

Public Hearing

04/20/10

Chairman Harry C. Merrow called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Present were: Harry C. Merrow, E. Morton Leavitt, Kathleen M. Maloney, and Martha B. Eldridge, Town Administrator, who recorded the minutes. Also in attendance: staff from MRI – Alan Gould & Robert Wood.

Approximately 73 people from the public attended.

Gould has 25 years of experience in this field and Wood has 35 years of experience.

Gould stated that they (MRI) had been contracted to do a survey for the feasibility of merging the three fire precincts into one.

The attached power-point was presented to the public.

Comments and questions were taken from the public.

Susan Riley, of Ossipee Corner Precinct, stated that their precinct meets monthly and have always been very cooperative. She asked what more they wanted. Gould stated that there should be less duplication of services, they should standardize the equipment, and purchase together when possible. This is the kind of cooperation MRI is talking about. Riley stated that they had not been asked to combine efforts.

John Hartog, of Ossipee Corner Precinct, stated that he thinks the fire department has done a good job and always responded. He asked if the firemen are paid or volunteer. He was told that all of the volunteers are paid. He asked if the stations would be retained. He was told yes, the changes would be in the administration.

Susan Riley, of Ossipee Corner Precinct, asked how the precincts would be paid back for their equipment they owned. Gould told her that the town would take on all the liability and assets. There would not be any paybacks.

Ralph Brownell stated that at the last Precinct Meeting they voted for a new truck & station. Instead they should be thinking about combining. The departments have a lot of equipment and it should be utilized by all departments instead of buying one for each department.

Mike Brownell, Ctr. Ossipee Precinct, stated that they have operated as teams as part of the Mutual Aid in the past and still do now. The Mutual Aid is used extensively.

Frank Riley, of Ossipee Corner Precinct, thanked all firemen for all their good work over the years. He stated that at a cost of \$168,000.00, to pay the chiefs, it is time to combine the departments. It is inevitable that they will need to merge and he thinks they should be under the direction of the Board of Selectmen. He stated that they have much duplication of vehicles. Riley suggested something be put on the warrant for the voters to decide. He thanked all of the departments again. Riley expressed concern that the administrative costs are the biggest problem at this time.

Don Meader thanked MRI, the Board of Selectmen, for having this opportunity to review this report and being allowed to voice their opinion. Meader stated that he thinks the Town should be surveyed and see what the response is from the people.

Merrow stated that the Board will consider this idea. Merrow stated that the report is available on the website and copies are available at the Town Hall. Merrow also stated that if a merger should take place, many details need to be worked out. If they merge much work is needed to be done before any of this would happen.

Ralph Brownell reminded the Board that not everyone has access to the internet.

Merrow asked how many people in attendance are not associated with one of the fire departments. About 1/3 of the attendance raised their hands.

Terry Hooper stated that the people are not aware of what is going on. The commissioners need to guide this venture.

Francis Lord asked what the Fire Chiefs think about this idea of a merger.

Jane Brownell stated that she thinks meetings like this should be advertised in the Granite State News.

Ralph Buchanan stated that he thinks the departments should fall under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen.

Center Ossipee Fire Chief, Michael Brownell, stated that he believes a reasonable job is being done. He stated that he is not sure that the National Standards would work in a small town. He stated that the Board of Selectmen can set the precinct lines. He asked that people attend the Commissioner's meetings. He stated that people need to ask more questions and get more involved.

Kathy Lord asked if the chiefs are for the merger.

West Ossipee Fire Chief, Brad Eldridge, stated that the survey makes a lot of good points and he believes that one day the merger will need to come, but that it will not happen soon. He stated that personalities being set aside, he does not feel the town is ready to merge at this time.

Merrow stated that he thinks the Board of Selectmen need to sit down with the Fire Chiefs and review the idea of merging.

Ossipee Corner Fire Chief, Adam Riley, thanked MRI and the Board for having the survey done. He stated that he still has questions, but eventually it will come to a merger with a lot of planning done slowly.

Don Meader agreed with Brownell that more people need to get involved but in defense to them it is difficult to maintain a family and this life style we live today to find the time to devote to volunteerism.

Being no further input Merrow made a motion to close this meeting. Maloney seconded. A unanimous vote was taken.

Closed at 7:40 PM

Harry C. Merrow, Chairman

E. Morton Leavitt

Kathleen M. Maloney