

**Town of Sunapee
Board of Fire Wards
November 13, 2019**

Present: Josh Trow, Austin Brown and John (Jake) Paris

Also present: Chief Dan Ruggles

Josh Trow opened the meeting at 7:01AM

Austin Brown made a motion and it was seconded by Jake Paris to enter non-public session at 7:01AM per RSA91-A:3 II(c) – Matters which, if discussed public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body or agency itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. All in favor.

A motion was made by Josh Trow and seconded by Austin Brown to return to public session at 7:42AM. There was a motion made by Josh Trow and seconded by Austin Brown to seal the minutes of the non-public session as this would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of the Board. All in favor.

The Board was joined by Sean Riley Director of New London Ambulance. Josh Trow explained some of the issues the Town of Sunapee has experienced. Mr. Riley explained there will be a learning curve with his new position and has some ideas of trying to alleviate the issues voiced by the staff at New London Hospital. He acknowledged that staffing is an issue. Josh Trow explained our issue is with response times being too long too often, and that Sunapee has been waiting for months to get a report about response times and as of this date have not received a report. Josh Trow went on to explain that 3 years ago there was an agreement that we would garage an ambulance in our Safety Services Building for a reduced rate and better response times. Josh Trow said that Sunapee feels that New London Ambulance is not keeping up with that agreement. Jake Paris reiterated that response time is our biggest issue, as everyone knows how important this is. Jake Paris responded that 25-50 minutes response times are too long. Austin Brown stated he would like to see a service agreement with specifics, not verbal agreement. Austin Brown said now that we are starting fresh with a new Director, he would like to see written specifics of patient care and set clear expectations to hold each other accountable. Jake Paris explained waiting for an ambulance not only puts a strain on the patient but also our first responders, and this is a big concern. Josh Trow added not having ability to have other agencies to cover leaves us in a bad position. Sean Riley explained he does not have access to anything that shows how many times another agency is called in. A suggestion was made to call it mutual aid like the fire service. Mr. Riley explained that his short-range goal is to hire some personnel. There was also discussion about New London Ambulance personnel using the Safety Service Building for classes and the Fire Wards did not see an issue with that. Mr. Riley noted that New London had 559 medical calls and Sunapee has about one half of that on an annual basis. Josh Trow asked that we forget what has transpired in the past and look toward the future

with solutions. Austin Brown offered a solution that if Sunapee EMS was notified of staff shortages, we could try to have more EMS personnel respond. Austin Brown also noted there have been times when New London Ambulance did not respond, and we had to wait for one from Lebanon when there was one parked at the Sunapee Station. Sean Riley asked how the Fire Wards would feel about hiring some of the Sunapee EMS personnel per diem and perhaps this could alleviate some of the issues. Austin Brown responded this is a good solution.

Chief Dan Ruggles joined the meeting at this time.

Sean Riley explained he needs to find a solution for back up when all New London Ambulances are in service. Austin Brown expressed his concerns about the ambulance that is supposed to stay in Sunapee going over to New London Hospital too frequently. Mr. Riley said his goal is to have all the ambulances available 24/7. Josh Trow said this seems to make sense if we can improve our service. Building bunk rooms upstairs in the Safety Service Building was discussed and it was noted that it should be included in the budget for 2020. We also need to have a policy for housing personnel. Mr. Riley said he knows some great paramedics that would like to work 24-hour shifts vs the present schedule. Austin Brown what do you need from Sunapee to allow our people per diem to drive ambulances. Mr. Riley said he would get the necessary paperwork to initiate this. The Fire Wards noted encouragement from the new ambulance director.

Recruitment & Retention – Josh Trow asked Chief Ruggles if he had any further ideas about recruiting. Chief Ruggles explained that he tried to use the Police Department Sign out by the road and sign was not working. Chief Ruggles went on to say shortage of personnel is not exclusive to Sunapee and that all fire departments are experiencing the same thing.

Personnel- Josh Trow and Austin Brown voiced their concern about the length of time it is taking to appoint an Assistant Chief. Chief Ruggles said he is going to have a discussion with the applicant. Chief Ruggles expressed his concerns and does not think the applicant is the right person is for job. Chief Ruggles asked if he could wait two months and repost the position. Josh Trow feels this is too long and we need to move forward for the sake of the Department. Chief Ruggles indicated he would have a decision next week. Josh Trow asked about the rest of the positions and Chief Ruggles said he is working on them. Jake Paris warned we have six weeks and the year is over and we need to get the department in order.

SOP-Chief Ruggles explained his committee is working on them but it is taking more time than anticipated because many of the SOP do not make any sense for the Sunapee Fire Department.

Chiefs Pay – Chief Ruggles expressed his opinion that the Chiefs pay should be hourly and not stipend. He feels that hourly is a more reasonable way to pay. Josh Trow said that classification of employment is a concern. There are several questions that need to be answered before we decide to make a change. This item should go on the next meeting agenda.

Cadet Program – Chief Ruggles explained he has postponed this program until Spring of 2020. He explained a program such as this one will take time and dedication.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58AM.

Submitted by:

Betty H. Ramspott