

**Fire Chief Study Committee  
Public Forum  
1/26/22  
Zoom Virtual Meeting**

Meeting began at 6 pm

Present: Kristen Burgess, Elaine Puleo, Walter Tibbetts, April Stein, Jim Walton  
Also present: Becky Torres, TA

Members of the public present: Susan Hanna, Lesley Bracebridge, Roo Trimble, Linda Avis Scott, Ellen McKay, Mark Foster, Tim Logan, Gary Rehorka, Meryl Mandell, Penny Kim, Karen Traub, Joan Hanson, Justin Veizan, Christine Sullivan, Craig Martin, Paul DeMarco, Joe Salvador, Weezie Houle, Emily Bayard, Jen Taylor, Rachel Schwab

- Elaine began meeting, establishing format for the meeting
- April gave summary of what the committee has done to date, and our process
- Jim summarized the interviews he and Kristen Burgess had done with 8 Fire Fighters
  - Strong Fire Department
  - Feeling that current Department model works with a Full Time Chief
  - Support of Chief Tibbetts
  - Confidence in his knowledge and leadership
  - Feels dept is nurturing and excellent training
  - Sees the department as progressive
  - Would like to recruit more volunteers
  - Fire Fighters support overlap between a new Chief and Walter
- Questions/Comments:
  - Tim: the need for more volunteers
  - response: Open house suggested among other ideas
  - This is beyond scope of this committee
  - Penny: Concern for maintaining emergency response
  - response: Walter outlined connection with Amherst and other towns
  - Jen: Ambulance service response times in other towns can be difficult at times. How does Shutesbury plan on managing these issues?
  - response: Walter-State laws mandates requirements for having a town ambulance. Shutesbury has first responders at the Fire Department and Police Department. Notes there is current shortage of EMS in the county.
  - Rachel: Having Fire Chief and Deputy Chief critical for our rural town.
  - Joseph: Has observed the work of the Fire Department at the Lake, and really appreciates what a good department Shutesbury has.
  - Gary: Has it been considered that the town have an assistant Chief?
  - response: Committee will be presenting options/recommendations to the Selectboard
  - Meryl: Appreciates the Fire Department. Because the town is also going to be hiring a Police Chief would it make sense to combine the two positions?
  - response: Each position is a full time position and would not make sense to have a combined Police/Fire Chief.
  - Jen: Would it be possible to have another public forum and make it later in the evening?
  - response: committee is looking to complete our recommendations to the Selectboard by mid-February so the hiring process can begin. Have had one other evening meeting. Minutes available on Town Website. Recordings of meetings also available.
  - Paul: Would like to see the draft recommendations
  - response: recommendations will be presented to the Selectboard at one of their meetings. Understanding that people want their voices heard.

- Christine: Saving money is important, but we need a strong Fire Department
- Penny: Felt this meeting had been well publicized and that she has had it on her calendar
  - response: Announcement for Public Forum sent out on Town Announce 2 weeks ago, and then again today.
- Gary: Recommends the Selectboard have an open forum to discuss this committee's recommendations
- Susan: What is the plan? Will people on the department have input on the decision on who the new Chief is? Feels that her family members on the department were safe with Walter as chief. Suggests input from Fire Fighters on choice of new Chief
  - response: Public interviews of top candidates will allow people to give their input. The committee is trying to make sure Fire Fighters are being heard. Understanding that Fire Fighters participation on the force involves the entire family
- Paul: Would appreciate a chance to participate in the interviews as he has had medical issues and not able to participate in process with other Fire Fighters
  - response: Either Kristen or Jim will contact him and set up a time/way to involve him
- Jen: Has found it frustrating that was not aware of tonight's forum and would like another public forum
  - response: Town Announce 2 weeks ago, a week ago and a reminder today on Town Announce. Minutes/recordings of meetings available.
- Roo: Current Fire Fighters want to be part of the hiring process.
  - response: Hiring process will be managed by the Selectboard.

Meeting ended 7:45 pm

Next Meeting 2/2/22 @ 10 am