

Suncook Valley Regional Town Association
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: February 18, 2010

Minutes Prepared By: Bruce Dyke

In Attendance: Jim Barnard – Town of Barnstead - Selectman
Bruce Dyke – Chichester Town Organization Committee
Stephanie Gray – Town of Strafford - Selectman
David Jodoin – Town of Pembroke – Town Administrator
Jeff Jordan – Town of Chichester – Selectman
David Kerr – Town of Barnstead - Selectman
Roger LaFleur – Town of Allenstown - Selectman
Gordon Preston – Town of Barnstead – Selectman
Joanne Randall – Town of Epsom - Selectman
David Stack – Town of Northwood – Town Administrator
Ed Vien – Town of Pittsfield - Selectman

Location: Strafford Town Offices

Minutes Approved: TBA

- The meeting was called to order at 7:00 by Bruce Dyke
- The draft minutes of the November 18, 2009 meeting were reviewed and comments/changes were solicited. A motion was made by Ed Vien to accept the minutes as presented and seconded by Jeff Jordan. The minutes were approved by for attendees, with one person abstaining.
- Bruce welcomed David Stack (Northwood's Town Administrator) to the meeting. Mr. Stack indicated that Northwood's Board of Selectmen confirmed their desire for Northwood's participation in the SVRTA and selected Mr. Stack to represent the town. Ed Vien made a motion that the Town of Northwood be officially recognized as a member of the SVRTA, which was seconded by David Kerr. The group voted unanimously to include the Town of Northwood, which represents the eighth town in the group.
- Jim Barnard and Gordon Preston indicated that the town of Gilmanton was still interested in potentially joining the SVRTA. Jim was going to follow-up with one of their BoS members to get a status.
- Bruce provided copies of the updated Police Department Operations Survey that was conducted last fall. Additional information that had been requested of the participating PDs after initial results were reviewed had been added for most towns, but responses from Barnstead, Epsom and Strafford were still pending. The remaining information should be collected within the next week and will be distributed to the SVRTA members at that time. The group reviewed the overall survey again, with particular attention focused on the

additional data items added. Upon receipt of the remaining data points, the group agreed that the survey should be considered complete and would be distributed to their respective Police Chiefs and Boards of Selectmen.

- As a follow-up to the PD Survey and the group's discussion during the November, 2009 meeting, Bruce indicated that he had contacted Allenstown's Police Chief, Shaun Mullholland to see if he'd be interested in providing a high-level presentation to the SVRTA specific to cooperative arrangements and consolidation of police departments. This presentation would be generic and outline pro's & con's of any potential arrangement (similar to last year's fire department presentation. Chief Mullholland indicated that he would put together such a presentation for a future meeting and also had indicated the County Sheriff was interested in attending an SVRTA meeting. With that in mind, group suggested that any such presentation be planned for a mid-June meeting of the group. Bruce will follow-up with Chief Mullholland.
- Each town present at the meeting provided a brief summary of their 2010 proposed budgets:
 - o Allenstown - \$6.4M operating budget, which is their Budget Committee's recommended budget will be proposed. This includes 3.5% (maximum) merit increases for town employees. Major capital expenditure warrants include two new fire trucks (substantially funded by grants), as well as a new 6-wheel dump truck.
 - o Barnstead - \$3.36M operating budget (mostly flat over last year's). Major capital expenditure warrants include the purchase of the town's fire stations and related equipment as a final step in making the fire department a 100% town owned/operated entity. Another warrant for bridge repair will also be presented.
 - o Chichester - \$1.6M operating budget, which will be slightly less than last year's budget. Includes a number of "market salary adjustments" to keep town employees in the mid-range of peers in area towns. Major warrants include three road projects (2 of which are recommended by the Selectmen) and a new forestry vehicle.
 - o Epsom - \$2.71M proposed operating budget (default budget is approx. \$2.65M). Includes varied COLA increases for town staff, which average approx. 4%. Only major warrant is in regard to design options for renovations to and/or expansion of old meetinghouse to accommodate the town offices.
 - o Northwood – Flat operating budget over last year's proposed. No COLA proposed, but 3.0% merit increases included. Warrants include proposal for an additional police officer and new cruiser.
 - o Pembroke - \$7.5M operating budget proposed which is up only slightly from last year's. Capital reserve funding proposed will be approx. ½ of last year's levels. Merit increases between 1%-2% proposed.
 - o Pittsfield – Overall operating budget proposed for the year is less than last year's. No salary increases for non-contract staff, with 2.5% raises for contracted (union) staff included. No major warrant articles

proposed, with the exception of a new dump truck, which would be funded primarily from capital reserves.

- The issue of police cruiser replacement was discussed, along with the possibility of pursuing a group purchase discount based on the following planned PD vehicle purchases in 2010:
 - o Barnstead – 1 4WD
 - o Epsom – 1 4WD
 - o Northwood – 1 2WD
 - o Pembroke – 1 4WD
 - o Pittsfield – 1 2WD
 - o Strafford – 2 2WD

David Jodoin indicated that the Town of Pembroke has had very good luck obtaining vehicles from a dealership in MA and would contact them to determine what makes/models they can accommodate and what potential group purchase discounts may be available. He will provide information to the group ASAP, with the understanding that any potential opportunity in this area would likely need to be defined by the time town meeting's conclude in late March.

- Bruce provided an update regarding the potential group discounts specific to electricity contracts through Glacial Energy. Bruce has had a few discussions with Glacial and determined that two different representatives had been working with different SVRTA towns on this issue without each other's knowledge. This internal coordination issue has been corrected and Glacial is expected to contact the remaining SVRTA towns and provide feedback on potential opportunities to Bruce within a couple weeks. Bruce will update the group as soon as any such information is received.
- Bruce indicated that he plans to contact the LGC regarding the current health insurance cooperative arrangement set to expire this year in order to determine what options we may have to continue the arrangement, with the additional towns that have joined the SVRTA since the original agreement was started. On the same topic the group discussed the possibility of exploring other insurance providers, perhaps through the use of an insurance broker. David Jodoin indicated that Pembroke had good success in exploring their options in the past and was going to contact that individual to see if they were interested in doing an search on behalf of the SVRTA towns.
- Roger LaFleur noted that the Town of Allenstown is able to obtain paper and other office supplies through their School's SAU (SAU #53), which participates in a Cooperative Purchase Program via Seacoast Educational Services, located in Rochester. Access to this arrangement is available to any other town served by SAU #53. It was unclear if the non SAU 53 towns could also take advantage of this program or if the other area SAUs also had similar arrangements. David Jodoin indicated that he'd send contact info. regarding this group to Bruce for distribution to the SVRTA members.

- Bruce indicated that he had contacted the Local Government Center about the possibility of their help in conducting a survey of all NH towns in order to collect info. regarding any collaborative arrangements that currently exist among towns in the state. The LGC was interested in collaborating with the SVRTA on such a project and Bruce will continue to work with them to coordinate this effort.
- The group discussed the status of welfare budgets within their respective towns and whether the current economic conditions had adversely impacted them. Overall, the SVRTA towns have not seen any noteworthy impact to their welfare budgets, with the exception of Pittsfield, whose budget in this area has increased.
- The group briefly discussed the issue of Workforce Housing.
- David Jodoin raised the issue of a potential multi-town/shared police department shooting range. He's concerned that Pembroke's current range will not remain available in the future. Several other group members expressed interest in such a facility and David will ask Pembroke's Police Chief to define proposed requirements for such a facility for further review/discussion at the next SVRTA meeting.
- David Kerr asked the group if each town had Capital Improvement Planning groups & associated processes in place and if those functions were beneficial to the town. The majority of town's did have format CIP groups and plans in place, which varied in their "depth" but the overall feedback regarding their value was positive.
- The next meeting will be held Thursday, April 15th at 7pm. The location will be at the NorthwoodTown Hall.
- A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Gordon Preston and seconded by Stephanie Gray. The meeting adjourned at 9:40pm.