

HUDSON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

February 9, 1998

Meeting w/Four Department Heads

1. **Call to Order** by Chairman Madison at 3:37 p.m.

2. **Attendance:**

Selectmen: E. Lorraine Madison, Rhona Charbonneau, Shawn N. Jasper, Ann Seabury, and Terry Stewart

Staff: Paul Sharon, Town Administrator; Priscilla Boisvert, Executive Assistant to the Selectmen; Richard Gendron, Chief of Police; Frank Carpentino, Fire Chief; Leo Lessard, Road Agent; Steve Malizia, Finance Director

3. **Discussion Items**

A. **Leo Lessard, Road Agent**

1) **Tentative work Schedule for Spring**

Leo said in the Spring, they are going to do Phase II of Glen Drive, about 3,000' of road, including sewer and drain work and they will do the entire length of Webster Street, which is just over a mile. They will also replace miscellaneous basins throughout the Town.

Selectman Charbonneau asked about the condition of the road base on Webster Street. Leo said it wasn't that good, but he will put rap over the asphalt and turns it in together, and that makes a good base. To make it a perfect road, it will cost \$1 million. The water table is very high there, so he will put in some under drains. The road should serve the Town well for at least 10 years before it will be resurfaced. It is important to keep the water down. They have already cleanup up the swales at the end of Webster by Garrison Farms. They cleared out the brush and sloped it so that the rain runs off instead of staying on the road. He said the road is much better than what it was and he did it for a lot less money than what the CIP indicated, which was \$1.5 million.

2) **Traffic Lights**

Leo said the problem with the lights isn't the Highway Department's fault; it's the Town Engineer's computer system. When the system goes haywire, Tim Lamper gets into the boxes and either sets them on automatic flash or re-computes them. Chairman Madison said the lights are a mess, so they will have to talk with Mike Gospodarek about them. Leo said Tim meets with Mike on a weekly basis so he can learn the software. Selectman Charbonneau asked if Mike was being hard-headed. Paul said Mike aware of the problem. Leo said Mike is trying to help, but he has got all of the software over here. Nashua must have the same system because they are all screwed up, too. Chairman Madison said she couldn't get out onto 102 the morning the lights were on flash because the traffic was backed up so far. Leo said that they have to call Rhode Island when the lights go crazy, for them to straighten out.

3) **Damage done during the December 23, 1997 Storm/ Damaged Truck**

Leo said that he has replaced the bull plow that was damaged when they hit a manhole, and the truck that was lost on January 8th has been replaced, which is also the one that started a lot of controversy. Last week, he talked with various Selectmen individually. He had assigned the new truck to one of his foremen, which some people had a problem with. In researching the records back to 1982, he found that all of the new trucks went to foremen and the trucks they had been using were passed along to the next person in line and the last one was used as either a lawn or sign truck. Chairman Madison said that was the practice because a truck gets less usage when a foreman drives it. Leo said that was correct, and that he didn't give it to a foreman to show favoritism. It is given to supervisors because the truck will last longer, getting four or five years of work out of it before it goes into the fleet. All of the other directors before him evidently used the same reasoning because that has been the pattern since 1982.

Selectman Charbonneau said the problem she had was that Leo had said the truck was purchased for the Mechanic and that it would stay at the garage. If it was going to go to a foreman, that fact should have been stated. Paul said the truck that the Mechanic uses does not leave, and that is what Leo was responding to the night it was discussed. Selectman Charbonneau said if the new truck was going to be used by someone else other than the Mechanic, it should have been stated that way. She, personally, doesn't care what he does with the truck, but when something is specifically stated, it should be adhered to. Paul said part of the problem is in the way Leo refers to the vehicle. Selectman Charbonneau said when something is stated, but isn't done, is where they get into trouble with the residents. Chairman Madison said the Board did get some complaints.

Leo said that brings up another issue--cronies. When Selectman Jasper gets a phone call from a resident who has a problem, he calls Leo to give

him the name of the resident. Leo then pays that person a call and it gets straightened out. On the other hand, he wasn't told who called Selectmen Charbonneau and Stewart. He felt that if the complainant wanted to remain anonymous, there probably wasn't any truth to the complaint, or else they wouldn't be shy about giving out their name. If this is allowed to happen once, it will continue to happen more and more often. If the name is revealed to him, maybe it will stop. This is something he cannot cope with, and it is just not right. People who make accusations should fend for themselves, just as he has to--and he didn't even know who his accuser is. Chairman Madison said he may never know because oftentimes they have to field calls from people who want to remain anonymous. Leo said that should be a good indication that what is being said shouldn't be accepted as fact, adding that if people can't give their names, they are not very big.

Selectman Jasper said there is axe that is trying to be ground here, and they all need to be very careful about they. They should all go to Leo with these things to avoid causing problems. Leo has done an excellent job for the Town of Hudson. When a truck is replaced in any department, it doesn't mean that that the new car is going into that exact spot. Vehicles get shuffled around in the fleet and that happens everywhere. He never assumed that the new truck that was being bought would be the one the Mechanic would use. Selectman Charbonneau said, at this point, she didn't give a damn where any of the truck go.

Chairman Madison said, at this point, it's moot, that whoever made the complaint to Selectmen Stewart and Charbonneau wanted to cause problems, but it has since gotten straightened out. Selectman Charbonneau said she has another problem she wants to address later on.

B. Richard Gendron, Chief of Police

1) Labor Relations

Chief Gendron said there has to be a better way to handle labor relations issues to make sure everyone's objectives are met. There are some things he wants to talk about, but didn't want to do it here. Chairman Madison said that if the Chief wanted to speak to the Board about personnel issues, it should be done in Nonpublic Session at one of their meetings.

2) Government Surplus Vehicles

Chief Gendron said that used army vehicles, big Blazers or big pickup trucks, are available for the cost of doing the paper transfer. It usually costs from \$1,000 to \$2,000 to refurbish them and they are good for emergency purposes. He said if they get any decent ones, he'd like to use them for road details, such as on Route 102. He understands that there are some Blazers available down in New Jersey, and Frank said that he'd like to get a pickup, as well, which would serve as a forestry, off-road vehicle, plus it would be an extra 4-wheel drive for the wintertime. Paul said Leo might be able to benefit from one, as well.

Chairman Madison asked if he was looking for a motion. He said no, that this was just an update to let them know what a great way this is to save money. Last year, they bought two smaller Blazers and they work out real well in snow storms. Donna Briggs, the DARE Officer and Paul Balukonis, School Resource Officer are each using one at the schools, but you don't really need a 4-wheel drive vehicle 365 days of the year. There is going to be a lot of detail work down by the Sagamore bridge eventually. Chairman Madison asked if the vehicles are parked at the schools all day. Chief Gendron said Donna goes from one school to another. Chairman Madison asked if there were a couple of cars for the school officers to use so the Blazers don't have to be tied up. The Chief said no. Paul uses the Blazer to check the surrounding streets for parking and once in awhile he will transport someone who is in custody to the Police Station instead of calling someone off the street. Each of the school officers need their own vehicle.

C. Frank Carpentino, Fire Chief

1) Emergency Apparatus Purchase Status

Chief Carpentino said the engine has been in service since the beginning of the month, and has already gotten a lot of use, including some pumping at the fire at 58 Robinson Pond Road.

2) Response '98 Exercise

Chief Carpentino said the Town's Emergency Management has committed to participate in this exercise, which is in April (22-24). If the Town wanted to be eligible for funding, they had to do certain things. They don't have to play for three days, but they have to take a role for the three days. They are looking at exercising the dive team, some type of exercise where a plane or school bus goes down into the waterways in Town. It will be different because no one else in the State is going to exercise a dive team. They are working on a scenario, but don't know how in depth they are going to get. If it's a plane, they will activate the EOC, but probably not if it's a bus.

3) Updated Fire Department Policy Manual

Frank said the updated, completely revised Fire Department Policy Manual came out about a month ago.

4) Robinson Road Fire Station Renovation Update

Chief Carpentino encouraged the Selectmen to go look at the amount and quality of work that has been done at this station with the new sheetrock, lights and ceiling tiles. The employees did a lot of work down there and saved the Town quite a bit of money. It was all done on a volunteer basis. They are in the process of doing a second patch on the roof to find out where the water is coming in. They patched where they thought it was, but it wasn't the right spot. The water may be coming in in another place and traveling. If the Town decided to replace the roof, there will be a recommendation to do a pitched roof instead of a flat one so the snow and water won't just sit there. It will cost \$12,000 to redo the flat room, but trusses are pretty reasonable, plus adding some plywood and shingles. Selectman Jasper said they, independently, came up with the same idea. The brick up there is ruining the whole building. He thinks trusses is the way to go.

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5) State Fire Code Warrant Article

For political purposes, he was advised that this was the way to go. It is the minimum standard they have to enforce.

6) IAFF Local #3154 Contract Negotiations

Chief Carpentino wanted to advise the Board that contract negotiations are opening up in April, and this is the first negotiations he will be involved in. He wanted to know how the Town goes about doing their negotiations, if he should meet with Paul first, or what. There are a lot of items he wants to address in the contract. Paul suggested that, for the next couple of contracts, it would be a good idea to have a parameter setting session between the Board, the department heads and him before meeting with Gary. There is a tendency to have Gary off doing one set of analysis and the department heads another and things get lost in the translation. The Board members thought that was a good idea.

7) Dispatch Staffing Problem/Part-Time Dispatcher Pay Scale/Possible Committee to look into Combined Dispatch Center

Chief Carpentino said they have a problem with part-time dispatchers in the Fire Department. They are down to four now. They have just completed advertising and testing for the third or fourth time since he has been here. It is time consuming and expensive. None of the current final seven have ever been a dispatcher before. They are bringing in people who have no concept of what they are doing, and are trying to train them in four or five weeks. Of the nine people that took the test, only one person was a prior dispatcher, and he did the worst on the test of everybody--and he's still a dispatcher in another community. And he didn't see this problem going away, so they have been looking at doing something with their pay scale, which has not changed since 1994. The people that are leaving aren't necessarily leaving because of the money, but if they bring up the pay a little bit, it may be an incentive for them to stay. People leave for various reasons, including not wanting to work weekends or nights. They put Patrick Carey on full time to work nights, so they part-timers don't have to work nights, unless they are filling in. They are told, however, up front what the days and hours are, but it is still a continuing problem. He knows that a combined dispatch center for the Town has been talked about in the past, and they will have to address it again. He has three full time dispatchers now and two of them are looking elsewhere. If they leave, he will be in a real world of hurt because he is looking at people with no experience being put on full time. He realizes that the figure of \$100,000 to move equipment was banded about last time. He feels, however, that it might be busy to leave the equipment where it is, in case the Police Department has to evacuate their building in case of a natural disaster, terrorism activity, or whatever, so they can fall back to an alternate site. If they have a big storm and have to deal with 200-300 calls, the second dispatch can provide backup, with two centers handling the calls.

Chairman Madison said when they looked at this before, it was the cost of new equipment that was so expensive, and there were many other big ticket items that the Town needed, they felt it wasn't feasible to spend money for combined dispatch at that time. Chief Carpentino said \$100,000 to move the equipment wasn't that unreasonable, but both agencies are having difficulty with dispatchers and it will be a continual problem. He didn't have a problem if the dispatch center moves to the Police Department, nor did he have a problem with hiring a dispatch supervisor and have a communications center. He sees this as an on-going headache, a management nightmare, and it is costing a lot of money to fill the slots. They are bringing fire fighters back to fill vacancies because they don't have enough dispatchers. There are five people, 2 part-timers and 3 full-timers, to cover all of the slots--earned time, sick time, training time, etc., and when you don't have someone, they are putting a full time trained certified fire fighter in dispatch, who doesn't do it on a routine basis, which causes some problems.

Chairman Madison said this is a growing town, getting larger each year and, if they go this route, she wanted to see a communications center, including public works, not a combined dispatch. Chief Carpentino said he was in agreement with her, saying that they already have a building that could be used and they have trained personnel in both the Fire and Police. Chairman Madison said in the planning, plan to expand to that.

Selectman Seabury asked if the Police Department has as much trouble with coverage as the Fire Department does. Chief Gendron said they are down to two part-timers and will have to hire two more; the pay scale is higher than the Fire Department's. It is tough to get someone to work late nights, so he needs a good amount of part-timers. Chief Carpentino said they are so short-handed, they have gone to 12-hour shifts on the weekends. When someone calls in sick and they can't fill the shift, they go down to two six-hour shifts. The other day, they used three dispatchers to fill one eight-hour shift because no one was available to cover it. It is becoming a complicated management problem.

Paul said the last time the study was done, there was a big difference of opinion in the concept, as well as how it would be put into place. He didn't think that schism existed any more because Frank has an entirely different attitude on the concept of joint dispatch. If it was looked at again, there would be a more serious effort to sharpen pencils and develop actual costs. There are some manpower savings that can be made--and should be made--which would offset the hardware investment. He thinks it needs to be looked at again as joint dispatch is being done everywhere. Frank said the community he just left is going to joint dispatch. The Police and Fire buildings are only 40' apart and, up until now, have had separate dispatch.

Selectman Charbonneau asked if other towns had problems keeping dispatchers. Chief Carpentino didn't know, but he will find out. Chief Gendron said sometimes dispatchers get bored if there isn't enough action coming in and that is a problem. Now that we are on 911, there should be two people in dispatch at all times because if someone is on a 911 call, that person can't be put on hold, even if a police car or fire truck calls in. In talking with his people, that's where the stress comes in. If they have to handle multiple emergency phone calls, you can feel the tension in the room. When they went through the exercise of possible joint dispatch, that factor was taken into consideration--at least two people in dispatch at all times. When the subject of moving the equipment was initiated, it got blown all out of proportion. It became astronomical!

Chairman Madison said there is different technology out there now, too. They don't need three separate dispatch areas. She asked if Chief Carpentino was looking for a motion from the Board. He said not necessarily today, but thinks there needs to be more discussion on this in the near future, if it is going to be incorporated into next year's budget. Chairman Madison said someone will have to come up with a couple proposals, if is going to appear in next year's budget. She thought it would be a good idea to see a copy of the last report and then it could be placed on a future agenda for the Board to decide how they want to handle it.

5. Other Business

A. Departmental Budgets

Chairman Madison said that in the future, after the Selectmen review the department heads' budgets and forward them to the Budget Committee, if an emergency arises and department heads need an appropriation, that request should be brought to the Selectmen for consideration to take it from Contingency; that's why it is there.

B. Department Heads need to write Letters to help sell their Warrant Articles

Selectman Jasper said the department heads need to do some work in selling their warrant articles, such as Letters to the Editor, or articles for the HLN. That hasn't happened in previous years, and Selectmen can't sell every one. The department heads need to help, too.

Chairman Madison asked each Selectman to write a letter to HLN for the March 6 edition, stating why they feel the Article dealing with the Water Commissioners should be defeated.

C. Highway Department

Chairman Madison recognized the Road Agent, who said he has heard it said that the braves are telling the chief what to do in his department, adding that he has a problem with that because he doesn't think that is true. Chairman Madison asked if this was something that should be done in Nonpublic. Leo said he wasn't going to mention any names, adding that he thinks he does a good job in telling the braves what to do, but they do work as a team. He didn't know where that rumor came from or how it got started. He has also been told that he doesn't blow his own horn often enough, adding that he's not that type of person. Last year, they did several projects, including St. John's, Rena sewer project,

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Stony, Boulder, Trigate, Glen Drive, and Rena and by the Highway Department doing it, they saved the Town \$1,160,172. In addition, he helps out by doing snow plowing himself, and as a salaried employee, he doesn't get over-time, and by doing that, he has saved the Town \$16,000. He said that was blowing his own horn, which he doesn't like to do, but those are the facts. He said that he considered that being part of the job and, if he was paid overtime, more would be added to that amount. He then reminded the Board of the Telegraph newspaper article that showed how much they do with the limited amount of equipment they have. Derry has 33 trucks to Hudson's 13. Chairman Madison said she understands that Nashua called him for advice on how to plow the city in a more economical manner. Leo said yes. Continuing, he said there was a problem brought to his attention about who he uses for welding. The record shows that last year, they paid New England Fabrication \$3,215; (Not discernable) Equipment, \$672; and Anger Welding \$3,600. RC Welding is either way over or they aren't interested in bidding on it.

Paul said no one's best interest is served by Leo doing anything else than getting the best price and best service, which is what he does. Leo agreed. Chairman Madison said all of this is new to her, that she hasn't heard any of it. Selectman Charbonneau said she asked if they went out to bid. Leo said he doesn't go out to bid for everything. Selectman Charbonneau said this was getting into a great bid deal. She didn't care who gets the bid; she just had asked the question if they go out to bid. She said she also asked how many were from Hudson. When she asked, she wasn't accusing Leo of anything, adding that he was getting to her. Leo responded by saying he didn't say she accused him of anything. Chairman Madison reminded them this was a public meeting. Leo said if anyone has a problem with what he does, it should be aired now. He was there to do his job.

Chairman Madison said with all of the money Leo has saved for the Town, they have a free ride on his salary. He has saved the Town a tremendous amount of money. Selectman Charbonneau said she, too, has told him he has done an excellent job.

Selectman Stewart asked if the Town provides subcontractors with plows for their trucks. Leo said they did for one; It's an extra plow that's not in real good shape, and the subcontractor takes a cut in pay for the use of it. Chairman Madison thought that was reasonable.

D. Police Department's Trade-In Vehicles

Chief Gendron said tomorrow night he has an item on the agenda concerning nine trade-in vehicles, which he has been quoted \$27,000. He has enough money in his line item to buy six vehicles instead of five, if he uses the nine vehicles as trade-in. Chairman Madison asked how many vehicles he originally requested. Chief Gendron said he requested six and got five, adding that it is tough to run a department with 13 vehicles, which includes the two Blazers. Vehicles are often broken down or used for training purposes or in court. It is a constant shuffle and they often have to use Paul's car. If he only gets five cars this year, he will take repaint a two-tone blue Blazer a solid color and give it to the detectives, and then figure out something to do for the school officers. Chairman Madison thought when the new white cruisers were bought, there would be no repainting old ones. Chief Gendron said then the detectives will be driving around in two-tone blue vehicles instead of an unmarked car. They are using a car now that has close to 100,000 miles.

Selectman Jasper asked how long it has been since they increased the size of the fleet. Chief Gendron said they've been at 13 since Bill Blake was here. He reduced the number of unmarked units to three and increased the marked units because they can't function with what he has. Selectman Jasper asked how many people have been added to the department in that time. Chief Gendron said he'd have to look it up, but they just added three to the roster. There are some days when there are no cars available. The budget will handle this. Selectman Jasper thought they should approve the Chief's request.

Chairman Madison didn't have a problem with allowing him the extra car, but she has a problem with how it was handled before the Budget Committee. He should have let them know that the sixth car was not going to cost anything. Selectman Jasper said they are talking about two different budget years. (Talking over each other.) Chief Gendron said this has nothing to do with the Budget Committee. Chairman Madison recapped by saying the Budget Committee approved five, but there was really enough money in the budget to buy six because of the trade-in. Chief Gendron said that was correct and, even with that, there will be \$2,000 left in the account. He said Nashua Ford was giving them a *great* deal on six Crown Vic's. Selectman Charbonneau said (not discernable) got a brand new 1997 Crown Vic for \$16,000. Chief Gendron said that can't be possible, that it sounds like a sound and dance. Selectman Charbonneau told him to check with Milford Motors. Chairman Madison asked the Chief to call and check on it.

Chief Gendron said a lot of people in Town respect both staff and the Selectmen because they finally have a group of people working together as a team. He understands the frustration because staff is trying to do a good job to make the Selectmen look good. But there is always someone 'out there' who likes to put up stumbling blocks and cause problems. He has problems in his department, too. If he has an employee who goes behind his back to someone on the Board, he needs to confront that individual because they do make enemies along the way. They make decisions that no everyone is happy with, but he will never do anything that will jeopardize the integrity of the department or himself. He didn't know what the previous discussion was all about, but sometimes there are people who work behind the scenes, making trouble; he has caught a few of his own. He hated to see things like this, saying they have to work together as a team. He works with Frank, Leo and Steve and it is the best team he has seen so far. With any one of them, if you want something, you have got it right away. He's never experienced that high level cooperation in the past. And with the Board, he doesn't see the friction that was present years ago. The present atmosphere is refreshing and he hates to see that jeopardized because of minor issues that can be easily rectified.

Chairman Madison thanked him, saying she understood what he was saying, and that everyone does get along well. Everyone knows that there are people out there who like to cause problems, but they do have to look into it when they are brought to their attention. Chief Gendron said he has one of the best policies for citizen complaints. If someone has a problem, they are directed to the Chief of Police first, but it's different if it's an employee. That can undermine a department head's authority.

E. Fire at 58 Robinson Pond Road

Chief Carpentino said he received a preliminary report from the investigation team because of the two injuries that were sustained in the fire. A Lieutenant sustained first and second degree burns to both arms and his neck and another firefighter suffered from smoke inhalation, dehydration and heat exhaustion. There are a number of reasons for this that he would like to discuss with the Board in Nonpublic Session. This fire, the second one in 14 months at this location, was allowed to go from one to three hours before the Fire Department was called. The gear that was worn by the burn victim has been sent to the company that manufactured it. When he talked to Paul about it Thursday morning, he felt it led to other issues that will be to be addressed with the Board in a workshop. He said it will be a lengthy Nonpublic Session, with a lot of items.

F. Release of Legal Opinion concerning Animal Shelter Trustees

Motion by Selectman Jasper, seconded by Selectman Seabury, to release the legal opinion relative to the Animal Trustee Warrant Article be

released to John Knowles, as he requested, carried unanimously.

6. Adjournment

Motion by Selectman Jasper, seconded by Selectman Stewart, to adjourn at 4:55 p.m. carried unanimously.

Recorded and Transcribed by Priscilla Boisvert

Executive Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

HUDSON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

E. Lorraine Madison, Chairman

Rhona Charbonneau

Shawn N. Jasper

Ann Seabury

Terry Stewart