

TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH, MA
Public Safety Communication Committee (PSCC)
MINUTES – Thursday, September 3, 2015 at 7 PM at Town Hall

1. The meeting convened at 7:05 PM at Town Hall, Hilberg & Morse Rooms. Present: Chairman Malcolm Reid, members, John Rosamond, George Elenbaas, Frank Hubley, Jeanne Steele Kangas and Eric Wong. Absent: Member Maria Neyland, who had a School Committee meeting. Also present: Police Chief Warren Ryder and Lt. Warren O'Brien, Fire Chief Randy White, Selectman Jim Gorman, and neighborhood residents Emily and Frank Coolidge, and Jim Bacharach.
2. Jeanne Steele Kangas agreed to serve again as Clerk. The Minutes of the July 24, 2015 meeting were approved.
3. Feedback from the abutting neighbor's meeting on August 2nd was presented by John Rosamond and George Elenbaas. Removal of the present light on the pole at the Museum was agreed by all who attended the meeting. Five families were represented, plus one who had met earlier. There was no consistent preference regarding where an antenna should be located, but no one wanted to see it from their residence. The reduction of height from the 65 ft. proposal to 45 ft. was much appreciated; but a general lack of trust in the public safety proponents was stated, and all were concerned that a 45 ft. antenna would become a 65 ft. one later on, a "bait and switch" proposal. Chief Ryder noted that if we wanted the 45' pole to go higher, we'd have to go to the Zoning Board of Appeals and seek a variance. That could be a very 'iffy' task, and even if granted, some residents would likely appeal to the Courts – making that an unattractive option. Several location suggestions were posed by the neighbors: put an antenna in a cupola atop the building, like the original one that was an attractive architectural feature there, or put it on Pole #2-1X that's on the North side of Middle Road between it and the Museum. No abutting neighbor objected to that location. Also: Neighbors felt there hasn't been enough due diligence as to other possible sites, such as Windermere or Liberty Fields. They communicated that we should look at the technology, cost, and coverage and do a cost/benefit of coverage.

The Chiefs stated they had done due diligence; and that preliminary findings were that other sites were not as good as the Middle Road site. Ryder stated that they were looking for the best solution, aesthetics, cost and effectiveness of coverage. George emphasized that we were there to listen to the neighbors, and that a propagation study of the 45 ft. antenna should be done.

Agenda item 7, Cost/budget review, was taken up at this point. Chiefs Ryder and White presented three handouts showing propagation studies by vendor

Ross Baruzzini all focused on the Middle Road site, showing the Talk-Out Radio coverage of VHF Police and UHF Fire portable outdoor radio with a 30 and a 35 ft. antenna; and the Talk-In Radio coverage with a 90 ft. antenna on Hager Hill, at 30 ft. one at Middle Road, and a 90 ft. one at Swanson Road. "Talk-Out" means 50 watts of talk going out into the receiver. George stated that if we were to look at other sites with similar data we would be doing due diligence, and we don't have that now. Ryder added that LELD will put the fiber optic in and charge us for splicing, about \$56K.

Chief Ryder presented the fourth handout, titled "Public Safety Communications Upgrades, Phase 1 Digital Upgrade-Capible (sic) System - Budget". It shows the estimated cost of upgrading the communications system at the Middle Road, Hager, and Swanson sites, and the Dispatch/PD upgrade, plus the Consultant and Licensing costs. The "Actual/Final Balance" is stated to be \$422,958.20. The Police Digital Equipment estimated costs are stated to be \$76,008.28. The Chiefs emphasized that any other location than the Middle Road site will cost more, probably much more, and will take much more time to complete and implement; and getting this done as timely as reasonably possible is important.

4. Feedback from the July 29th Historical Society Board meeting was presented by Jeanne Steele Kangas. The Board went outside and viewed the site, meeting with Chief Ryder who presented the then-current status of the antenna investigations. Jeanne stated that she perceived there was general approval of the benefits to the Museum of having the communications there, and not a lot of concern about an antenna at the Northwest corner of the parking lot. Removal of the present brown utility pole and light was a benefit. Chief Ryder echoed that perception.

5. Alternative locations were discussed. Frank Hubley stated that the Windermere site, which would have a 45 or 50 foot pole, has FAA problems as it's near the airport. Liberty Fields would need a very large monopole maybe 100' tall, which is the maximum under our Zoning Bylaws; and it would cost about 2 ½ times more than the Middle Road site for the steel pole, the excavation of soil, the erection of the pole, and the cost, in rough estimate, would be \$75K for the monopole and another \$75K for the equipment and shelter and fencing. One like those Fitchburg line railroad ones would cost about \$25K, Frank estimated. George Elenbaas noted that we'd have to pay that \$75K for the equipment for any site. Frank added that we'd still have to pay for a second new site with a Liberty Fields pole, and that would increase our costs. Jeanne noted that with a 100' monopole, many more abutting neighbors would be affected, along both Liberty Square Road and Hill Road, including the apartments there, and wondered how to get a good idea of how visible such a pole would be. Looking at the large map, we noted there is a loss of about 80' between the Liberty Fields

site and the Middle Road site. The Committee felt two more propagation studies, one showing a 100' pole at Liberty Fields and one showing a 45' pole at Middle Road are needed. Chief Ryder stated the cost would be about \$1,000.

Citizens present were asked their views on all this. Abutting neighbor Jim Bacharach observed that we should look at communications coverage by each site, and there would always be some residents who wouldn't have good or any coverage. He opined that the residents who voted that \$400K at Town Meeting two years ago undoubtedly had no idea that even after that expense, their homes or businesses would not be covered. What would it cost to get most residents covered, he asked. We should consider that. The Selectman charged the PSCC with balancing the interests and the cost. We don't get 100% coverage because we don't have enough money?

Selectman Jim Gorman stated that public safety is balancing the risks and the costs. If we were to meet all the National Fire Protection Agency's (NFPA) criteria, it would triple the Fire Department budget. To be 100% free of liability no matter what costs a lot of money. To obtain cost estimates of all possible sites and to get 100% reliability and coverage would not be reasonable and seems unnecessary. John Rosamond stated that we do have some expertise on this Committee. People can disagree with our data, he said, but it's our own data. Chief Ryder wondered if the residents would vote another \$100,000 to get more data. Jim Gorman stated that the Selectmen will be meeting on September 14 and 28. George asked for a propagation study of a 45' pole on both frequencies at the Middle Road site. Chief Ryder said he could have that done.

6. The two-page document, "PSCC: Antenna Structure Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Draft" that Eric Wong presented was discussed. He had received several edits from members already, and several more were discussed. He tried to make it clear, concise and not too technical, he said. Eric will finalize the FAQ for the Town's website.

7. What is needed before we can issue a recommendation to the Selectman, and who will do what over the next two weeks, asked Chairman Reid. First, having another propagation study of a 45' pole at Middle Road for both UHF and VHF was felt necessary, and secondly, the Windermere site and a 100' monopole at Liberty Fields as a transmit site should be done, to see what reception a hand-held receiver could get from that site and height. Chief Ryder stated that the second study would put us over budget and a Reserve Fund transfer would be needed. After 3 years of studies and 5 years of efforts to improve our public safety communications systems do we really need to consider two more sites? Jeanne Steele Kangas again noted that a 100' monopole at Liberty Fields would affect and involve many more residents in yet another neighborhood. George stated that a Windermere site would have a 45' pole; Jeanne asked if that site is Conservation land, it is protected and thus a quagmire

to attempt using it for this purpose; but it was believed by several to consist of some municipal land, and that the access road might be public, and not just a driveway. Mac Reid asked if we are doing our due diligence, and is there a real alternative to the Middle Road site. Do we want to do more investigation, he asked. George Elenbaas then moved that the Committee do more investigation, Jeanne Steele Kangas seconded, and it was VOTED unanimously.

At this point, the undated letter that member Maria Nyland wrote to Chairman Reid was reviewed, in which she stated sorrow that attending the School Committee meeting to which she was elected took priority over our meeting; and that IF the mock up pole at the Middle Road site is accurate or there are minor changes, she would be comfortable with recommending a pole somewhere at that site; but if the actual pole would be substantially different, and the Committee votes to obtain more information, she would strongly ask that the cost be less than \$1,000. She also urged that PSCC put a short time limit on making its recommendation.

John Rosamond then moved that we obtain a propagation study of a 45' pole at the Middle Road site, seconded by Jeanne Steele Kangas. The Motion was VOTED unanimously.

George asked what is the best estimate of the cost to construct a 100' monopole at Liberty Fields; and Frank Hubley stated he could get that done next week, noting that the Town does have 200 amp service there, that the underground circuit there would be good, and we might go 25' into the woods with the pole. IF it's on Town property, it would have to be at least 100' from the boundary line. Chief Randy White asked that the cost estimate include the engineering costs and 'prevailing labor' rates. John Rosamond moved and George Elenbaas seconded the Motion to have Frank prepare such an estimate of cost, and it was VOTED unanimously.

Visitor Jim Bacharach asked what about that 2-1X pole as a possibility. Chief Ryder stated that if the pole has utility on it, we cant' use it. Frank said he thinks that the electric service to the Museum is on that pole, and a line would have to go underground to the building, for both security and aesthetic reasons. Dig Safe would have to be called to see if we could go underground. George volunteered to contact Dig Safe and will get the elevation of that pole.

8. Next meeting date: Decided to meet at 8 AM on Wednesday, September 9th at Town Hall. The Meeting adjourned at about 9:50 PM.

Jeanne Steele Kangas , Clerk Pro tem.