

**Selectmen's Informational Meeting Minutes**  
**Town's Police Department**  
**January 12, 2015 - Kimball Hall @ 6:30 p.m.**

Selectmen present: Rheume, Ladd and Brooks: See Attached Sheet

Tim - This meeting was called today to get the towns peoples input on where they want the Stratford's Police Department to go from here and use that information to prepare for Town Meeting. Tim said that he was going to give everyone a recap a little bit from last weeks Selectmen's Meeting. The Selectmen have appointed Wayne Hall as Officer in Charge until Town Meeting so that people have time to decide the fate of or the direction of the PD. So in preparing for the Budget Hearing we are exploring as many possibilities as we can and so on. Wayne Hall has expressed his interest in continuing the PD as is by improving it or enhancing it by making it more efficient in his definition. Chief Marcel Platt from the Groveton PD has given the town a tentative or rough draft proposal and is defiantly interest in having a dialogue with the town for Contracted Service of his PD for Stratford. Also, I had spoken to Sergeant Landry from Troop F to see how Monroe & Stewartstown do it and how they contract out for so many hours a week. Trooper Landry said that he would be more very interested in attending one of our Selectmen's Meetings to meet with the Board to show us how that lays out. Stewartstown raises \$18,000.00 each year and they contract with Troop F for coverage 100% plus so many hours per week. The State Police show up when they decided. The Board of Selectmen there does not set a schedule for them. So this gives us three options that we now have to explore and processing all this so we can make our decision. I was really reflecting on how in our small town we can make and provide services to the people in the best order. Talking with Troop F they will not respond to Civil Issues or Dog Issues. So, I was thinking as maybe a possibility for us to consider is a shared responsibility between the State Police and our Town's PD. Just for something to consider when we... I'm no saying increase the budget. We have a budget and maybe we could share a percentage with the State Police and the Town or go with... I would like that option to be discussed with Northumberland keeping it all a forth option.

Robin - It would be helpful to have some numbers floating around. So, from what I can see our budget for last year for the PD was \$39,825.00. Just saying \$40,000.00 and there are upgrades that need to happen. So, can we legitimately say \$5,000.00 more on top of that or is that too high?

Officer Hall - That looking at things for the past week, I think we can still do it with the \$39,000.00 and when I get my chance to speak I'm going to go over a lot of questions and I'll have answers for them.

Robin - Asked Chief Platt if she could read his proposed amounts or are they confidential:

Chief Platt - That they are not confidential.

Robin - Northumberland's proposal comes with a figure of \$41,000.00. We can go through and discuss what they have proposed if you really want to know the details but basically it sounds to me like you were going to provide service for the town as though it were an extension of your town.

Chief Platt - That is correct.

Robin - There are different levels of emergencies in general. So, when we're ready I think it's helpful for people, when you start talking, to know what kind of money you're talking about. Because it really is going to come down to that. It's not a full time budget for us.

Tim - The town voted to have a part-time PD so, we would have to put that before the voters to go full-time. We could not do that on our own. If you wanted to increase it more than half-time.

Robin - So, we're talking about the PD as it stands or with a different person operating it or contracting with another town for pennies more or not having one at all and just winging it and having whoever comes when they come.

Tim - Troop F.

Suzanne -They do a contract in addition to just having them come because you call 911.

Tim - Contract- they'll work so many hours and I asked, what about School Meeting and Town Meeting when you need an officer there and they will provide it and it has worked very well in Monroe and Stewartstown.

Suzanne - What do they charge per hour?

Tim - \$70.00 per hour.

Bruce Blodgett - 4 hours per week and you can set it up anyway you want.

Tim - Stewartstown is 4 hours per week.

Bruce - Like Tuesday from 5-9 pm you might get 2 days a week and if you wanted to go Friday from 8-12 pm.

Tim - Stewartstown did not want anyone to say, "when is the law enforcement going to be here?" They wanted to say, "I don't know, we don't control that, they show up randomly".

Pat Fortier - I would like the town to keep its own PD. I don't think we should contract with any other town.

Tim - So, keep the department as is?

Pat - Yes, or vote for Full-Time.

Joe Hakey - Do you know what the numbers are for State Police?

Tim - \$70.00 per hour and Stewart. The Budget would be \$18,000.00 and when that money is used up. It varies from week to week. They use their judgment but he said if there's higher activity because of ATV's or long weekends or whatever, summer, mud season, then they increase their hours but they budget so they craft it so that \$18,000.00 lasts them the year.

Joe Hakey - If there is a Civil Disagreement the State Police will not cover the call.

Tim - That concerns me a little bit. We need someone to cover.

Darlene Curley - Do they come if one shoots the other one? Are they not going to come?

Tim - Wait, Domestic Violence they respond to but my concern with our town is it would seem that we have more Civil Issues than we do the other. When that does concern the other, I talked to Trooper Landry and he said that Stewart Walling was really good about calling them when it needed more attention and he said that they really appreciated it and then they came on board. So, that's when I started thinking, if we are going to do something maybe we could do a little bit of both. We need someone to deal with the everyday issues in our town.

Rene Routhier - I know you don't want to go to the past.

Tim - Not really so please don't. I don't mind going into the past as long as it isn't a Witch Hunt.

Rene - If you're not happy with the service where there's \$39,000.00 involved. If you can't do a good job at that price. If you can't have it don't have it at all. If you can't do a good job don't do it.

Tim - That's what Officer Hall brought to our attention last week and what he would like to do from now until Town Meeting is to re-craft the department so that there is more definition and more proficiency. I guess I'll let you speak to that.

Wayne - I've been appointed Officer-In-Charge since Stewart's Retirement. I'm not going to bad mouth Stewart. I've worked with him for a lot of years. He's a good guy. I've know him since I was a little kid. That said, there are a lot of things that have happened in the department that I have not agreed with and I've even voiced that to Stewart. So, anyways, my thing is I've already implemented some things with the PD that's different than it was. From now on Troop F isn't going to be dispatched here. Units from Groveton aren't going to be dispatched here until I'm called. All calls are going to come through me. I'm on call 24 hours a day. I have my regular job that I do plus the PD. If I'm at work and something major happens, Troop F will come in as needed. But, I'm going to be on call every night and every weekend, those are my hours that have already been set up. Dispatch calls me first, if I'm not able someone will be called but from now on Stratford is going to take care of it's own while I'm in charge. So, until March that's the way it's going to be handled. Some of the things that have come to my attention was about the coverage of hours worked in the past and so forth. I also didn't agree with that. I've given the Selectmen a schedule that can change. I could be scheduled one night but I could have an emergency, things change, but they have a schedule as to when I can work and when Officer Tippitt can work. So that way they can know how many hours we're going to do plus I'm on call 24/7. So, that has changed right off the bat. I've had a lot of questions about how things would be handled with the 4-wheeler. There's going to be a lot more coverage not just for the big events. There's going to be a lot more weekends. We're going to be out there patrolling. I've checked into a couple of places. I'm going to do some more homework. I think I can get more Grants for the 4-wheeler than just what we get through Fish & Game. Now, when the Grants come in from Fish & Game and we're out there patrolling we're actually being paid by Fish & Game not by the Town. It doesn't come out of the Town's Budget. So, that \$39,000.00, I'm not drawing from that to cover for the repairs of the 4-wheeler or time on the 4-wheeler. There is the Fish & Game Grant and a couple of other Grants that I might be able to get so I can get more money. During that time we're basically working for Fish & Game that doesn't cost the Town. Also, when we write tickets for the 4-wheelers, snow machines, etc. the town gets 33% of that money back. When we write tickets for speeding the state gets that, we don't get any of it. I'm also going to propose to the Selectmen that any tickets that we write for the 4-wheelers goes into a 4-wheeler fund, goes back to it so that we can kind of help to be self sufficient on that so it doesn't cost the town as much. So, if we're out there enforcing the law on the trails and writing tickets, I think it should go back into the 4-wheeler fund. I've had a lot of people ask how come Northumberland's been up here covering a lot? I can't answer that specifically except there wasn't a lot of coverage. But that's all going to change. That has changed now. A letter was sent to Troop F and Lancaster Dispatch. Like I said everything's going to come through men now. So, that will be all taken care of there. Another question that I'm getting is what are we doing with animals. People are calling, animals are running all over the place. We don't really have a Town Policy for that so I would like to meet with the Selectmen to get a policy drawn up for that because if we take it to Riverside it's like \$30.00 a day that the town gets charged for so many days. If the owner isn't found, the town has to pay that money. I think that's a waste. We should have some policy for that. Other than that if people have questions. There's a lot I'm still learning, I'm just a Police Officer and now I'm doing all the administrative and everything else. I've learned a lot, I've done a lot of homework and research, and I will continue to do that. So, if there are any questions I'll be happy to answer them the best I can.

Rob Maxwell - (from the Sentinel) I'm curious to know, with the changes you're proposing. Will your plan be excepted by the town in March and the town continues with the equipment that you have? Do you foresee having some serious expenditures? That's all the equipment from cars, equipment, to what have you, or are you in good shape there?

Wayne - As of right now we're okay. Yes, eventually we're going to have to update the equipment and stuff. That's the nature of the beast. Things change. Everything that we have we own.

Rob - Is the Cruiser in good shape?

Wayne - Yes, fairly good shape. The only money put into it since we've had it. Recently we had to have wheel barring replaced. It's a 2009, so it's 6 years old, no money put into it until recently.

Suzanne - What's the mileage?

Wayne - There is only 61,000 miles on it.

Steve LaFrance - Wayne, how many hours can we expect from the current budget, on average?

Wayne - That would vary.

Suzanne - Around 25 hrs.?

Wayne - Overall 40-45 on an average. There will be more maybe less. Just to give you an idea, just in the past week that I've been in charge we've had is 3 accidents, 2 domestics, 2 court cases to go to (1 theft and 1 motor vehicle), dispute cases, 3 call outs and 1 case involved with the State Police (drug case). A lot more involvement from Stratford Police.

Steve - I guess what I'm coming around to is this – you get paid by the hour not salary, at some point you're going to want to be compensated for these extra hours you're putting in. I guess my question is what level of service can we expect for that \$40,000.00? You're going to get tired of going out and working 8 hours a day for Stratford's PD for an hours pay. I'm just trying to understand.

Wayne - You have a part-time PD. As part-time certified (standard training for NH) I'm only allowed to work 13 hundred hours. Lloyd Tippitt works for us and he can only work 13 hundred hours. (no he's full-time certified so he can work more)

Steve - That's the two of you combined 13 hundred hours?

Wayne - 25 hours per week each.

Steve - So, that's full time for \$40,000.00, two together is full time.

Wayne - Right, now if I've done it correctly. For a \$39,000.00 Budget for me and the other Officer to work 40 hours a week between the two of us, that's 29 of the \$39,000.00 that leaves \$10,000.00 for fuel, insurance, maintenance, upkeep expenditure for things that we need. I think I can do it and like I told the Selectmen I would like a trial to have a shot at it. Give me a year and if you're not happy. It's no harm no foul we've got the budget, the equipment, I can run it this year with the equipment that we have.

Raymond Arsenault - We have a PD already. If we need to go full-time I think it should, but I think we should give him a shot.

Wayne - I'd just like to ask a question to Chief Platt. What's the cost for 1 full-time Officer here. Salary, retirement, etc. What's the average?

Chief Platt - The cost of going to the Academy?

Wayne - 60 or 70 hours per year?

Both Wayne and Chief Platt agreed that the cost of Police Academy Training is over what the budget can afford.

Tim - I would just like to add when talking about responsibilities, the way the RSA's read that when and if we keep the PD then we are going to have a different job description that gives us more control over the PD because the way it is now the Board has no control over the PD unless we hire someone new and have a mutual agreement. When you say Tim – we want more coverage out in the Hollow then we can say you need to cover the Hollow more because its a contracted service.

Wayne - People out here in the Hollow can attest that I have been out here.

Ginny Routhier - I was just curious what the Groveton – more details about the Groveton - what that would look like? Somebody said you would be treating Stratford like an extension of Groveton. What are the hours? What does that mean for coverage?

Chief Platt - What I had in mind was, not taking numbers from calls from Stratford itself but I took numbers from the State Police from 2014 and tried to figure cost per call/response. My thought process was to look at so many hours per week to offer full hours with answering calls and keep track of these hours. I would schedule whoever was working for me in town and overlap it so he could come here and they would get the regular wage that they get now and the contract would off set that, is the idea I have. To get a real good feeling of how it is really going to work, whether that was going to be enough or not, we would have to actually try it. Take into consideration the equipment that Stratford already has and Groveton's equipment as well. I couldn't get a good feel for it until we actually do it if that's what you want to do. My Selectmen have a copy of what I have given you and one of my Selectmen is here tonight. I don't know if you've had a chance to look at that Jim?

Jim Wiggles - Yes I did.

Chief Platt - The Selectmen and I had a little discussion and they are at the same level. I don't know what the Selectmen here feel so again how I'd set it up right now is 40 hours per week with 52 weeks per year at \$40.00 per hour. State Police pay is \$70.00 per hour x 40. The Officer would get paid their regular pay as if they were working an 8 hour or 10 hours shift in my town and the rest would go towards equipment, gas and so on. I've also checked with Sheriff's Dept. at the Southern part of the state and they do it a little different than that . I know the town of Milan and Berlin are in a similar agreement right now. The last I talked and my understanding was that Pittsburgh PD also does Contract with Clarksville and Stewartstown as well. There's same overlap there north of here.

Ginny Routhier - What assurance would we have? We need coverage Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays not Monday mornings.

Chief Platt - My idea would be that the coverage would overlap with my town. If there was enough hours left in that week I would have someone out there patrolling Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 6:00 pm to 2:00 am.

Tim - Your patrol time we'll say is 20 hours per week and I know there is a significant amount of time a department does paperwork and court. Would that be taken away from us like paperwork, court, we'd be left with 5 hours per week for patrol?

Chief Platt - That was something that I figured in, some of that stuff would be court time. We'd have to see how that would play out to know how the court system works and how they run it.

Joe Hakey - My question would be for anybody in Law Enforcement. What's the average time it takes, the difference between picking up a dog or a domestic disturbance. What's the average?

Chief Platt - There is a formula that I have used in the past and I don't know I left it on my desk because I'm preparing my budget. It's called the Service Mold again it's an average, it's not an exact number that you can use to determine the average call length an officer would attend. We factor that into how many officers you would need from the dept. to deal with the call for service. That's a call to service approach and how to deal with calls. There is a way to do that but you've got to know how many calls to service there are in order to do it with knowledge, is to get an idea how many calls to service. Based on the fact that you've got Town Police dealing with calls and State Police dealing with calls. When we would come up here it's not so much to deal with calls it's to deal with the beginning of it until someone that has overall jurisdiction arrives. State Law allows us to come up here and act as a police officer with authority based on either through the town's current Police Officer-Active Chief or in the event there is nobody available at that time. A dispatcher who has authority such as the State Police allows us to come and deal with it. We have full authority to arrest somebody in the event that something happens. That's what this NYU has on it that I gave to the Selectmen here and my Selectmen have it as well. It's all based on RSA that allows Police Authority to come up here. With that in place we have the ability to come up and act as Police Officers with jurisdiction.

Joe Hakey - Just on that note how, just randomly can you say roughly how long it takes you guys to respond to a call. If you get a call to come to Stratford. How long would it take you to respond? How long does it normally take to get someone under control and in the cruiser and jail?

Wayne - It depends on what part of town you live in. It could be 5 minutes or it could be half an hour.

Joe Hakey - If you have a 3 hr. call that takes only 20 minutes. Isn't that going to burn up the hours quickly?

Robin - We're going to have that same situation with our own Stratford PD, right?

Wayne - It is apples for apples. I'd like to say something on his note that he's right. I mean that when I said that everything's going to come through me for now, and I don't mean to say that we're not going to have Mutual Aid. If something happens and he needs to come up or if I need help. It works all round and if they need help and I can I will. I've gone down to help them on calls and they've come up here. So I mean there is Mutual Aid. That way we do work together.

Robin - Can we get a General Consensus by a show of hands.

Chuck - So at Town Meeting, the town Decides to go with the Stratford PD, are you going to post that Chief's Job or is it automatically going to go to Mr. Hall?

Robin - I would like for us to discuss that it goes out as advertised. Interview whoever applies. It's just not an automatic.

Wayne - That is an option. It's not something that you have to do, but it is an option.

Robin - I understand that, but I think that since we don't know what we haven't gone through that process. The best thing for this Board would be to experience that.

Dawn - I want to give some background of the PD with regards to the Town Offices. Unfortunately Stewart....

Tim - No, we said we weren't going to do that.

Dawn - I wasn't here yet.

Tim - So, I'm saying that we're not going to do that. What do you want to see happen with the department? How can the department move forward from this point on.

Dawn - OK, then I will, every time I've talked do that Officer right there(Wayne).

Tim - No, we're not doing that. How would you like to see the dept. move forward?

Dawn - OK.

Wayne - I don't think that she's trying to go back I think she's trying to express her opinion as to how I work.

Dawn - I'm trying to explain the responsiveness.

Tim - I'm just very sensitive to a Witch Hunt. Dawn. I just don't want you to point fingers.

Dawn - It's not going to be a Witch Hunt. I'm also going to 2012. We had a Town Meeting that said to keep this dept. upon 55 to 5 and I want to keep that A. in front of everyone's mind and B. that Officer Hall has been very responsive any time that I have ever called him. I've never been told ever, ever "What do you want me to do about it". And part of it is we're basing this view of keeping this PD open and where we want it to lead based on a previous member who ran it. And that really isn't fair. It's like judging the Board by a previous Board. You can't do that. This is a side that most people do not see. I just wanted to say that.

Robin - I think that you can't keep in mind what you haven't been comfortable with from a past PD and that you would like to see.

Jayne Lytle - We all have our opinions. But there's going to be everybody in the town in a consensus of whatever the decision comes to.

Robin - That's what the plan is for Town Meeting. But why would the Board put extra effort into pursuing things that the Town doesn't want.

Jayne - Consensus, that's what I'm saying.

Dawn - Right that's why we had a Town Meeting in 2012.

Pat Fortier - Why would you want to put that out to bid at the Town Meeting on a Chief. You were asking for applications.

Why would you want to do that? We've got an Officer right here, he's not good enough? To me he's working in the area. He knows the area, he knows the people.

Robin - It's never a bad thing to look at all the options. When you have a business and you pretty much know you want to promote from within, you still want to get a feeling of what else might be out there. It's not a bad thing to do. It can either enhance the person that you think you're going to select from within or it could send you in a totally different way.

Pat - Now is that going to be on a vote?

Robin- Is it going to be on a vote as to whether we - no, no that's a Board's decision.

Wayne - What I was going to say just so that she understands is promote from within the dept and you don't have to put it out there but you can put it out there to get applications from other people that are interested and that way as they said it gives them better options all the way around. I'm kind of prejudice, I hope I get the job.

Pat - This is my own Town.

Tim - So How many people here?

Robin - I would like a consensus of who would like to keep the Dept. in the Town. Raise you're hands.

Ginny - That's what Town Meeting is for.

Tim - We're just looking for you to direct us so that we can have an idea for the Budget Hearing.

Steve LaFrance - As opposed to - no dept at all?

Robin - Our options that the Board is trying to make up their minds to do is to contract with someone else or have no dept. at all, or to continue with a dept. similar to what we have now. We have to put something together to bring to Town Meeting.

Suzanne - It will be a Ballot Vote.

Tim - I think that we put the Budget together as we always have.

Robin - And have this discussion at Town Meeting?

Tim - Yes, But I guess if everybody here is saying we want to get rid of the dept., we need to be ready to come before Town Meeting to say okay here's our options.

Wayne - Tonight is not an Official Vote?

Tim - No.

Wayne - Just to get a consensus because the vote can only be at Town Meeting.

Robin - That's correct.

Ginny - Why can't you put the \$40,000.00 in the Budget and if it gets totally voted down then you've saved \$40,000.00.

Wayne - But then you have nothing - options.

Tim - Do you want to keep the Police in Town or do you want to contract out.

Chuck - Why don't you put both options out at Town Meeting and have people voice their opinion.

Robin - That may be after tonight, that may be what we do. Because I'm not hearing any clear direction from anybody.

Rob Maxwell - I cover both Stratford and Columbia Meetings every year. Some of you may recall that last year Columbia was faced with a dilemma of what to do with their Town Hall. They had 3 options and nobody could decide which one they wanted. So, they put separate Warrant Articles for each one and voted that way.

Robin - That may be what we have to do.

Steve LaFrance - I think you're proposal about putting the Budget in there might be one way to do it. Do you have a Warrant Article over \$40,000.00 for PD and at Town Meeting when it comes up for discussion you just explain to people that this \$40,000.00 is for maybe not the status quo but the same basic number of hours. People have an opportunity to Amend the Article on the Floor or say what are we going to need for a full-time dept. You can increase the Budget on the Floor or you could completely -0- it out. Which would mean no PD or you could take Chief Platt's Proposal and say we're going to raise this amount of money. You can have a separate Warrant Article that says you want to contract with Groveton for x amount of dollars. If that one passes - you'd pass over the next one.

Robin - Yes.

Steve - If that one fails then your up to the Stratford Article - it's either no Dept - Zero Budget. Part-Time Dept. at \$40,000.00 - or Full-Time Dept. at \$\_\_\_?\_\_.

Wayne - You can't have Full-Time Dept.

Steve - I thought I heard that one of the Officers.

Robin - We wouldn't get it for \$40,000.00 put it that way.

Steve - You've got two people that can work Part-Time.

Ginny - And your excepting new applications.

Steve - If you're going to be a Full-Time Dept. You're going to ...

Tim - It does make sense to put like starting with at clean slate. Putting it back out there with a Warrant Article. Separate Warrant Articles.

Bruce Blodgett - Three Warrant Articles - Ballot Vote.

Rob Maxwell - Three Warrant Articles and which ever one gets the most votes wins.

Michael Brauer - Look at the numbers - look at the coverage - most coverage from local PD.

Rick Serven - If they are slow to respond, prioritize their resources.

Joe Hakey - Seconded the response time?

Brooks/Ladd (3/0 approved) motion passed to adjourn Informational Meeting and resume regular Meeting at 7:15 p.m.