

Truro Board of Selectmen Joint Meeting with the Truro Fire Rescue Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – Thursday, March 13, 2014
Truro Town Hall, 6:00pm

Members Present: Jay Coburn-Chair, Breon Dunigan-Vice Chair, Jan Worthington-Clerk, Robert Weinstein and Paul Wisotzky

Others Present: Truro Fire and Rescue Advisory Committee (TFRAC) members: Bob Panesitti-Chair, Arthur Lisenby, Dan Silva, Jon Sawyer, Tom Roda, Jeff Robeirio and Ed Walker, Senior Consultant of Municipal Resources Inc.

Vice-Chair Dunigan called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Truro Fire and Rescue Advisory Committee and Municipal Resources, Inc. presentation of the Truro Fire and Rescue Department Final Analysis Report to the Board of Selectmen¹

Bob Panesitti thanked the members of TFRAC and the Board of Selectmen liaisons to the Ad-Hoc Committee. He explained the work that was accomplished by the Committee as well as their involvement with Ed Walker, of Municipal Resources, Inc. and the report recommendations that were being presented that evening.

Ed Walker, of Municipal Resources, Inc., presented the scope of the TFRAC Charge as determined by the Board of Selectmen. He explained the role of Municipal Resources, Inc. in conjunction with the Truro Fire and Rescue Advisory Committee. He explained that Municipal Resources conducted a comprehensive analysis and operational evaluation of the Truro Fire and Rescue Department as well as developed job descriptions based on the organizational analysis. The job descriptions entail both the skills needed for the positions and describe the roles and responsibilities for those particular positions. He added that MRI also looked into merger options and alternative service delivery options.

The report focused on the following areas: discovered areas of focus: Organizational Design, Job Descriptions-including Administrative roles, Facilities, Equipment and Capital Planning, Recruitment and Retention of Personnel, and Training and Certification of Personnel, Benchmarking and Comparative Analysis, Emergency Medical Services, Regional Options, Organizational Culture, and Fire Service Grants.

The top five challenges were identified: deciding on an acceptable level of risk, provide an enhanced level of fire protection to the community, recruitment and retention of sufficient personnel, enhanced training and certification of personnel, ensure that personnel are both firefighter and driver operator qualified.

MRI made 6 recommendations: refocus on providing fire protection to the community; immediately cease allowing untrained personnel to staff on a per diem basis; there should be a clear understanding of the community by the personnel; hire a fulltime Fire Chief and provide Executive assistance to the interim Chief to implement the recommendations immediately; proposed organization with 3 key areas-Fire Chief as the Management Director and Fire prevention Coordinator, Deputy Chief focused on training, and a Squad System consisting of Captains and per diem and call personnel; enhancing the training program and recruitment and retention of on-call members; formalize a program for automatic aid immediately.

Mr. Walker concluded that the Truro Fire and Rescue department numbers for on-call personnel are below what a fire service organization needs, there is an excellent apparatus set, and there is an excellent public facility. He thanked the Truro Fire and Rescue Advisory Committee for their hard work collaborating with MRI.

Coburn thanked the Committee and MRI for their report. Worthington thanked everyone for their hard work. Worthington asked about the recruitment emphasis being on fire personnel versus rescue personnel. Mr. Walker responded that the department should continue to have fire & rescue services but the emphasis needs to be on building firefighters in the department with an EMS skillset. Worthington asked about the town comparisons with respect to being true on-call departments like Truro in rural communities at the end of a peninsula. Mr. Walker responded that they kept the comparison towns within Massachusetts with a similar sized community and an on-call structure. Mr. Panesitti added that there is an issue keeping people and providing two more staff people 24/7 is not a solution. He added that the on-call list is dependent on the new Fire Chief's organizational structure. Coburn agreed that there are challenges retaining people and this is the first time that they have given the department the tools and resources to do the retention that it needs.

Worthington felt that the Health Insurance as an incentive was a great idea but asked if the financial implications have been looked into. Mr. Panesitti responded that specifically it hasn't been looked into but needs to be looked into in greater depth by the new Administration. Wisotzky stated that there was a suggestion with the report for a focus group. He commented further that the focus group could potentially provide the information to the Board of Selectmen regarding retaining people on the department.

Weinstein commented on the immediate need for an assistant for Chief Davis and what that would equate to financially. Mr. Walker noted that a person coming in to assist Chief Davis should not be transitioning to the Chief position for a variety of reasons. Mr. Panesitti stated that first there is money in the budget to hire an assistant for Chief Davis and begin the process to select a new Chief, and increase staffing by (2) 24/7. There was a brief discussion as to how many more people are needed per diem to make sure there is coverage of (2) people 24/7. Wisotzky thanked everyone for their hard work in providing a report with a roadmap for overseeing the department.

Weinstein stated that he didn't completely understand why the call personnel numbers were down but stated that it can't continue but didn't feel that the low numbers were based solely on demographics. Mr. Panesitti spoke to the morale issue within the department also playing a role along with a lack of an incentive and in part the demographics of the area.

Dan Silva, a member of TFRAC commented that there is no incentive to be on the Fire department which would help with attracting people to the department. Worthington suggested that camaraderie needs to be established within the divisions of per diem and Lower Cape Ambulance personnel. Mr. Panesitti commented that there does need to be an incentive and steps taken to move the department forward. He noted that they need to see what level exists within the department, what the deficiencies are, and what we want to do about it as well as to stay on top of the department. Dunigan suggested that they also look into offering of an incentive. Wisotzky felt that they need to ask pertinent questions to arise at the solution of what are the exact incentives.

Mr. Panesitti felt between the advertising and creating a search committee they could possibly have the new Fire Chief hired by the end of the year with real changes taking place in 12-18 months. Coburn

responded to Chief Davis' concern regarding his employment as Fire Chief and that the Board of Selectmen would be hiring a fulltime Chief but he would remain the interim Chief during the hiring process. Chief Davis responded that he hopes that he will be allowed to stay. Worthington added that she would be comfortable voting as long as Chief Davis remained part of the process. Tom Roda, of TFRAC, commented that the Town needs to do some immediately and now they have the tools to accomplish the recommendations. Mr. Panesitti added that the Town has to acknowledge what isn't getting done and fill that gap and move forward. Weinstein added that the Department is in a transition period and he emphasized that Chief Davis will be assisted and not replaced in the interim.

Weinstein made a motion to begin the process to secure the services of individual to act as an Executive Assistant to Chief Davis. Dunigan seconded the motion. Worthington asked what kind of background is required of the assistant. Mr. Walker explained that 100% of the job qualifications are falling on one individual (Chief Davis). He added that the Town is looking for an assistant that can provide the administrative function within the job description of the Fire Chief. Mr. Panesitti explained that the Board of Selectmen now have to choose a co-interim Chief. Worthington received confirmation that they were looking for someone that would work parttime and was not going to transition into the fulltime Fire Chief position. Jon Sawyer, committee member of TFRAC, suggested that the assistant should report directly to the Board of Selectmen and should be employed no longer than a year. Mr. Walker explained that the recommendation was to get the department to the point of being managed on a fulltime basis. Dunigan asked that the job description be split for clarity and no overlapping of duties and responsibilities. Mr. Walker suggested members of TFRAC could identify those duties for each position.

Wisotzky made a motion to hire an individual who will report directly to the Board of Selectmen to help implement the recommendations in the report. It was noted that there was a motion on the floor. The motion was withdrawn. **Coburn offered an amendment that the two Board of Selectmen representatives to TFRAC and the Chair work to bring back to the Board of Selectmen a specific job description for the Interim Fire Chief and the Executive Assistant and a suggested process for making that hire. Weinstein seconded the amendment to the motion. So voted unanimously 5-0.**

Wisotzky asked if they accept the recommendation for a fulltime Fire Chief and begin the process of looking for the fulltime Fire Chief. Mr. Panesitti added that there needs to be a budget implemented before the search and then a salary adjustment. **Wisotzky made a motion that the Board of Selectmen accept the recommendation and move to hire a fulltime Fire Chief for the Truro Fire and Rescue Department. Weinstein seconded the motion.** Dunigan added that it would be within the new job description as provided by Municipal Resources, Inc. **So voted unanimously, 5-0.** Mr. Panesitti stated that since they needed to vote on the Warrant Article for the two additional staff that vote could wait. Dunigan asked about the changes that were recommended for the current administrative position. Mr. Walker said that the recommendation was to separate the civilian position from being an active member of the department. He recommended that this be worked out with the Town Administrator to provide direction to the Fire Chief as to how the Board of Selectmen would like to do that as a part of the recommendation from the report. Mr. Panesitti commented that this would come later when the Executive Assistant was in place and will have no implications on the budget. Dunigan stated that she would bring Chief Davis up to speed on the discussion and it would be placed on the March 25th Agenda. It was agreed that TFRAC has completed their task according to the Charge.

Coburn asked for a motion to adjourn. Wisotzky so moved. Dunigan seconded the motion. So voted unanimously 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:53pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Tudor, Board of Selectmen Secretary

Jay Coburn, Chairman

Breon N. Dunigan, Vice-Chairman

Janet W. Worthington, Clerk

Robert Weinstein

Paul Wisotzky
Board of Selectmen
Town of Truro

¹ Municipal Resources, Inc., 120 Daniel Webster Highway Meredith, NH 03253-Final Report Fire Services Organizational Analysis of Truro Fire and Rescue March 2014