

Dispatch Regionalization Working Meeting
February 22, 2012 – 4:30 p.m. – Training Room, Ashburnham Public Safety Building

Present – Ashby: Peter McMurray, BOS; Bill Seymour, Fire Chief; Kathy Bezanson, Dispatch; Mike Bussell, Emerg. Mgmt.

Present – Ashburnham: Ed Vitone, BOS; Bill Johnson, Advisory Board; Larry Barrett, Police Chief; Duncan Phyfe, IT Advisory Board; Paul Zbikowski, Fire Chief.

Also present: Doug Briggs, Town Administrator Ashburnham/Ashby.

Ed Vitone gave a quick recap from the last meeting held on February 8, 2012. A tour of the Dispatch Center followed.

Ed presented the following:

- Results from State 911 Meeting of February 9, 2012
- Summary of three (3) Regional Agreements
 - Templeton/Phillipston
 - Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch (Lunenburg, Lancaster, Harvard, Devens)
 - Revere/Wintrhop
- Estimated regional costs/savings
- Cost allocation options
- Summary of interviews with Nashoba Regional Dispatch towns
- Dispatchers per shift as a function of town/region population
- Next steps

After some concerns voiced by Mike Bussell, Ed stated that the committee would look at the following more closely:

- Other cost sharing options
- Analysis of call responses

Mike also stated his concerns regarding the people/personnel who would be affected by this decision.

Peter McMurray stated that in his opinion, if the two towns didn't regionalize now, they probably will be forced by the State to do so in the next five years, and at that time, there may not be any funds available. Peter stated that he personally thinks its time to move forward. Mike stated that the math/business model works but that we need to worry about the "people". He also noted that the problem right now is the grant "deadline" of March 16.

Kathy Bezanson stated that regionalizing would be taking public safety away from the Town of Ashby and she wanted to keep the security for the people/taxpayers.

Larry Barrett stated that there were three concerns as he saw it.

1. Is the State going to force this with 2 dispatchers per shift which neither town could afford or should we do it on our own terms?
2. Forced to do quickly for two reasons.
 - a. March 16th grant deadline (start up cost of \$400k)

- b. Ashby Dispatch building in need of major work
- 3. Do we really want to put this off until next year? Will funds be available next year?

Keith Maynard of Ashby agreed with Larry and Peter but inquired as to the real potential for savings and if the finances would be closely scrutinized. Ed stated that dispatch operating budget would be set and managed by a committee representing both towns including the Fire and Police Chiefs of both towns. Bill Johnson reiterated that the finances would be manageable.

Ed stated collectively we should not invest an extraordinary amount of time preparing the grant if the prevailing sentiment is not to regionalize. Assuming that the numbers we have now are in the ballpark, Ed suggested that each town decide if they will move forward. Bill Johnson, chairman of the Advisory Board, agreed and stated that he was in favor of regionalizing. Peter stated that Ashby would try to hold an open meeting with the townspeople in the near future.

Joe Olivari of Ashburnham stated that both towns need to manage the press on this issue and come up with a statement. It was agreed by both Peter and Ed that they would work together and put out a joint press release.

Larry noted his concerns with the grant deadline and time to do “due diligence” and get the paperwork for the grant completed.

Once again, Mike stated that people/personnel were the top issue. Kathy agreed stating that there were six dispatchers in Ashby, three full-time and three part-time and that not one of them was in a position to retire at this time. Ed suggested that Ashby sit down with each dispatcher individually and understand their plans if the dispatch centers were regionalized.

Larry suggested the next meeting be held on Tuesday, March 6th at 4:30 p.m. in Ashby and everyone agreed.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Turcotte
Assistant to the Town Administrator
Town of Ashburnham