

**Suncook Valley Regional Town Association**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Date:** May 7, 2009

**Minutes Prepared By:** Bruce Dyke

**In Attendance:** Bruce Dyke – Chichester Town Organization Committee  
Stephanie Gray – Town of Strafford - Selectwoman  
David Jodoin – Town of Pembroke – Town Administrator  
Roger LaFleur – Town of Allenstown – Selectman  
Gordon Preston – Town of Barnstead – Selectman  
Joanne Randall – Town of Epsom - Selectman  
Ed Vien – Town of Pittsfield – Selectman

**Location:** Epsom Town Office's

**Minutes Approved:** July 23, 2009

- The meeting was called to order at 7:05 by Bruce Dyke
- The draft minutes of the March 19, 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 Gordon Preston. The minutes were approved unanimously.
- Bruce Dyke informed the group that he had a discussion with Northwood's Town Administrator (both current and incoming T.A.) in April and both individuals indicated that Northwood was still very interested in joining the SVRTA. However, since nobody from Northwood was able to attend the meeting, the group agreed to table agenda item 2 regarding Northwood's request to join the SVRTA until such time as a member of that Town's BOS could attend.
- The group welcomed Roger LaFleur, one of Allenstown's Selectmen to the meeting. After having attended the last SVRTA meeting, Mr. LaFleur discussed the potential benefits of participating in this forum with his peers on the BOS and they unanimously agreed to join the group. Based on his request, a motion was made by Joanne Randall to accept the Town of Allenstown in the SVRTA, which was seconded by Gordon Preston. The group voted unanimously in favor of the motion.
- Stephanie Gray updated the group on Strafford's budget process for the current year (as they were not able to attend the previous SVRTA meeting when that info. was shared). She indicated that Strafford's operating budget decreased by approx. 2% and they paid-off the remaining town debt. At this time, they have no outstanding bonds or debt of any kind, which the group found to be noteworthy.

- Joanne Randall informed the group that Epsom recently signed a contract with Verizon Wireless for cell phone service for all Town departments. This will provide better coverage in all areas of town and allow multiple, existing plans to be consolidated.
- Bruce asked for an update from all towns with regard to Gordon Preston's request for information specific to type/size/usage of carbide plow blade edges. He still intends to pursue potential group purchase discounts with relevant suppliers, once he's received the particular details from each town. At this point, Chichester, Allenstown and Pembroke has provided information. Epsom and Strafford contract almost all of their plowing services, so the request is not relevant to them. Pittsfield will be providing information shortly. Gordon will follow-up on this issue at the next meeting.
- The group discussed the potential for arrangement group discounts specific to office supplies, which continues to be met with some resistance in some towns due to vendor or specific product preferences. At this point, it was agreed to simply pursue a potential group discount for copier paper and "Post-It" notes. Each town was going to collect usage/vendor info. and send to Bruce. On a related note, David Jodoin noted that SAU 53 apparently does not actively pursue group/bulk purchase opportunities on behalf of the schools in their group.
- The group discussed a suggestion made by the Town of Allenstown to investigate potential group purchase opportunities with regard to road salt. At this point only the Town of Epsom has locked-in for the upcoming winter's salt purchase. A couple other towns attended a recent State meeting to discuss the possibility of purchasing salt as part of the State contract. Each of the remaining towns will send Bruce their estimated salt usage (in tons), along with their expected delivery requirements (single delivery, multiple deliveries over the course of the winter) and whether they plan to pick-up the material themselves or have it delivered. Each town will also send info. regarding the price they paid for last winter. After collecting all info. Bruce will contact the group to determine next-steps in terms of requesting prices.
- Bruce Dyke welcomed Stephen Hamilton, Director of the Property Appraisal Division for the NH Dept. of Revenue to the meeting. Mr. Hamilton had been invited to follow-up on a presentation provided by his office last summer regarding the potential benefits that may exist by regionalizing assessing services across multiple towns. The SVRTA was interested in getting Mr. Hamilton's perspective on what, if any benefits may exist for our specific towns based on demographics and existing assessing contracts in place within each SVRTA town.

Mr. Hamilton reviewed two multi-town arrangements currently in place, with the most notable being the Tri-Town Agreement, which is comprised of the Town's of New London, Newbury and Sunapee (representing approx. 8,500 parcels). The general impression of that agreement (which is an inter-

municipal agreement) is that is helped those towns greatly reduce legal fees incurred relating to property assessment disputes. Although each town shares an assessor, the net operational impact has been minimal in terms of any real savings, but the towns appear to enjoy a better level of service quality and overall availability in terms of assessing related services. It was also noted that some disputes between the towns have arisen in terms of getting their “fair share” of the assessor’s time.

It was noted that while most Inter-Municipal agreements fall under the rules in RSA-53A, a separate statute exists specifically for Assessing Cooperatives, which covers requirements including:

- Governing Boards
- Cost allocation formulas
- Minimum contract terms (typically 5-year)
- On-going cost responsibilities (beyond contract expiration)

The five towns in the SVRTA that expressed interest in this potential opportunity represent 12,000 parcels and collectively pay approx. \$200,000 annually for their current assessing contracts. Given the size and geography of those towns, it would most likely be impractical to expect to form a single assessing cooperative. Mr. Hamilton suggested an easier way to “test the waters” of a potential cooperative without the formalities and long-term commitment, would be to pursue a group-purchase where common vendors exist among the current towns (i.e. Avitar). This could also benefit other SVRTA towns using other systems, whereby a vendor quoting business for several other towns may be interested in also providing a migration solution to towns not currently their respective system. Such a “group purchase” arrangement could serve as a good first-step in determining if a more long-term formal arrangement among towns would be practical.

The group found their discussion with Mr. Hamilton very informative and thanked him for his efforts and time. Each member was going to discuss this issue with their respective Select Boards and determine what, if any, interest exists for pursuing a group from assessing companies in the area.

- Ed Vien noted that Pittsfield will be hosting an Emergency Management Operations Center training class at their Town Hall on May 26 and 28<sup>th</sup> (all day, both days). The training is free and any town interested in sending people should contact Pittsfield Fire Chief (Gary Johnson) at 435-6807 as soon as possible.
- Joanne Randall raised the issue of potential police department related collaboration among towns. The group acknowledged that this issue has come-up consistently over the course of several meetings and based on initial discussions which have taken place with the police chiefs in most of the towns, there appears to be some areas worth exploring. It was noted that any serious attempt to pursue specific cooperative arrangements in this area will likely have to start at the selectmen level. Bruce suggested that a portion of

the next meeting be dedicated to drafting a comprehensive questionnaire to be completed by each town specific to PD operational data in order to better gauge which opportunities should be further explored. The group agreed with the proposed approach.

- Joanne Randall raised the issue of coordinating payment schedules with the SAU in order to better manage expectations (from both sides) in terms of cash flow requirements and planning. To this point, efforts to work with the SAU on this issue have not been as productive as desired. Joanne polled the group to see if similar issues existed, which was confirmed as an issue by the group.
- The next meeting will be Thursday, June 25th at 7pm. The location will be at the Pittsfield Town Hall.
- A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Ed Vien and seconded by Joanne Randall. The meeting adjourned at 9:30pm.