

October 21, 2015 Joint Board Meeting Minutes

Present: M. Oltedal (Selectboard) B. Weiss (Dorset Fire), S. Ludlam (East Dorset Fire), J. Kingston (Dorset Fire), J. Stannard (Dorset Fire), D. Pinsonault (East Dorset Fire), M. McWayne (Dorset Fire), D. Tuttle (Dorset Fire District), R. Gaiotti (Town Manager)

R. Gaiotti called the meeting to order at 7:34pm. First item on the agenda review/approve the minutes from September 28th. J. Stannard moved to approve the minutes, S. Ludlam amended to strike the words “*and dry hydrants*” from the Sept. 28th minutes, amended accepted and minutes approved unanimously.

R. Gaiotti stated that the next item on the agenda was to hear reports back from both prudential committees about discussion and pursuit of an inter-local contract with the Town to combine the Fire Tax in Dorset.

S. Ludlam and D. Pinsonault noted that East Dorset had made the bylaw change and has warned a special annual meeting for December 17th to approve the FY17 budget and contract with the Town. S. Ludlam questioned process for review by the Selectboard upon receiving the budgets from the Fire Districts. R. Gaiotti stated that if the budgets were already approved by the Fire District voters prior to being brought to the Selectboard, this meant the figures were set and could not be altered. R. Gaiotti commented that the Selectboard could give opinions about the figures etc, but would leave it up to the voters at Town Meeting to approve the Fire Budgets, included in the Town Budget as part of the contract.

J. Stannard commented that the contract information had been passed along to the Fire District attorney and that they would wait to see if the attorney had an opinion on their ability to take part in the contract. R. Gaiotti stated that he had sent a copy of the VLCT Fire Tax Study that was conducted by Attorney Jim Barlow to attorney John Thrasher working for the Dorset Fire District. J. Stannard mentioned that he did not feel the Dorset District could meet with timeline given for the contract process. J. Stannard noted that a 10 day notice was required for non-regular meetings of the Fire District, and that a meeting for November 2nd with the attorney was scheduled. Discussion ensued about meeting notice timeframes etc. D. Tuttle pointed out that the Dorset Fire District bylaw # 22 stated that a 10 day notice was required for special meetings. It was noted that the State Statutes are more flexible/ reasonable and that the Dorset District could have the attorney review this as well, as it could help the Dorset District with a more flexible schedule.

B. Weiss commented that it makes sense to package the combined fire tax agreement with other measures that would create efficiencies or save tax dollars over a period of time. R. Gaiotti mentioned that the potential joint purchasing of trucks and large equipment items had a possibility of saving both Districts money vs. paying interest on truck payments over time. Other options and avenues for joint purchasing, training, and scheduling were discussed. It was noted that the Fire Chiefs need to be more involved when the process gets to this point. J. Stannard

agreed that there needed to be an incentive for the Dorset FD residents to accept the proposal. It was noted that a town meeting vote was held in 2011 to approve the contract and the vote passed 222 to 76, and that showed general support. R. Gaiotti mentioned that the meetings minutes and agendas dating back 40 years deal with this same exact issue of inequity for Fire Services that are universal. D. Pinsonault stated that he felt all residents in Dorset understood that this issue and that this was the “right” thing to do. D. Pinsonault noted that the Dorset voters would make the right choice if given the chance. It was noted that the Fire Departments would respond to any/all calls in Dorset regardless of the situation, and this confirms that the service is universal. R. Gaiotti commented that the combined fire tax agreement would follow this model and make the funding universal as well.

J. Kingston explained that perhaps if the timeline could be met that the East Dorset District could petition the town to equalize their fire tax rate by increasing the appropriation. She further explained that East Dorset could lower their “fire taxed” budget to the same rate as Dorset and have the town make up the difference. S. Ludlam questioned the mechanics of such a process. D. Pinsonault noted that they would still be taxing the same East Dorset residents twice at two rates and that this would be very difficult to explain to residents, not to mention an attorney would have to decide if it was even possible. Further discussion ensued about this concept and other ways to combine the rates. B. Weiss again stated that there needed to simple be a package that would show a net benefit to the voters in both districts. M. McWayne felt that it would be better to be methodical about this process and take time as to not rush and miss a step or not include one thing.

R. Gaiotti noted that the timeline could be altered and still be implemented in the next property tax cycle. If both districts continued with their review approval process of the combined fire tax contract and were prepared to sign the contract by the spring, the town could hold a special Town Meeting in May/ June to have voters approve the contract. Further discussion was had about timeframes and details of the contract, and how to further involve the Fire Chiefs and members in this process.

The next meeting of the Joint Board Committee was scheduled for **Monday November 23rd at 7:30pm** at the Dorset Town Offices. It was noted that this would give the Dorset District two meeting dates to review the information with their attorney and again report back.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting stood adjourned at 9:35pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Rob Gaiotti

Town Manager