

The **December Board of Selectman meeting** was a bit of a think again moment.

At the last meeting the board approved (4-1) a plan to charge each of the five towns that use Bow Dispatch exclusively on a fee for service basis. Towns are charged based upon their percent of use of the service. Selectman Judd voted against the new arrangement because of his belief that Bow should pay more because the town has the benefit of having a 24 hour presence at the Bow Police Station. FYI, Bow taxpayers pay the total cost of maintaining and repairing dispatch equipment and supervision of the dispatch staff is NOT included in the cost and thus entirely picked up by the Bow taxpayer. Mr. Judd motion would have the effect of having Bow taxpayers subsidized the other towns police departments cost He was afraid that if we increased charges other towns would drop out.

Since the board had settled the issue at its last meeting it was a surprise to see Merrimack County Sherriff Scott Hilliard on the agenda. At the meeting the Sheriff, Concord Police Chief and the Bow Police Chief presented information on the possible development of a regional dispatch service.

The Sheriff focused on the fact that he was talking with 3 of the towns that use Bow Dispatch. Their conversation focused on the Sheriff's office providing there dispatch service at a much lower rate then Bow. The County Sheriff uses an arbitrary figure of \$150,000 when it establishes its rate. The Sheriff's charges about \$1.50 per call while Concord and Bow's per call cost is \$9.30 and \$9.06 respectively.

Eric Anderson voiced concern that the County was not charging its true cost and said he would take the issue up with the County's legislative delegation.

After almost an hour and a half of discussion the presentation was concluded with an agreement to encourage the group to move forward with determining the feasibility of a regional dispatch. At this point Selectman Judd offered that he would ask for reconsideration of the previous vote to charge towns based upon their actual use of dispatch but he could not do so since he voted against the winning proposal. Selectman Crisp then moved to reconsider but neither Eric, Leon nor I second his motion so the motion died and we will charge towns based upon their use as voted at the prior board meeting.

The result of our vote may be that other towns shop around for a better dispatch deal and Bow residents would be left with a significant increase in the cost to Bow residents.

If that does come to pass the discussion will focus on should Bow (cost per call \$9.06) have its own dispatch service or should ask for the same deal (\$1.50 per call) other receive from the County Sheriff's office.

FOLLOW UP -- In the last month there was a subsequent meeting with the Sherriff, county commissioner, county administrator, Allenstown, Pembroke, Epsom, and Bow selectman, police chiefs and other town officials. At this meeting a decision was made to move forward on gathering data on the cost and logistics of one county wide dispatch center located within Merrimack County Sherriff's department. The report is expected within four months.

Select Boards January 15th meeting – The most important issue discussed and voted upon at this meeting was moving ahead on the plans to build a town water and sewer system.

I was personally surprised when I sat down for the meeting to find on my desk a proposal from Don Lane to spend almost a quarter of a million dollars on the next phase of building a water and sewer system for the River Road area of the Town of Bow. I was more surprised when a motion was made by Selectman Jack Crisp to approve the expenditure as proposed. The motion was seconded by Harry Judd. Leon Kennison recommended some changes to the proposal.

Selectman Anderson and I asked to delay any vote until we had time to read the entire multi page document including its graphs. That request went nowhere and a vote was taken on Selectman Crisp motion.

The motion passed on a 3-2 vote with Selectman Kennison voting yes.

Bow is now in the process of securing the necessary permits and contract documents and specification to actually go to bid on the water and sewer (not enough money to actually complete the sewer portion) project.

Given the talk about possible federal tax money being allocated for infrastructure projects I would have likely voted in favor of moving forward but I could not in good conscience with out reading and understanding what we were voting for. I also expressed concerned that the engineering firm chose to head the project (I am not aware that there was a competitive bid process used to determine which engineering firm would head the project) was currently named in a law suit by the town for a new bridge that is collapsing down in the industrial park area.

Upcoming Meetings -- We are scheduled to begin the process on building next years budget and to that end at the next board meeting we will have the Town Managers proposed budget. There after we will hold hearings with individual department heads concerning their proposed budget.

If you have any questions or concerns please let me know. As always if you know of anyone else who would be interested in receiving these emails please let me know.

Tom Keane, Selectman
715-1875