

**Fire and Rescue Planning Committee Meeting
Minutes of November 21, 2016**

Members present: Ben Wallace, Co-Chair; Selectman Kevin Johnson, Co-Chair; Jonathan Burbank, Allan LeGrow, Gail Hart, David Mercier and Selectman Rick Daniel

Also present: Kristi Eiane, Town Administrator; Marguerite Kelly, Town Treasurer; Amy Tchao, Town Attorney

Call to order

The meeting was called to order around 6pm.

Discussion with the Town Attorney

The problem of daytime fire coverage arose out of lack of consistent response in one area of Town, although the problem is felt in departments other than Harpswell Neck. The model being discussed is comprised of a municipal fire chief who would have overarching authority over other volunteer fire chiefs and volunteer fire fighters with 2 fire fighter positions, paid by the Town, on Monday through Friday from 6am to 6pm.

There was discussion about how to implement this model under the statute. The Attorney indicated it could be difficult to implement the proposed model given statutory language. Functionally there are currently 3 separate zones in Harpswell with 3 separate chiefs. The Attorney indicated that the organizations may have to change their by-laws, if one municipal chief becomes responsible for Town-wide command of the system and its volunteer structure. Under this scenario the Attorney expressed that people would still be providing volunteer services, albeit not to their organization but to the municipality. As a possibility, the organizations could consider having district chiefs or deputy chiefs who would be under the direction of the municipal fire chief. There was some discussion about whether the Town could create a fourth district/zone with its own fire chief. The Attorney indicated she would have to look into that scenario.

It was noted that one of the goals is to preserve the volunteer structure and another is to focus on developing town-wide capability. There did not appear to be consensus on whether the three organizations would be willing to change their by-laws in order to accommodate the proposed model. While one department might be willing to change, if others were not, it would not necessarily be the best town-wide solution. It was noted that any change could risk the loss of volunteers. There was a suggestion that volunteers be asked how they would feel about being municipal volunteers rather than department volunteers.

The Town Attorney indicated that it could be helpful to look at the Kennebunkport model. The Committee will continue to discuss variations of the model and the Town Attorney will continue looking at legal ramifications.

Public Comment

An audience member asked about the creation of one new nonprofit entity which was not widely embraced.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:17pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristi K. Eiane, Town Administrator

