

Town of Boscawen
Penacook Rescue Work Session - Final
Boscawen Municipal Complex
4th Floor Meeting Room
May 29, 2018 at 6:00pm

Selectmen Present: Mark Varney – Boscawen, Edward Cherian – Boscawen, Roger Sanborn – Boscawen, Ken Ross Raymond – Salisbury, Joseph Schmidl – Salisbury, Pete Ballou – Salisbury.

Administrators Present: Alan Hardy – Boscawen, Nicole Hoyt – Boscawen, Ken Folsom – Canterbury.

Fire Dept Members Present: Chief Ray Fisher – Boscawen, Mike Fisher – Boscawen, Tim Kenney – Boscawen, Lieutenant Scott Dow – Boscawen, Chief Bill MacDuffie – Salisbury, Captain William MacDuffie – Salisbury, Chief Guy Newbery – Canterbury.

Penacook Rescue Members Present: Chief Richard Oberman, Asst Chief Shawn Brechtel, Roy Fanjoy – Trustee, David Collins – Trustee.

Selectman Mark Varney called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Selectman Varney said the Town of Boscawen met with Penacook Rescue members Chief Oberman, Dave Collins, and Asst Chief Shawn Brechtel during the budget process. The purpose of that meeting was to figure out how to proceed with rescue services in the future. The 2018 increase presented by Penacook Rescue was substantial and they also showed that 2019 could see a significant increase in costs as well. Questions were raised at that meeting about how Penacook Rescue is being funded. Penacook Rescue and the Boscawen Selectmen felt it would be a good idea to meet with members in Salisbury and Canterbury to discuss the future.

Chief Richard Oberman said Penacook Rescue is currently staffing 24 hours a day. Staffing at a paramedic level equates to approximately \$430,000 per year in salaries. Operational overhead, ambulance replacements, and equipment upgrades are additional costs. Penacook Rescue doesn't receive reimbursement for their entire billing amounts. The percentage of reimbursement has been decreasing over the last few years with changes to Medicaid and Medicare. He thought it would be good to come together and brainstorm ideas.

Salisbury Selectman Joe Schmidl asked if Penacook Rescue has missed enough calls to warrant expanding staffing. Chief Oberman states they have missed some calls, but they are currently a part-time employer and don't have any full-time staff. Many staff members come from full-time jobs and sometimes get held over at those jobs. Penacook Rescue did expand their staff because they didn't have the volunteer staff to cover shifts.

Salisbury Selectman Ken Ross Raymond wanted to clarify that Penacook Rescue did hire more staff but not full-time staff. Chief Oberman said that is correct. Mr. Raymond asked if any other towns have full-time staff. Canterbury has one full-time on days. Mr. Raymond asked how many calls are being responded to annually by Penacook Rescue. Asst Chief Shawn Brechtel said for 2017, the total number of calls (including Fire & EMS responses) responded to by the area communities was: Town of Boscawen Fire Department responded to 181 calls, the Town of Canterbury responded to 372, Salisbury was 166, and Webster was 200. Penacook Rescue responded to 887 calls which included calls in Boscawen, Canterbury, Salisbury and other mutual aid area responses. Penacook Rescue also does mutual aid for Concord and Franklin. Mr. Brechtel said Penacook Rescue only staffed paid people because they couldn't

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cover the call volume with volunteers. There are approximately 40 people who cover hours. They expanded the roster to fill in gaps because staff call out sick or go on vacation.

Dave Collins, Trustee, said 10 years ago they were only staffing per diem staff Monday through Friday from 7:00am to 5:00pm. Volunteers were paid nothing then they moved to a minimal stipend.

Roy Fanjoy, Trustee, said they have been losing volunteers. It isn't unique to this community. People are calling for the ambulance a lot more. There was a recent article in the Concord Monitor about ambulance service in Concord. They gave mutual aid 81 times and received mutual aid 51 times. Penacook Rescue went to Concord 41 of those times. He has been on the Board for 9 years now and when he first started he met with Roger Sanborn and the Board and told him that things were changing and that they were going to need to move to a full-time service. EMS is keeping the full-time and part-time fire departments in service because the calls keep increasing.

Canterbury Administrator Ken Folsom asked what the estimated increase might be for 2019. Chief Oberman said he didn't bring that information with him tonight because he thought the intent of the meeting was to figure out what the towns want. Penacook Rescue is trying to figure out if they want to continue to run an advanced life support service with 24/7 coverage. Chief Oberman would say yes, but that might not be what everyone else wants. Penacook Rescue has done what they can over the past 20 years to keep costs as low as possible. Mr. Folsom said that when Chief Newbery came to the Board with the increase and they had a lengthy discussion about it but still felt they are getting good service.

Selectman Edward Cherian said that it was a 30-40% increase projection for Boscawen. He thinks Penacook Rescue does a great job, but if it's voted down at Town Meeting that could be difficult for the town. He asked if there a way to make Penacook Rescue part of the three towns in order to keep the service, share the resources, etc. He also questioned whether we could work something out with the County as well. A lot of calls in Boscawen come to the County facilities.

Asst Chief Brechtel said that before Mr. Cherian was part of the Boscawen Board of Selectmen they started talking about increases. The Town of Boscawen wanted Penacook Rescue to drain down funds to offset the cost which they agreed to do with the caveat that they would need to return for more money. They have pushed out all their capital reserve funds in order to ease the burden on the town. They have two trucks that are 8 and 10 years old. They are due to be replaced and that isn't going to happen. The increased costs they presented last year was to make sure there was an ambulance to show up and had nothing to do with capital improvements. Selectmen Cherian said they may benefit from having something in place with numerous towns in order to start putting money away for that.

Salisbury Selectman Schmidl said it sounds like if there were four unified towns it could be less expensive. Chief Oberman said going to full-time staffing and adding benefits is going to cost more money. The benefit gained is more stability. You still need a reserve of per diem staff to cover when full-time staff is on a call.

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Selectman Varney said Tri-Town Ambulance services Pembroke and Allenstown. Chief Oberman said each town pays approximately \$300,000 for that service. They can guarantee paramedic level service and 24hr coverage. They are entitled to group one retirement provided they meet the minimum hours.

Salisbury Selectman Pete Ballou said their population is getting older. He would like to get the County involved, but if they won't maybe numerous towns can come together. Asst Chief Brechtel said they are not opposed to regionalizing EMS services. Penacock Rescue already services multiple towns. They provide an array of services to meet the needs of the towns. Penacock Rescue determines cost based on population. They used to do a percentage of call volume. Chief Oberman is willing to present costs to the towns if they want their service. A comment was made that Salisbury has had minimal fire calls and maybe they need to start focusing on providing EMS services.

Selectman Varney said he can speak for Boscawen that we'd love to have Advanced Life Support service 24/7 and there are large costs associated with that. Chief Oberman said the standard of care is ALS. Discussion ensued regarding call volume in surrounding towns.

A comment was made that there is no contract between Penacock Rescue and Canterbury and that may be something to consider going forward as the costs increase. Canterbury pays an EMT but doesn't see any reimbursement because reimbursement comes with transport. They still have the expense associated with that EMT position. They have a contract to train with Penacock Rescue and split the costs. It may be challenging to attract paramedics because they are in demand. It's a challenge for Chief Oberman to bring in 40 per diem staff members for training because he would have to pay them. All the towns need an EMS service and it's a big expense for the towns to purchase their own ambulance and staff it.

The towns will go back and see what their individual needs are and representatives will brainstorm ways to reduce overall costs and/or look into grants. Penacock Rescue will come back with a total cost for 24/7 ambulance service figures (BLS and ALS) and provide contract examples for the three towns. A suggestion for a five year plan from Penacock Rescue was made.

Dave Collins, Trustee, requested a generic timeline or deadline for discussions. Selectman Varney asked what other towns think would be a reasonable timeframe. It was suggested prior to budget time – July or August. No later than September 1st.

Chief Ray Fisher asked if Salisbury currently contributes to Penacock Rescue. They do not currently.

Next work session will be **Tuesday, August 7, 2018 at 6:00pm.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Katie Phelps