

Town of Groton
Select Board Work Session Minutes
February 12, 2019

In attendance: John Rescigno, Ron Madan and Sara Smith (Administrative Assistant - AA)

John called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

Meeting with the Sheriff's Department (Jeff Stiegler, Ryan Kelley, Travis Austin)

John explained we are going to have a vote in March to see if they want to abolish the Police Department and then to see what the Town wants to do but there are some questions the Town has.

- Are you able to provide patrol after March, depending on how the Town Meeting goes? Sheriff Stiegler doesn't know if he can guarantee coverage especially in the summer.
- Currently we are only doing one four-hour block on the weekends. Can we do more patrol in the summer time but keep it less in the winter? (like 2 or 3 four-hour blocks in the summer) Sheriff Stiegler doesn't know if he can guarantee that he would have the personnel
- Can we suggest where the patrol is done? For example, SRR in summertime. If they are covering, they would be able to pay attention to certain areas but again they are not sure if they would be able to cover. The Sheriff recommended asking State Police to detail Sculptured Rocks Road since it is a state park. They do Hampton beach which is a state park.
- If something happens while you are on duty and it involves court, such as a DUI or something, do we pay the prosecutor or is that you and we just pay the hourly flat rate for coverage? This would be above and beyond the charges. The Sheriff explained that it would come out of the Town costs and not the Sheriff's costs which could cost another 80-120 hours for investigation.
- How would the dispatch work? Would the Town still need dispatch or would our residents just use the Grafton County dispatch number? They would recommend keeping the dispatch right now since they cannot guarantee coverage. This is something that could be looked at after Town Meeting.
- Log of calls responded to while covering (how many arrests, tickets, accidents, etc.). They sign on through Plymouth Police Dispatch since they are the ones that take our calls so we can get a log at any time. They recommended that we reach out to Plymouth Police Dispatch and ask for the activity log for the Town. We do not need the detailed one, just what the media would get. This is a public document. They may refer to it as the right to know log or the calls for service log. We can ask for a monthly log too.

Sheriff Stiegler said that he isn't sure that the four-hour blocks are effective out of 168 hours in a week. There is no way to cover everything. John mentioned this has been a concern of the Towns as well which is why we would like the log but he thinks it is more of a feel-good thing to see presence in Town. Sheriff Stiegler said he thinks it would be more feasible to connect with another town for a service. He mentioned again that he doesn't know if he can guarantee that he would have the personnel for coverage especially with vacations, etc. in the summertime. Ryan said that the ones that are covering is because this is their slow time but, in the summer, they don't know what will happen. If they are coming through the area and pull a car over there would not be a charge to the Town.

Sheriff Stiegler thinks we may want to try to find our own Chief again. John explained that we have been looking for help and when we have looked for a Chief in the past, they wanted too much money or had unrealistic expectations. We always have a hard time filling positions within the Police Department. The Sheriff recommended talking to Primex about re-establishing the Police Department and what that entails. They also recommend talking to Robert Barry or Nicole Armigadean at Primex about our police needs. Robert works with departments and Primex usually helps with the advertising process, hiring process, procedures, etc. Travis said that it is worth looking into with Primex, Robert Barry, about not abolishing but like a place holder. Ryan said that Primex helped Orford and did all advertising, set up meetings, sit in the oral boards and interview process, etc.

Sheriff Stiegler said that he wants to help but they are responsible for courts, service of warrants, transportation and so many other things. Right now, he is looking at what their obligations are first and then see what they can offer. He doesn't want to promise anything and then not be able to go forward with the coverage because other needs come up. However, he does want to promote the Sheriffs Department in the community.

They explained that Monroe uses State Police. Sara already emailed the Monroe Select Board office but will try contacting them again. Also, Orford has used State Police so we could reach out to them.

Ryan said that they brought Chief Austin here because he is local and has knowledge about the communities. John said that we had talked about working with Hebron before but it would have to be voted by the Town and we are not sure how the Town will vote this year. They said that if Groton does go back to a Police Department then we should use Chief Austin for his feedback. Some towns do a combined effort.

John had a few questions if we do hire another Chief.

- He asked if the Chief usually lives in Town and if not how close should they live. They explained that most do not live in the Town but most are within 20 minutes. It is hard to say that in the hiring process because when you give residential restrictions you start lowering the interest but you would definitely want to do a contract which states minutes or miles. They stated the Town would Also, would want to think about on call.
- John asked if they normally allow the Chief to take the cruiser home. They stated that it is more appealing and the Town could say that as long as they live within so many miles, they can take the cruiser home.
- When does the clock start when they take a cruiser home? They explained that once they get in a town vehicle it could be workers comp issue so they should be on the clock when they are driving the vehicle but as long as they are salary it shouldn't matter.
- How much should the Select Board control the hours? They explained that the Select Board a state they want so many weekends a month or nights a week. The Select Board can also control time off to say they can only take one week off in the summer, etc. They recommended that the Town just be defined in the contract. Robert Barry will be able to help with a lot of this.

The Sheriff said there are no questions that Groton has options. He pointed out that it will be more expensive to re-establish it if it is abolished. Right now, the Town has some say and more control and this can be lost if there is no Police Department in regards to State Police responses, etc.

They have heard of people that would be interested in the Chief position that didn't come forward before so it may be worth posting. They don't think long term the Sheriff's Department covering would

be the solution. In the meantime, they will do what they can for us but the summertime may be a different story. They explained that the Sheriff's Department doesn't have a contract it would be a verbal agreement that says they will do what they can to cover four hours a week like we are doing now if they can continue to help but once they start getting busy, they cannot guarantee it. They are afraid that if there are is no police coverage that the Town will regret it.

Sara mentioned that Town Meeting is March 16th at 9am so they will know more then and can be in touch after. Sara also asked if they would have someone available to cover the Town Meeting. Ryan said they can have someone cover and asked Sara to send him an email to remind him.

Casey Kuplin building permit

Sara explained that she emailed the packet that Casey brought in to the attorney for review. The attorney stated that the fact that the state issued a driveway permit for the private right of way to access the state road does not resolve the town's issues. The lot still lacks frontage on a Class V or better road. Therefore, he still requires ZBA relief under RSA 674:41, II to get a building permit. The driveway permit is something the ZBA can consider, but it does not change the need for the ZBA relief. If the engineer/attorney would like to provide an analysis of why they think this is no longer required, she would be happy to consider that analysis. The Select Board asked Sara to email Casey and explain that he can have his attorney or engineer provide an analysis as why they do not think it is required and she will review that. Sara had emailed this information to Casey. He responded that it was their understanding that the selectmen have the authority under RSA 674:41 to grant permission. He said that the state DOT has no issue with his lack of road frontage therefore he feels it meets the criteria of class V or better since that is the access to that property.

Sara sent that information to the attorney and she responded with the following:

"RSA 674:41 provides 2 mechanisms by which a building permit for a lot without frontage can be approved. Paragraph I allows the BOS to grant the building permit under certain conditions. The only one that would apply here is paragraph 674:42, I(d). That paragraph allows the BOS to vote to grant building permits on a lot served by a private road, after review and comment by the Planning Board, as long as the town assumes no liability for the road. My understanding is that the BOS has already voted to deny the building permit for this lot back in December. Therefore, the applicant is forced to paragraph II—going to the ZBA for a waiver. The selectmen can certainly reconsider their decision, get the input from the planning board and grant the building permit; but they can also stand by their earlier decision and remind the applicant that his only avenue at this point is to seek ZBA approval under Paragraph II."

Casey called Sara on Monday and had some other reasons why he thinks he is being held to different standards. Sara told him to email them over so she can forward them to the attorney for review and she has not received this as of yet. Sara will send the email from the attorney to John again and will email the attorney and Deb Johnson for their thoughts on how to proceed.

Having no other business to conduct, Ron motioned to adjourn at 5:02pm, John 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant