

**Southfield/Union Point Committee Minutes  
Town Hall Council Chambers  
December 7, 2023**

Present: John Abbott, Chairperson  
Gary MacDougall, Vice-Chairperson  
Christopher Heffernan  
Fred Happel  
Arthur Mathews

Also Present: Ted Langill, Chief of Staff  
Brian Smith, Assistant Superintendent  
Robert Wargo, Superintendent  
Chief Fuller, WPD  
Chief Stark, WFD

Recording Secretary: Janet P. Murray (transcribed from recording)

Chair Abbott called the Southfield/Union Point Committee meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

**Oversight of Redevelopment of Former NAS South Weymouth - Infrastructure – Town Services**

Chair Abbott made the following disclosure:

“We do not have a recording secretary for this evening's meeting and meeting minutes will be created from the recording. This satisfies open meeting law regulations. Please note that anyone that gets up to speak tonight must identify themselves and their position in order that the proper notations are indicated in the minutes.”

Chair Abbott stated that this committee previously met on September 12, 2023, and discussed the outline of the committee's purpose and met with the town's peer review consultant who is overseeing a review of the various impact studies necessary for the MEPA notice of Project Change. In preparation for tonight's meeting, Councilors were invited to submit questions to the administration as it relates to the impact from the Southfield/Union Point redevelopment will have on town services. As a result, 34 questions were submitted in advance to the administration and chief of staff Ted Langill; department heads are present to review the administration's response to the questions and answer any follow up questions. He noted that the committee will not be reviewing any of the impact studies of the town's peer reviewer's response at tonight's meeting that will take place during this committee's meeting on Monday, December 11, 2023.

Chair Abbott stated that Councilor Heffernan had a work commitment tonight and is unable to attend.

Mr. Langill responded to two general questions.

- Population estimates as it relates to future build out of Southfield

- The town's answer to that is there are over 1200 units, homes, townhomes, and apartments at Southfield with approximately 2200 residents living there. Their bedroom ratio is slightly higher than what has been redeveloped over the last eight years. The town averaged about 1.3 bedrooms while Southfield is closer to 1.7. Those are the numbers they look at when thinking about future development. He added that while it is flexible, the developers are looking at potentially at least 4000 more units.
- Role of the union in dealing with the development and need for additional services:
  - He stated that they have an ongoing, very productive working relationship with all eight of the town's unions.
  - He stated that he met with the Fire Fighter's Union recently to continue discussions of their future needs.
  - He stated that the town will need more of basically everything.
  - He pointed out that a couple of the collective bargaining agreements have wording that would impact any of those decisions.
    - Fire Department: If there is a new fire engine, it has to have four firefighters on it, and a new ladder has to have two firefighters aboard. He noted that there are four groups which allow them to know how much that would be when the time comes.
    - Schools: language about class sizes is in their contracts. This will play a role in future decisions.

Robert Wargo, superintendent of schools, and Assistant Superintendent Brian Smith introduced themselves. Mr. Wargo stated that with any development in town they look at the school-aged children calculus, talk about square footage and bedrooms, and how many school-aged children might be moving in. He noted that the calculations that were created for the students that are in the school system were pretty much spot on. He added that the calculation for school-aged children was between 65 and 70; the town has approximately 71/72 students from Union Point attending Weymouth schools.

Mr. Wargo stated that they are at a pressure point, with or without Union Point coming online, regarding enrollment of elementary schools, class size, and space in the elementary schools. He added that they are at the point where decisions about the future of school buildings need to be made.

Chair Abbott questioned if there would be a need to redistrict the elementary schools, given that the Union Point students are currently in the Hamilton district.

Mr. Wargo stated that with or without Union Point, the town is already at the stage where they need to talk about how to distribute the students equitably across all eight elementary schools.

He continued that they have tried to honor the "home" school where someone lives in the neighborhood of the school they go to. He added that they are at a point where they cannot fit more children in certain schools; the neighborhood a student lives in no longer guarantees the school attended.

Chair Abbott asked if there is discussion of substantial physical changes to any of the existing elementary schools, relocation, or construction of a new elementary school in a different location.

Mr. Wargo stated that they have a Master Facilities Planning Group with members of the town, the school department, school committee sitting on that planning committee, and they are looking at two different phases.

- Short term phase - next five to seven years
- Phase two - from seven to 30 or 40 years

He stated that they talk about the space that they have currently, space needed, and how to acquire that space whether by adding on or consolidating schools.

Councilor Happel asked if the enrollment from 2016 to 2023 of kindergarten students increased about 80 students.

Mr. Wargo stated that with the current grade configuration, grade five, probably has 370 or 380 students, and the current kindergarten class is 450 students. He added that they are anticipating an increase in enrollment.

Councilor MacDougall asked the superintendent if he expected to see exponential growth each year.

Mr. Wargo stated that they look at projections for population trends provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NSEC). He noted that the town, in the next year or two, is going to bottom out and from that point forward, there will be increases which might be 20-40 kids a year.

Mr. Langill stated that there are currently 1200 units at Union Point with about 75 kids. He continued that there is a higher bedroom ratio than the rest of the redevelopment in the town which means that they have close to two bedrooms per unit.

Councilor MacDougall asked if there would be an elementary school on the property.

Mr. Wargo stated that all factors are being taken into consideration by the Master Facilities Plan.

Mr. Langill stated that they are looking ahead to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) as was done with Chapman.

Chair Abbott asked if there will more use of modular classrooms as part of the short term goals.

Mr. Wargo stated that the use of modular classrooms is one the of considerations.

Chair Abbott noted that there were questions relating to police, police response, and impact of potential development on police response in Union Point.

Police Chief Richard Fuller stated that they currently have 102 sworn police officers and noted that in 1995, there were 115. In 2016, when the current administration took over, there were only 88 officers, and they have since built up to 102.

Chief Fuller stated the town is divided into five sectors with five sector cars and typically two rovers. On the day and evening shifts there are typically seven cars on duty. On the midnight shift there are five cars and one rover. He added that every shift has a supervisor and a watch commander and an officer in the station.

Chief Fuller stated that all of the buildings are in Weymouth, so all calls are generally in Weymouth. There are an average of 1500 calls a year, with a lot of medical calls. He noted that they do get a lot of calls for the runway. Chief Fuller continued that there is a misunderstanding that Weymouth has jurisdiction on the runway; however, he explained that about 500 feet off of Delahunt Parkway is Rockland or Abington which are not only different police departments but also a different county. He stated that the plan is for a Home Rule petition to put Weymouth in charge of the whole area. The two towns would have to pay for that service under a fee agreement.

Chief Fuller stated that although most of the calls are medical and domestic disturbances, they do get parking complaints and requests for traffic enforcement.

Chief Fuller stated that the previous town solicitor worked so that the police can enforce parking on private ways as Union Point's roadways are not public ways.

Chief Fuller stated that for average response time, it may vary because if there is a larceny call, it might take a half hour to get there because they will not be going with blue lights. He pointed out that a domestic response time is about three minutes. He stated that from what he has reviewed, the response times are pretty good.

Councilor MacDougall asked if difficulty getting there is the hard part.

Chief Fuller stated that this is an issue as Union Point is in sector four, which includes Weymouth Landing, so the sector is large.

Chief Fuller stated that the town does anticipate having to hire additional officers. He stated that it is probably time to start developing a strategic plan. He said that it is a simple formula for policing. He does not need buildings; he needs more officers. He continued that Union Point will be big enough to be its own sector. This would increase the number of sectors from five to six. There would be no need for additional non-uniform staff.

Mr. Langill pointed out that the growth issues are not just about Union Point but about South Weymouth as a whole.

Councilor Abbot asked if there was a plan for a public safety outpost in Union point.

Mr. Langill stated that the town made it clear to the developer that any plan presented must identify a space on their land for public safety. What that becomes, or turns into, is yet to be decided.

Councilor Abbott asked if there was discussion with the master developer and the financial backers behind them to contribute in any specific way to any of these increases in services or is it mainly through the increase in tax revenue generated by the construction,

Mr. Langill stated that it will probably be more the increased revenue that is generated from the development. He stated that there have been discussions about water and sewer infrastructure increases and how to pay for that. He added that there are other possible support options at the state level.

Councilor Abbott stated that some of the promises made by the previous master developer were part of the legislation and the MEPA filing.

Mr. Langill stated that there was also a separate agreement between the Mayor and the developers. He noted, as an example that the Columbian Square redesign was in the original plan and the new developer has been reminded that the town is spending \$11 million that their predecessors agreed to.

Councilor MacDougall stated that the plan is to look at Union Point as a part of South Weymouth and the town will pull these services into Weymouth's police, fire, and schools.

Councilor MacDougall asked if any additional officers would be dedicated to that sector.

Chief Fuller stated that town is currently broken up into five sectors, which can be seen geographically. He stated that the new sector would include South Weymouth of which Union Point is part of. He added that officers are generally assigned to one sector and that is on purpose.

Councilor Mathews stated that there is a resident at Union Point who is concerned about people in the parking lot of the sport's complex which is adjacent to her house, drinking there at night after hours. He added that this resident is proposing a 10 p.m. quiet ordinance for the whole town.

Chief Fuller pointed out that this is already in place as there are hours when you are supposed to be quiet such as Sundays, and overnight. He reported that he is not aware of any calls regarding this concern.

Councilor Mathews suggested that the chief look into this before the Ordinance Committee meeting.

Councilor MacDougall asked if there might be a need for more than six sectors.

Chief Fuller stated that they are trying to think outside the box such as having four sectors but having two officers on patrol.

Councilor MacDougall asked if there is something that might be needed at full build out such as equipment or technology.

Chief Fuller stated that officers work out of their cruisers so potentially another cruiser. He added that radio infrastructure improvements may be needed as there are some spots at Union Point where there is not good transmission.

Mr. Langill stated that they have a program in place to rotate seven new cruisers. They would need to add one or two more vehicles.

Councilor Abbott asked if there is a timeline for staffing increase.

Chief Fuller stated that they will need to just grow with it.

Mr. Langill stated that the plan is to work incrementally so that all of the financial needs for resources do not happen all at once. He added that they are looking at cameras to be able to see what is going on out there and have a little more oversight of the spots and maybe prevent some of the unwanted activity.

Chair Abbott noted that there were questions relating to fire department response, and impact of potential development regarding fire department response at Union Point.

Fire Chief Keith Stark spoke about the need to hire additional firefighters. He stated that in FY 2016 Weymouth department's fire suppression force was 88 with 83 firefighters funded and five firefighters funded by the Safer grant. These were absorbed into the budget to the current complement of 99 firefighters fully funded in FY 24.

Chief Stark stated that they need more stations, apparatus, and more staff. He stated that a fully staffed fire department should have 119 fire fighters. This number is from Commissioner McCurtain from the Boston Fire Department who was hired by the previous developer as a consultant. The 111 numbers represented the National Fire Protection Association calculation that fire departments across the country operate on average ratio of 2.75 fire fighters per 1000 residents.

The numbers vary based on target hazards within a community. Weymouth currently operates at a 1.71 ratio based on 57,200 residents which is from the census in 2021. He continued that the town has a lot of infrastructure such as the water treatment plant, the hospital, and the box stores. There are also the highways, and trains, as well as Routes 18 and 53 over which Clean Harbors trucks travel. This is a lot of responsibility for the department, and they have to train, be prepared, obtain the proper equipment, and enough people to respond.

Chief Stark stated that they apply for grants all the time. He noted that the Safer grant is under attack in Congress.

Chief Stark stated that they do anticipate needing additional trucks. He added that they are constantly dealing with apparatus and station maintenance. The department would request an additional engine and ladder. He stated that he would want a building up there.

Chief Stark stated that the town does anticipate additional major expenses such as personnel equipment.

Councilor Abbot asked if the additional engine or ladder would replace an existing vehicle in service or be an addition.

Chief Stark stated Mayor Hedlund has gotten the fleet back to where it should be, but they still need to keep moving forward. He stated that they have a lot of runs and there is wear and tear on the apparatus. He stated that a number of pieces need replacement as they are old.

Mr. Langill stated that to address a full build out of Union Point, he will need to be new equipment.

Councilor MacDougall asked about the need for a ladder to access the tall parts of the structures and what does the town have right now.

Chief Stark stated that they have a 100 foot stick truck. He continued that they have a 2021 ladder, 2007 ladder, and the 2000 ladder is out of service. He added that they are looking to purchase a new tower ladder with a bucket to access the tall parts of these structures.

Mr. Langill stated that ordering can be tricky as delivery can go out a few years.

Chief Stark stated that medical runs have increased. This year there have been 121 EMS runs while last year was 96. There were eight fires last year, and eight fires so far this year.

Chief Stark stated that there are enough water connections and a hydrant system. He noted that the water tower was removed; he has stressed to Department of Public Works (DPW) that this needs to be addressed when they do the build out. The water tower was there to help with pressure.

Chief Stark stated that they currently have four engines and one ladder. Each engine is staffed with one officer and three fire fighters, and the ladder is staffed with one officer and one firefighter.

Chief Stark stated that response time is, on average, 14 minutes which is from when they are dispatched, to arrival on scene, and sign off.

Councilor MacDougall asked about the national average.

Chief Stark stated that the national average is about four to six minutes.

Chief Stark stated that since developed, there have been 97 fires total, from a mulch fire to losing a couple buildings. He added that in 2018 there was a total of 102 emergency response calls and in 2022 there were 219. He stated that the CAD system goes back to January of 2009. From then to the date of this report, there were 1800 responses at locations in Union Point, all of which were in Weymouth.

Chief Stark stated that EMS response times were provided by Eugene Duffy, the EMS coordinator at South Shore Hospital (SSH). The average response time for the ambulance to Union Point is 5 minutes and 40 seconds. There are five ambulances for the town to transport Advanced Life Support (ALS), one non-transporting ALS, and two Basic Life Support (BLS) transporting ALS. Between midnight and 8am, BLS ambulances staff capacity increases with internal SSH Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

Chief Stark stated that the police receive the 911 calls. If it is a medical, SSH is notified to dispatch; however, the fire department is listening to the 911 call if the call is priority 1 or 2 they send an engine as well. The goal would be to have all of this in the same room together in a separate building.

Chief Stark stated two of the ambulances are staffed with paramedics and two are staffed with EMTs or EMT advanced. There will be a need for an additional ambulance to cover the new population. He continued that ambulances are currently stationed at 60 Winter Street and 730 Bridge Street.

Mr. Langill stated that ambulances are not always just at these two locations.

Chief Stark stated that they stage in certain locations because they have an algorithm of the times when it is most busy in order to have quicker response times.

Councilor Abbott asked if there is a staging point in South Weymouth.

Chief Stark stated that they do but that they are mostly out of Winter Street.

Chief Stark stated that there were 1500 South Weymouth EMS transports at Union Point in the calendar year 2022. He added that SSH only responds to call requests in the Weymouth portion of Southfield; they don't go to Abington or Rockland.

Chief Stark noted that a growing population increases demand for healthcare services, including emergency medical services, and resource allocation. With more residents, South Shore Health may need to allocate additional resources to address the needs of the community.

Councilor Abbott asked if it is possible to use the existing building at Union Point for a fire station.

Mr. Langill stated that it was not clear if it could be used.

Councilor Mathews stated that the goal is to gather information as the town goes through the notice of project change with the MEPA process. He added that when the Town Council formulates a letter to be voted on, they will have comments about all different subjects: water, wastewater, traffic, public safety, and schools.

At 7:20 p.m., there being no further business, Councilor Mathews made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Councilor MacDougall. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Janet Murray as Recording Secretary

Approved by John Abbott as Committee chair  
Voted unanimously on 16 January 2024