

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2024

Present: Doon Hinderyckx, Frank Severy (zoom), Pat Harvey

Guests Present: Kristen LaPell, Julie Smith, Terry Severy, Rob Gardner, Nancy Woolley, Lois Bond, Orca Media, Jeff Gephart, Matt Parrish, Bruce Hyde

Guests Present on Zoom: Orca, Martha Slater, Troy LaPell, Daniel Sargeant

Doon called the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Doon confirmed the open meeting law conformity.

Doon moved to approve the December 21, 2023, meeting minutes. Doon wasn't present and Frank wanted to look over the minutes, therefore they were tabled until the next SB minutes.

Approve Town of Rochester Fee Schedule: Doon shared the fee schedule was discussed in Budget and Finance for the past few years noting they may need some updates. In comparison to other surrounding towns, the current fees in Rochester were much lower. Some of the fees are set by state statute but the zoning fees could certainly be raised. After discussion and review, there were a few fees in municipal water/sewer hookup for residential and commercial that needed to be confirmed. Doon moved to table the approval to a later board meeting in hopes to have ready for July 1, 2024, deadline.

Regional Coordinator Discussion: At the last selectboard meeting there was discussion about several towns deciding to share in the position of a regional coordinator overseen by Two Rivers. The costs for the Town of Rochester were proposed and after hearing that several towns backed out, the board decided to wait and not participate at this time and perhaps would reconsider at a future time when more surrounding towns participated. The towns that backed out would increase Rochester's share from \$10,174 to \$19,085.00. Jeff Gephart will still be the volunteer energy coordinator for the town.

Emergency Services Discussion: Doon asked to start a conversation to figure out where the three towns stand with Emergency Services. Doon asked both Dan and Matt if there was any conversation about joining and getting underneath one roof. Matt said he has spoken with Dan in previous weeks and the understanding is the State would like to see WRVA have the license vs starting a new entity to transport. Matt shared after attending Rochester's budget and finance meeting, he felt everyone on this side of the mountain come up with some plans for 2- and 5-year goals and work towards a transporting truck versus getting a truck and parking it somewhere. Dan shared the conversation he had with the state is they are pushing for larger entities rather than small volunteer organizations. Dan said from that conversation he felt the state didn't indicate they wanted WRVA to oversee the entire project. They preferred a larger entity to manage it. Bruce asked Matt when WRVA responds to an emergency, they have a paramedic on board and when Valley Rescue responds they have an EMT on board. Matt agreed and he shared

that its either and EMT with First Response. He asked if a paramedic responds with WRVA. Matt indicated they have a paramedic on each truck when they respond. Bruce said it was important because when you have someone critically ill, the paramedic can inject medical needs. Matt shared paramedics have a larger scope of practice. Bruce said with an EMT can stabilize. Matt shared they can do quite a bit outside pain management. EMT can identify heart attacks or stroke, but they just can't start pain management. Bruce shared that when critical care transfer is needed, they can meet to switch. Matt said in the 16 towns they have 4 trucks to staff and 3 could be out at the same time. Matt shared that Valley Rescue is an A level service, which means they can start some care. Matt shared their coverage from Brookfield to Sharon servicing over 550 square miles. Doon said our desire here is to have the optimal protection for people in our town and neighboring towns. Matt shared the past Valley Rescue ended in 2014. He said that was volunteer based with a full-time administrator and then they hired part time drivers and eventually full time. The costs increased because of the service. Pat asked about other towns who have fast squads within their fire departments. Matt said both Pittsfield and Stockbridge have licenses under WRVA. He said all their personnel are under WRVA for their licenses. Pat asked if the other towns should be doing the same within their fire departments. Matt indicated that is an option. He said in the last year he has been able to license first responders in any of our towns through the state if they are affiliated with WRVA. He said he could put first response in any of the towns they cover. In the past he said it was a problem because you had to join the fire department to be covered under their insurance and then you would have to take all the fire classes with it and the one who were interested in the medical side were not interested in the fire. He said they can teach the first responder course through WRVA. He said the biggest hurdle now is getting the right personnel toned out with the right town. He came up with the idea that if a town wanted to do it, they could sister with the fire department since all first responders would receive a pager and radio, personal protective equipment, and medical bag. He said each town could invest into that through the fire department and if it disbanded or the members got done the equipment would stay within that fire department. Pat asked if Pittsfield and Stockbridge would go to WRVA for additional training. Matt said not yet but it is the plan. He said if they are licensed under WRVA they have to certain guidelines they have to meet. Doon shared the concern for where this is going is the duplication of our efforts. He said we signed up with WRVA for a significant sum and then with Granville, the costs there are ramping up. Doon asked Dan if he had given it though or seeing in the future, folding in under WRVA to bring efficiency and give Valley Rescue support for what is going on in Granville. Dan said it would need more discussion for research for questions. Dan shared as a volunteer in EMS if there necessarily a place in WRVA for volunteer but there is a place in Valley Rescue and Granville fire for those volunteers. He said there always will be. He indicated they will not be able to pay someone to be on call. Dan said he doesn't see a duplication of efforts between the two services. He said they complement each other. He said living in a geographically difficult area has its challenges to ramp up the number of resources available to maintain the expected level of services. Doon said by joining WRVA it might help to ramp up the level of services and support. Doon said it's a conversation between WRVA and Valley Rescue to determine. Bruce said WRVA already does this with other towns. Matt said none of the other first response has a monetary reimbursement. Matt said they are volunteers and WRVA just supports them. Matt shared the volunteers attend trainings. Bruce said they don't have any mobility issues with their own ambulances. Matt said Stockbridge use their own vehicles and Pittsfield does have a first responder vehicle that respond just to have one place for equipment. WRVA does not have

anything to do with the equipment from the other towns. He said what disposable items used from the other towns, WRVA will just replace. Matt said it was important that the costs for each town be put back into their own towns by going through the fire departments with radios and such. Doon said that is how it could work with Granville since they are already teamed up their fire department. Matt said Granville has their own license so he wasn't sure how that interservice would work. Matt said he designed it for the towns that didn't have anything. Frank said this is a very informative discussion and good conversation to have. He was happy that other selectboard members attended. He wasn't sure if the fire department in Rochester was having this discussion and would need to discuss it with them. Rob said the project in Granville is already in motion. Rob asked Matt how it could benefit WRVA and how it could benefit Valley Rescue. He asked how to roll the two organizations together to save money. Matt said it's already been established on how to do that. He set up training and procedures for volunteers. He said ideally, it's all about the patient outcomes. He said it's all in timing and this valley needs first response in one sort or another. The discussion was initiated, as Matt shared when it appeared to him that everyone wasn't on the same page. Questions came to him about what the plans for Valley Rescue were. He suggested at Rochester Budget and Finance; the towns need to get together so there are same goals instead of two entities trying to do the same thing. Rob asked if he could wave a magic wand and what would he do, and Matt said have an ambulance in every town. Rob asked what it would look like from a professional standpoint, what would work well, putting the two together or working independently. Matt said it doesn't matter who the first response is, it's to have a good system and keep the system in place. Matt shared the questions he had, the goal of a transporting ambulance in two years is a good goal but in two years you may have the ambulance, but would you have the personnel to run it. This is the cycle of paying someone to run it or shut it down. Dan shared his feeling about two organizations versus one. He would like to have a service that is exclusive to the tri-town area. He feels it necessary to have an organization that is dedicated to the three towns to provide a level of service that we need. He feels if it is viable solution to have an ambulance, or another resource in our area we need to do it. Rob asked Dan if he felt his vote was to have two independent organizations rather than one. Dan was in favor of that. When Rob asked Matt the same question, Matt indicated he didn't think he could afford it. He said Valley Rescue shut down in the past because of it. Matt shared a call out sheet with the three towns combined, last year there was a call out count of 159 calls, including no transport calls as well. Matt shared the costs of the gross bill of \$77,000 and the percentage of return is \$44,600. He indicated it would be a little less with no transport included. After a long-ensued discussion, it was determined the two entities would need to sit down and share their thoughts for solution.

Highway Update: Frank indicated the town trucks are having breakdowns. The Ford 550 is having the same issues it has been. Cooter is reaching out to Ford for transmission issues. He is waiting to hear if they will honor a replacement even though the hours are over on that truck.

Grant Update: Lois submitted a grant through Urban Forestry to address the canopy on the park. They would like to have diverse species of trees in the park. She said they spoke with Coble Creek Nursery, and they have 7-8 earmarked for purchase with this grant. An arborist has reviewed the trees and indicated which of the trees in the park are unhealthy and need to be removed. Doon asked if several of the younger trees on the park are ailing because the root ball wasn't broken up during planting. Lois shared there could be one or two that may be the cause.

Nancy said it could also be where the trees came from. Lois said the trees planted from last year's grant are all doing very well. Frank did a great job taking care of them last summer. Lois said the grant is a one to one. The grant amount is \$5,000 so therefore the volunteer work will be \$5,000 in-kind work. Volunteers are welcome.

Meeting adjourned at 8:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Smith