

**TOWN OF SOMERS
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, August 21, 2014
7:00pm**

**Selectmen's Conference Room
Joint Meeting with Somers Fire Commission**

Call to Order: First Selectman Lisa Pellegrini and Fire Commission Chairman Bob Koczaska called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Members Present: First Selectman Lisa Pellegrini and Selectman Kathy Devlin represented the Board of Selectmen and Chairman Bob Koczaska, Tony Bruno, Vinny Navin and Andy Rocket represented the Fire Commission. Those also in attendance included Town Attorney Carl Landolina, Fire Chief Gary Schiessl, Fire Officer Rick McDonald and Firefighter Al Baker.

Discussion regarding recommendations by the Fire Commission re Fire Chief and Fire Commission:

Fire Commission Chairman Bob Koczaska presented the following comments and recommendation(s) of the Fire Commission:

The Fire Commission recognizes the Somers Fire Department as being a highly professional group consisting of both volunteers and career staff.

They acknowledge the intense amount of training required by each member of the Fire Department.

They recognize the significant capital investment of equipment required and appreciate the support of the Town in supplying the department with such necessary equipment.

They recognize the decreasing number of volunteers and acknowledge that there is no one in the pipeline qualified or interested in becoming Fire Chief.

They recognize the increasing amount of responsibilities associated with the position of Fire Chief and recognize that such responsibilities and time necessary can be overwhelming and unrealistic for a volunteer.

Based on the above it is the Fire Commission's recommendation to the Board of Selectmen to recommend that the position of Fire Chief change from a volunteer position to a paid full time employee position.

Mrs. Pellegrini thanked Chairman Koczaska and the members of the Fire Commission for their recommendation and time and effort spent on such discussion and review. She asked for clarification regarding the Commission's recommendation on disbanding the Fire Commission as she had heard that was also discussed by members. Members of the Fire Commission stated that no formal recommendation regarding the need, necessity or the disbanding of the Fire Commission was made and that such action should be recommended in the near future by the new Fire Chief.

Lengthy discussion began and the Town Attorney made the following key points:

There is no formal written agreement between the Town and the Volunteer Fire Association to provide Fire and EMS services to the Town.

There is no formal Fire Ordinance despite various attempts through many years.

The Volunteer Fire Chief is elected by the Volunteer Association and not the Board of Selectmen.

It was determined that a Fire Ordinance was necessary and work should begin on formalizing such a document.

It was also determined that an agreement between the Town and the Volunteer Fire Department was necessary.

It was also determined that a Charter Revision Change was needed in the future.

It was determined that additional assistance should be obtained from the Town Labor Attorney Patrick McHale as he has had much experience with fire departments.

Finally, it was determined that a subcommittee should be formed to further investigate the above.

Mrs. Devlin made a motion to create a Fire Department Study Ad Hoc Committee consisting of the following members, Lisa Pellegrini-First Selectman, Kathy Devlin-Selectman, David Palmer- Fire Commission Member and Andy Rockett- Fire Commission Member to investigate the recommendation of the Fire Commission to have a paid Fire Chief.

Adjournment:

Mrs. Devlin and Mr. Koczaska made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:10pm, seconded by Mrs. Pellegrini. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Pellegrini-Recording

Minutes are not official until accepted at a subsequent meeting.