

DRAFT

Meeting of the Select Board, 2020-02-18.

Board members attending: Ian Underwood, Russell Edwards, Joe Marko.

Meeting called to order at 6:00 pm.

Signed vouchers.

The town report has been delivered to the printers.

The board received a letter from Department of Environmental Services regarding testing for monitoring wells. It looks like we'll only need to test once a year.

Russell read a letter from NHMA explaining that the select board had the authority to adopt the snow removal ordinance, after a hearing, which occurred. So there is no question that the snow ordinance is valid. Richard Lee says that he will now enforce it against anyone who violates it.

Kim Berkhamer provided, for board consideration, guidelines for creating an agenda and running a meeting.

Russell noted that it appears that only four towns in NH do not have a website. He has been talking to other towns to collect information that we can use to make a decision about coming up with a website for Croydon.

New London Dispatch and Ambulance forwarded a contract to us. Between New London and Newport, there doesn't seem to be a lot of difference. George Caccavaro noted that there is 'great service' from both services, but there are sometimes longer waits for New London. The board decided to stick with New London for another year.

Russell noted that the board has had issues with the police department. He came up with a list of 9 expectations, based on RSA Title 7 Chapter 105. The board voted to table them.

A motion was made to increase coverage by the State Police from 81% to 100%, abolishing the Croydon Police Department. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made to provide a severance package of one month's payment for Richard Lee. The motion passed unanimously.

Floor opened for public comment, 3 minutes per person.

Clyde Bacon suggested that the town should have job descriptions that can be used to hold people responsible. He also noted that there are two state troopers for Sullivan County at night, and related a story in which he made a call for assistance, and the State Police (rather than the Croydon Police) showed up.

Megan Hanson noted that she has two active cases that need Richard Lee to prosecute. The board will look into how to proceed with that.

Kimberly Berkhamer asked permission to bring some people in to look at some town files regarding a federal grant to help bring broadband internet to the town. The board will set up times for that to happen.

Meeting adjourned at 6:37 pm.

The following statement is a summary of my understanding of the current police situation, based on conversations with residents in my capacity as selectman; my examination of minutes, documents, and recordings from previous select boards; my own observations during my time as a member of the current select board; and my own experience as a resident of Croydon.

I believe that a problem well-posed is half-solved. What is our fundamental problem? It's that we have absolutely no idea how much, and what kind, of police coverage we actually need.

How much police coverage do we need?

We have no idea because our method of deciding how many hours to pay for has always been based on how many hours are allowed by the state retirement system, rather than on how many hours the town needs.

Properly analyzing what the town needs requires reliable answers to basic questions like: How many times did people call for assistance? At what times of day or night? For what kinds of problems? How long did it take to respond? How much time was spent per incident?

Previous select boards have been requesting this kind of information from our police department for years, usually getting no response at all, but occasionally getting logs that aren't useful or accurate.

What kind of coverage do we need?

The things residents seem to want most from the police are are:

- (1) To curb speeding in town, both on Route 10 and on back roads
- (2) Quick response times for incidents that require police presence
- (3) Enforcement of town ordinances

What have we been paying for, and what have we been getting for our money?

Again, requests for information from our police department have yielded no useful data, so we just have to guess.

However, I can find no evidence that we're getting what we're paying for with regard to the three objectives listed above.

Complaints about speeding haven't decreased over the years. In recent high-profile incidents, the State Police and other nearby departments have responded more quickly than our own department (which has sometimes not responded at all). And since the passage of our town snow ordinance, our own department has actually been going out of its way to prevent its enforcement.

So those are the things we *haven't* been getting — a reduction in speeding, quick response times, enforcement of local ordinances.

So what *have* we been getting for our money?

Mostly, we've been getting a community that is increasingly divided into factions over the issue of policing, to the point of discouraging residents from participating in public events. That needs to end.

Where does most of our coverage come from now?

Currently, we pay more than \$50,000 per year for 32 hours of weekly coverage from the Croydon Police Department. At the same time, we pay \$0 per year for 136 hours of weekly coverage from the State Police.

That is, we already get 81% of our coverage from the State Police.

Unlike the local police department, there seem to be *no* complaints of any kind about the service provided by the State Police.

So we're paying 100% of our police budget for the least useful and most controversial 19% of our coverage.

This strongly suggests that we should increase our coverage by the State Police from 81% to 100%.

If we did that, what would we be giving up?

There's nothing that a local police officer can do, that a state trooper can't also do, except maintain close personal relationships with residents. *But it's precisely such relationships that have broken the town into factions.* So that turns out to be a minus, rather than a plus.

The state police can enforce our local ordinances. The select board can also issue citations on its own. And the select board can approve carry permits.

With regard to speeding, there are one-time solutions (like setting up a school zone near the center of town, putting up a device to show drivers how fast they're going, creating speed bumps, and so on) that would be no less effective, but much less expensive, than what we've been doing for the last 20 years.

So really, we'd be giving up nothing, except an ongoing source of increasing discord.

And what would we be gaining?

Moving to 100% coverage by the State Police would directly address our fundamental problem, which is a lack of the *data* required to make an *informed* assessment of the *actual* needs of the town with respect to policing.

After a year or two, future boards would be in a much stronger position to decide whether the town should have a part-time police officer, a Watchman, a private security firm, an agreement with another town, a contract with the County Sheriff's Office... or nothing at all.

We'd also be saving the town upwards of \$50,000 per year.

And so, based on all of the foregoing, I make a motion that:

Effective immediately, Croydon increase its coverage by the State Police from 81% to 100%, abolishing the Croydon Police Department.