

LEE SELECT BOARD & STOCKBRIDGE SELECT BOARD
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
STOCKBRIDGE TOWN OFFICES
Thursday March 9, 2023 @ 6:30PM
Town Offices • 50 Main Street • Stockbridge, MA 01262

Minutes

Lee Select Board Members Present: Sean Regnier (Chair), Bob Jones, Gordon Bailey

Lee Select Board Members Absent: None

Others Present: Town of Lee Admin R. Christopher Brittain

Stockbridge Select Board Members Present: Patrick White (Chair), Ernest (Chuck) Cardillo, Jamie Minacci

Stockbridge Select Board Members Absent: None

Others Present: Town of Stockbridge Admin Michael Canales

Chairman Regnier called the meeting to order at 6:30PM.

1. Discussion of an Intermunicipal working group for Fire Services.

Chairman Regnier began by stating Lee has been conducting a feasibility study for about a year to create a shared public safety building to house the Health Department, Building Department, Fire Department, and Police Department. He stated they were currently in phase 3 now which is the final design stage and Stockbridge recently approached Lee to consider combining towns for fire response services. Chairman Regnier stated today's purpose was to bring this forward and get input from the public. Admin Brittain added that part of the reason this came up was because of the location Lee is looking to put the new public safety building, which will be on Rt 102 very close to the Stockbridge border.

Chairman White stated looking forward this may help to meet both town's needs pulling resources to improve and expand coverage for both communities. He added that this idea is in its infancy and they find it very important to have public hearings on the topic.

Admin Canales stated that at this point they need to establish a working group for both towns and they should identify who they would like in the working group. Admin Canales stated that they are considering the possibility of putting together an agreement where the Town of Stockbridge will contribute \$4 million to the Public Safety Building in the Town of Lee, and moving forward Stockbridge will contribute 30% of operational costs and 30% of capital costs. This would include fire and emergency services and combine the two town departments together as best they can. Admin Brittain stated that they are estimating the total budget for the new facility to be \$20-\$25 million range. Admin Canales stated that the working group would have to figure out how this would all come together.

Admin Brittain stated that currently the Town of Lee is doing most of the EMS in Stockbridge and that potential contribution from Stockbridge towards equipment and staffing would allow to offer better services to both towns. It would give more staff to the department and allow for more calls to be responded to.

Fire Chief Ryan Brown from the Town of Lee stated that this would potentially allow the full staffing of two ambulances. One staffed with a full paramedic crew and one cross staffed with an engine. He stated that there are far more EMS calls than Fire calls and having the crossed staffed ambulance/engine allows for response time to be quicker. Chief Brown stated that there is also a long-term potential for financial savings for homeowner insurance.

Fire Chief Vincent Garofoli from the Town of Stockbridge added that this is not the only option available but is the option they are exploring the feasibility of at this time.

Admin Brittain stated that if the Town of Lee's Public Safety building were to pass at Town Meeting, it would likely come forward again at a Special Town Meeting in the fall where it would be the first phase and be two thirds vote for a bond, and then it would go to a referendum for exclusion potentially in the winter. He stated they are looking at around a year from now before actual construction.

Jonathon Lyons (14 Ice Glen Rd in Stockbridge), the Fire Safety Director of Fairview Hospital for Berkshire Health Systems, stated that

he is the number one first responder for the Town of Stockbridge and Lee is there on most of the calls as well. He stated that he is always there first, and that allows him to tell Lee what they need in the situation.

Admin Canales suggested the working group includes one member from each Select Board, both Town Administrators, both Fire Chiefs, at least one volunteer from Fire, and possibly a citizen at large. Chairman White stated that he would like the volunteer from Fire be selected by the members of the department.

Neil Haywood (32 Interlaken Rd in Stockbridge), the Deputy Chief for the Stockbridge Fire Department, stated he has been on the department since 1978 when they used to have 90 members. He stated that Stockbridge has sub stations and boats, and he wonders how that will work together for both towns. Chief Brown stated at this time, he doesn't know. He stated that it would great to keep all facilities available, but they would need the staff to do so. He stated that the roster for Stockbridge is 18 with 12 being readily active. He stated that it's a great question, but it's too early to have the answer.

Chief Garofoli stated that one thing that brought the towns to this meeting today has to do with volunteerism in all of the communities. He stated it's a national concern and volunteerism is down; however, the demands of the volunteers have increased. He stated any model they put forward will depend on volunteers being part of that backbone. He stated there are currently 12 readily available volunteers, and he expects that number to be cut in half in about 5 years in Stockbridge.

Jay Rhind (13 Interlaken Rd in Stockbridge), a Lieutenant of Stockbridge Fire, ask how far the new public safety building will be from the Stockbridge town line and how much time will that add to response time to get to Stockbridge scenes. He stated that right now they can respond from Stockbridge, Interlaken, and Glendale if needed. He also asked what could the Town of Stockbridge accomplish with investing the \$4 million of contribution in Stockbridge. He stated at the last town meeting for Stockbridge, there was an approval of funds to purchase a new fire engine, which is on hold, and he doesn't understand why.


Admin Canales stated that the distance from the Lee wastewater plant and the Town of Stockbridge fire station is 3.7 miles which is a 6-minute drive in a car doing the speed limit. Admin Brittain added that the response time may be faster in the end having staff readily available, versus calling staff in.

Admin Canales stated that the fire truck was approved contingent on a grant with the federal government. He stated that the grant went out and they made it almost to the final round but they ran out of money. When this proposal came up, he asked to pause the new engine for a moment to see if this proposal was feasible. The purchase of the truck was not contingent on receiving the grant, but the grant would allow for reimbursement. Chairman White stated that he thinks the new engine should be discussed at a Select Board meeting where it is placed on the agenda and he will put it on for the regular meeting on March 23rd.

In terms of next steps, the Stockbridge Select Board agreed to have Mr. Cardillo represent them in the working group. Mr. Bailey stated there will be a place on the Town of Lee's website for people to ask questions to the working group. Chairman Regnier stated he also thinks it's a good idea for the towns to work independently as well and try to work collectively since this is only one option.

Mr. Jones made a motion to adjourn at 7:22pm which Mr. Bailey seconded and was unanimously approved, 3-0.

Submitted by:



Sabrina Touhey
Admin Asst TA/BOS

Approved on: 03/21/2023