

TOWN OF ORFORD

Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

January 15, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Adams, Kevin Follensbee, Chase Kling

OTHERS PRESENT: Jim Hook, Ruth Hook

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm

Fire Department

Kevin Follensbee researched a few other Towns and how they compensate their fire department members. (Piermont-Volunteer, Wentworth-only the Chief is paid a stipend, Warren-Volunteer). He came up with three (3) options to compensate the OFD members.

1. Annual Stipend
2. Per Call Stipend
3. Strictly Volunteer

Currently the Town pays the fire fighters an hourly rate to respond to calls, and additional the officers received a year end stipend. Town Council has indicated the Town should elect to pay per hour or pay per stipend, but not together.

Follensbee took the average # of calls responded to from 12/01/2022 – 11/30/2023 and calculated the total salaries that would be paid per option.

Option 1 – Annual Stipend – this would be based on the # of calls each member responds to. Using the data from 2023, this option would cost the Town approximately \$6,500

75% - 100% = 1,000

50% - 75% = \$750

25% - 50% = \$500

Less than 25% = \$250

Option 2 – Stipend per call – this would be based on the # of calls each member responds to. Using the data from 2023, this option would cost the Town approximately \$12,800

Firefighters - \$15 per call

Lieutenant - \$18 per call

Captain - \$20 per call

Asst Chief - \$25 per call

Chief - \$30 per call

This stipend would also apply to local meetings and trainings attended by each member, similar to how members are currently compensated.

Option 3 – Volunteer with no payment – Follensbee feels this is unfair to the Fire Department members, as they are leaving work and families to respond on behalf of the Town.

Kling expressed his concern with the amount of calls the Orford Fire Department has responded to in Fairlee. It may be because Fairlee is short of volunteers and relying on Orford more for mutual aid. Follensbee feels the Orford Selectboard needs to discuss with the Fairlee

Selectboard this concern. Mutual Aid is by definition to supplement the host Town when it's reached capacity for handling a call, and/or responding to a call that's beyond its capacity.

Follensbee suggested choosing Option 2 – it will allow FD members to be compensated for responding to calls, local meetings and trainings. Adjusting the salary line item on the budget for 2024 to \$20,000 to \$25,000 would cover these costs, and allow the Town to pay for some unanticipated calls. If the Town requires specific trainings, the members attending these training would be compensated, but if not required, the Town would only pay for the cost of the class.

Jim Hook asked about the Wild Fire funding, as he would like to submit an order in September that the State covers the cost 50/50. Currently there is \$1,000 in that line item for the 2024 budget. Ruth Hook said there's a Wildfire Suppression CRF that can be used for those expenses.

The Selectboard discussed the types of calls the fire department responds to, specifically medical calls. When Upper Valley Ambulance is called to a scene and needs extra help, they will tone a second time and FD members can respond. Often, it's to help the ambulance crew move a patient into the ambulance. An EMT has to be licensed by the State of NH to work on a patient. When non-certified personnel respond to a medical call, the caller often expects that person to help in some way.

Will the Town pay to a FD member that responds, but is called back before arriving at the scene? Follensbee said they would. How would the Town compensate for members that do hose testing, safety inspections and taking the fire trucks for repairs and service? Follensbee suggested the Selectboard would need to review these events at the end of the year, and if the budget allows, members performing this work would be compensated at their stipend rate. Follensbee also suggested that each member should be responsible to track the calls they respond to, and other work. In addition, there would be a master call sheet and data could be pulled monthly from the CSI program.

How will the Town budget for gear and equipment for new members? It's difficult to know if a member will remain with the department after spending money on equipment. This would be a question for Chief Straight at the meeting tomorrow night.

Other Business:

Kling addressed the work the Highway crew has been doing managing the various weather conditions. During the storm on the weekend of January 13th, the crew stayed off the roads until the electrical companies could clear the road of wires and trees, then they were out cleaning and plowing various roads in Town.

Kling also mentioned his serious concern over the lack of response by the Fire Department members during the same time period. Only 2 members responded to the multiple calls that went out. This is another item he wants to address with Chief Straight at the meeting tomorrow night. The Town had volunteers show up to help remove trees and debris from the roads.

Warrant Article #14 – Adams suggested removing this warrant article pertaining to rescinding the ordinance for Personal Wireless Service Facilities. He suggested taking time in 2024 to research it further which will allow the Selectboard to have more information to explain why they want to rescind. After a brief discussion, the Selectboard agreed to leave on and allow the voters to decide at the 2024 annual meeting.

Jim Hook mentioned that there are three (3) OVD orange cones missing from Dame Hill. The Highway crew may have picked them up – the Selectboard will check with the crew.

Adjourn

Motion made by Kling, seconded by Follensbee to adjourn the meeting. Motion Passed 3/0

The meeting adjourned at 6:34 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Esther Dobbins-Marsh (from recording)