

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
October 25, 2010**

Present: Patrick O'Connor, Chairman
Robert Conlon
Ed Harrington
Michael Smart

Also Present: Kenneth DiFazio

Not Present: Brian McDonald

Recording Secretary: Mary Briggs

Chairman O'Connor called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The update from the Police Department was taken out of order.

Update from the Weymouth Police Department

The Police Chief was not present. They have requested the committee set up a meeting with the union and police administration to discuss budgetary concerns.

Speeding and Safety Issues on Rt. 3A

Traffic officer Sgt. Concannon was not present. Dan Curran, a resident of Bridge Street, brought a petition signed by residents of the area regarding their concern over the lack of traffic calming measures in place. Councilor O'Connor reviewed the measures that were put in place at the intersection of Front and Federal Street after a traffic study and several meetings, which have alleviated some of the traffic issues. While the bridge construction is underway, the town has a few years to consider and undertake some measures to calm speeding and accidents. The intersection at the King Cove loop with Evans and Bridge Streets are the focus of many of the problems. There were fifty accidents in a four month period last year. Timed signals, such as in place on Wollaston Blvd. in Quincy, have been suggested as have signage changes. There will need to be an effort to work with the state and Mass Highway.

Councilor Smart agreed that Mass Highway should be involved; the town cannot make changes to a state highway. He recommended an official traffic accident report and drafting of a letter to the state. He also requested the petition be forwarded to the administration to include with the request to the state.

Councilor Conlon recommended an analysis of the traffic accidents in the area, and that the town request some state police supervision on the road during what is indicated to be the peak need times from the analysis. He also noted that the cleanup following an accident be more diligently attended by the contracted tow companies. He would like to

see timed lights also.

Councilor Harrington noted that a traffic study from the town engineer is requested and comparison be made with what is provided by the state. He will assist Mr. Bezkravainy if needed. He also recommended considering doubling speeding fines in that area.

Mr. Curran also noted that there is no crossing guard at St. Jerome's School. There was a brief discussion of the traffic guard situation throughout the town. Budget cuts eliminated the positions; however, the school department has hired some with grant funding.

Councilor Smart made a motion to send a letter to the town and police administration, including the petition, that there will be a series of public meetings held in an attempt to come up with traffic calming and safety improvement measures, after a traffic study has been completed. This letter will also include a request for immediate action regarding the lack of a posted school zone in the St. Jerome's area. Secondly, his motion included sending a letter to Mass. Highway requesting the most recent accident and speeding studies relevant to Route 3A, and request a contact within the agency to serve as a liaison. The third item in the motion is a written request to the traffic engineer to obtain the most recent police reports, which include accident and speeding data from October 2008-October 2010. The motion was seconded by Councilor Harrington and unanimously voted.

Update from the Weymouth Fire Department

Union personnel- Local 1616 President Kevin Connolly, Secretary Tom Murphy, and Treasurer Steven Murray presented an overview of the current staffing situation in the Weymouth Fire Department. With reductions, the force is now at a staffing level of 2 engines/1 ladder, once the weekly overtime allotment is expended. Current staff totals 85, which includes 6 members on long term medical leave and 2 members out under the FMLA.

This leaves the town and the fire personnel in an unsafe condition. The RIT (rapid intervention team) response is affected. It jeopardizes mutual aid coverage- if the town cannot deliver mutual aid because of too few personnel, it is also then unable to receive mutual aid. Surrounding towns are facing similar situations.

It also affects the ability to respond in a timely manner to emergencies. Proper coverage includes the equipment on the truck; ladders and engines are outfitted with separate abilities; for example, ladder trucks do not carry water.

A discussion ensued concerning the number of times over the last several months that the company has dropped to 2/1 coverage.

Mr. Connolly noted the number of members/equipment on a typical shift of comparably sized towns across the state. Brookline, Framingham, Quincy, Malden, Haverhill and Lynn were included in the comparison.

The fire department and the union are looking to establish a fire-based EMS service. Cross-trained personnel will be able to put more men on duty. The information has been discussed with the chief, the union and the administration and is in the early stages. Grant funding is being sought to rehire laid off personnel. Southfield mitigation is also being investigated.

Councilor Harrington asked if the department has considered forming a committee to seek a Proposition 2 ½ override. Mr. Connolly responded that they hoped the Council would initiate this. Councilor Harrington responded that the Council is prohibited by statute from initiating an override. It must emerge from the community. He noted that the town has no source of funding to trim to be able to fund WFD needs. The town has no money to spare while the school department finds the funding to send a member of its staff to China.

Councilor Conlon requested an explanation of the manner in which mutual aid availability is determined.

Councilor Smart noted that the department has had reductions in the workforce for each of the last ten years. He notes free cash, when certified, should be prioritized so that it is expended on public safety. He also urged that the contract for Southfield fire protection should go to Weymouth-- as 95% of the land is situated. The town must strive to provide its employees with the best conditions in which to work.

Councilor O'Connor noted that the goal should be to maintain a force of 4/2 at all times in a community the size of Weymouth. Since 2000, there has been a lack of emphasis on the Fire Department budget. The town has missed the opportunity to invest capital funding in the department as well. He is a proponent of a fire-based ambulance service. The town needs to look at the long term needs and investment in the department and they need to get the word out to the citizens to get the administration to set priorities.

Councilor Harrington discussed Quincy's plan to bill insurance companies for response to accidents. Most towns are awaiting the outcome of pending lawsuits. Councilor Smart noted that any "crash tax" will ultimately be trickled down to the ratepayers. The WFD is not a for profit organization.

Several suggestions were also discussed; raising permit fees or structuring the schedule fairly- the permit fee is the same for a homeowner as it is for a multimillion dollar cancer center. Councilor Harrington noted that the Ordinance Committee is currently reviewing the schedule.

Crosswalks

A letter was brought forward from a resident to Councilor DiFazio requesting that a particular crosswalk be repainted. The resident has requested the DPW repaint it, but it has not been done. Councilor Smart noted that this must have been an anomaly and that Mr. O'Connor's department has been diligent in the past with regard to crosswalks. He also recommended that verbiage could be included in the repaving section with the

Ordinance Committee's review. Chairman O'Connor reviewed the DPW's current policy for repainting crosswalks.

A motion was made by Councilor Smart to send a letter to the DPW including the letter from the constituent requesting that the particular crosswalk be addressed, to provide a list of crosswalks in town, and perform an audit of all crosswalks located within a half-mile of any school building.

At 8:15 PM, there being no further business, a motion was made by Councilor Smart to adjourn, was seconded by Councilor Harrington and was unanimously voted.

Respectfully Submitted:

Mary Barker

Approved by:

Chairman Patrick O'Connor