be available for 700 days from order once funds have been approved. Another needed item is the cardiac monitors which is a crucial piece of equipment for their service. Equipment life expectancy is about 10yrs and the current limits have reached those limits jeopardizing patient care if units fail. Prior equipment was replaced by acquiring grants. They will be applying for grants for this equipment but the need is immediate due to the age of the machines. There is one unit per vehicle for a total of three. The SoCEMS Board of Oversight voted to approve replacement of the equipment with funds from the ambulance (savings) fund. This will result in a shortfall in the ambulance fund, especially if grants are not received for the cardiac monitors. Sunderland's portion of the short fall is \$86,000 and she is asking towns to support their portion at town meeting so they can continue with ordering the new ambulance. The board complimented SoCEMS for their services to our towns and surrounding communities.

- **SOUTH COUNTY SENIOR CENTER:** Director Jennifer Remillard gave overview of the center's budget. The budget includes salary increases for the director and outreach coordinator due to increased hours and responsibilities. Outreach Coordinator's role includes covering the Director's position when out of the office. The Director position has increased to 40 hours/wk and is currently receiving back up from the Deerfield Town Administrator when absent. The SCSC Board of Oversight (SCSCBoO) approved increased hours to 35/week for the Outreach Coordinator position. Program participation has increased on average from 31 people per day to 61 people per day: Membership increased by 93 in 2022 and an additional 16 in January of 2023. Total membership is 319. Users of the center would like to see more open days per week and longer hours. Membership by town is 28 from Whately, 37 from outside the county area and the remainder split between Deerfield and Sunderland. Programs are physically offered in all three member towns. Exercise classes are the most attended programs and the food insecurity program served 185 individuals in 2022. A total of \$16,820 has been received in grants which has supported the exercise and food insecurity programs. The Center has locations in all three towns now for various services. The Administrative Offices are now in Sunderland, which costs \$1,800/mo. totaling \$21,600/yr. This location has had double attendance since opening. Prior to February 2021, the center used tents to house some services in Deerfield. SCSC is also renting space in the Holy Family Church Center in Deerfield for \$1,000/mo. which has just increased recently by \$200/mo. due to utility costs, totaling \$14,400/yr. This location is limited in private space for members who want to seek specialized services or needs assistance. Additional space is utilized in Whately for the center programs as well but there are no rental fees. Funds for the rentals are being covered by carryover and special revenue funds. The SCSCBoO is pursuing the feasibility of the Deerfield Congregational Church for the center's future. It was noted that the MASS-IN-MOTION PROGRAM was presented at the last Selectboard's meeting and Ms. Remillard noted some the benefits of the program as well. The Board agreed to combine resources with other SCSC towns for Mass-In-Motion and not participate independently. Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to combine Mass-In-Motion resources with SCSC towns of Deerfield and Whately, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0.
- **RETIREMENT COLAs** – Franklin County Retirement Board voted an additional 2% increase in FY26. Approval from two-thirds of Franklin County towns required. FY24 Assessment for Sunderland is \$392,000, 2% additional in FY26 would be \$11,000 more. 2% would amount to \$259 for the average retiree bringing the total COLA, if approved to \$647 on average. To be reviewed at next Selectboard meeting. Some recipients may be eligible for Social Security if they worked in other entities. If the recipient only worked in municipal government employment, they would not be eligible for social security benefits.
- **FRANKLIN COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (FCSWMD) SPECIAL MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE VOTE.** Town's Energy Committee appointee is still pending. The FCSWMD is requesting towns vote so Board members could have multiple positions. There is an issue with county and board members holding a position in each entity. Mr. Fydenkevez noted that Selectboard members are special municipal employees already. Mr. Kravitz noted the FCSWMD seat is not a special municipal employee position. It is not clear why towns are being asked to make the

designation. We have been advised that all members of the district are required to be a special municipal employee. Ms. Drake-Tremblay moves that the Selectboard designate the position of Franklin County Solid Waste Management District Representative as a Special Municipal Employee position for the Town pursuant to M.G.L. c. 268A, section 1(n) AND move that the Selectboard designate the position of Franklin County Solid Waste Management District Alternate Representative as a Special Municipal Employee position for the Town pursuant to M.G.L. c. 268A, section 1(n), Mr. Waring second, vote 2-1.

- CAUCUS WARRANT for SELECTBOARD SIGNATURE – Mr. Kravitz read the warrant which will be held Monday, March 6, 2023. Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion that the Selectboard sign the Town Caucus Warrant which will be held Monday, March 6, 2023 at 6PM in the Town Office Building, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0.

SELECTBOARD UPDATES

Ms. Drake-Tremblay attended a PERSONNEL COMMITTEE meeting prior to Board's meeting. Mr. Waring has a CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE meeting tomorrow and report next week. MMA MEETING IN BOSTON was attended by Mr. Kravitz, Mr. Fydenkevez and Ms. Drake-Tremblay. The town receives credits towards their MIIA insurance costs for attending seminars, trainings, etc. by all employee participations, not just those at the Annual meeting. Mr. Fydenkevez attended a regionalization discussion for various ideas.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES

The Town Administrator noted that there is a request for ARPA funds to install brackets on the new basketball backboards that will allow them to be raised and lowered. The estimate for that is \$2,000. The school has also raised funds to replace the scoreboard.

Next Selectboard meeting is scheduled for February 6, 2023.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Drake Tremblay motion to adjourn, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0 at 9:02PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Geoff Kravitz,
Town Administrator