

Police Study Group (PSG) – January 6, 2022 5:45 pm Virtual Meeting

Attending members: Select Board member: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil, Chair

Town Administrator, ex-officio member: Becky Torres

Acting Chief, Shutesbury Police Dept, (SPD): Kristin Burgess

Finance Committee member: Susie Mosher

Personnel Board member: Melody Chartier

Community at large members: Cheryl Hayden, Mike Vinskey, Mary Jo Johnson

Absent: Rita Farrell - Select Board member

General Public: Rachel Schwab-Rehorka, Tim Logan, Brigid Murphy, Officer Taylor Beaudry, Officer Nate Masse, Justin Vezina and Megan Emrick-Vezina, April Stein, Kate McConnell, Patricia, Duffy, Jim Hemingway, Kay Washington, and Shannon Gamble from the Leverett Police Study Group

The meeting convened at 5:48 pm

Public Comments: None

Review and Approve minutes from 12/9/21 and 12/23/21: A discussion concerning the format of minutes: problems of being misquoted and appearing verbatim, process of using review and amending minutes to correct problems, style of minute taker. Recordings of meetings are available. Summary of discussion vs specific attributions style was suggested. Voted 6 no and 1 yes to adopt a specific minute taking model. Members will review the recording or minutes in print before we review and approve 12/9 and 12/23 minutes at the end of the 1/20/22 meeting.

Discussion of On Call Model: Mike Vinskey's ON CALL model was presented to the committee for discussion. Because this topic was not listed as a separate agenda item, it was recommended it be discussed in relation to adding this model to the survey cover letter. Highlights of the model are two officers of equal status who cover 24/7, each paid \$80 –\$ 85,000/annual salary. No specific schedule; number of hours established by Select Board (SB). Officers would share administrative tasks and cover for each other during vacations, schedule conflicts, etc. Officers would have to live in Shutesbury and each would have a cruiser to use and keep at home.

Questions were raised about residency requirement: pay to relocate to Shutesbury? Has this model been seen in action in another town? Would the on-call response meet community policing goals? As residents, the officers would have strong connection to the community and could participate in social functions. They could be volunteer fire fighters. Their work would be preventative if they drive around or the SB could require specified hours of presence.

Labor laws in Massachusetts require on-call status to be on premises 24/7. As an effort to save money, the salaries in the on-call model would equal \$160K - 170 K, compared to current budget of \$195K without including costs of sick time, vacation coverage. This translates to about 9.70/hour for 24/7 coverage. Minimum wage (\$15./hr) X 24 X 365= \$131K/annually. But overtime pay would be legally required. There may be some personnel issues, how could we make this work out?

Rachel Schwab Rehorka: This model would likely require more state police coverage. Our MSP district from Belchertown covers a huge area and response times for the two state police officers on duty would be likely over an hour; they are not truly available to respond to crisis.

SPD relies on state police coverage already, 11 pm – 7 am. We also can rely on Mutual Aid for assistance.

This model sound similar to the British model, but the cultural differences make the on-call model unworkable.

Is this the time to add new structures to include in the survey? How would we represent ON CALL in the cover letter? Two full-time resident officers for 24/7 on-call basis? Is this option legal? Would we include a caveat "...if this meets legal requirements"?

We should be listening to new ideas. We do not have to work under a made-up timeline. Others said we need to get the survey information to the Select Board.

Justin Vezina: Is there a problem with the current model? No – the vacancy for chief prompted this review.

Should the ON CALL option be listed? Vote was taken 4- No, 2-Yes and 1 abstain.

Further Considerations of the Survey Cover Letter: Should the committee's charge be included for those without a computer? The charge can be added to the cover letter.

The costs are not mentioned; that may affect the citizens' preferences. Don't send out the survey without more information. The call logs tell us how the people use the SPD services. The survey will tell us more clearly how the people feel about the SPD services. The PSG will not be writing a specific proposal. PSG members can pick through the options and share their concerns and suggestions with the SB. Sending out the survey gives the more information to the SB to craft a proposal that will be reviewed by the towns.

Rachel Schwab Rehorka: Doesn't the town have to have a police department by law? Is the MSP option designed to be without a town department? Some would have to be done in town.

The MSP option, like all options, has some faults. Should the language for the MSP option be changed? Should the language be "different models" instead of "alternative structures"? In Contracted Services can we remove pay-for-services basis" to "provide services through a contract"? Edits accepted.

In getting the survey out we considered how many surveys to mail out per household, whether two respondents per survey would work, anonymity, steps to securing the integrity and accuracy of the data. It was concluded that each household would be mailed two surveys for residents 18 years or older, printed on colored paper, uniquely numbered, without return postage, with the drop box making the survey return easier.

We will meet briefly on Thursday, January 13 at 5:30 to approve the final draft pf survey and cover letter, with an effort to get the survey in the mail the following week. Due to COVID, a mailing service will handle the folding and mailing. The return date is by Feb.14.

A meeting was also scheduled for Thursday, January 20 at 5:45. We will look at the topic raised by Mary Jo, review the budget numbers from nearby towns, and approve minutes from 12/9, 12/23, and 1/6/2022. Meeting adjourned 8:00 pm. Minutes by Susie Mosher