

Minutes of 6/25/18 Board of Selectmen's meeting with representatives from Blandford regarding Shared services.

John B. opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m. and explained they were here to discuss shared services. Not only with police but with whatever the two towns may be looking at. He expressed the desire to look into a little more professional town administrator. Currently P. Carlino has been with Chester for 4 years or so, but things are evolving. Blandford is thinking about a shared Building Inspector also. A. Myers also attended the meeting due to his involvement in the shared services initiative.

Started with discussion of Police. Chief Ilnick is in attendance. (see below)*

Chester is also looking for shared Town Administrator. Blandford would like to do things more digitally. JB explained about our accounting situation. Blandford reached out to PVPC for Interim administrator. Josh explained about accounting services through the regional procurement, and being a little too high for Chester. Blandford also turned down the first year. Bill Levakis asked about elected/appointed positions. Blandford also has same issues as Chester regarding passage at town meeting, but turned down at town elections. JB explained he thought people were aware of issues, and might have a better shot at the election. Accountability is needed. Discussion of Free Cash issues. Blandford had a good free cash figure due to clean up of old accounts. Also trying to work with Department Heads to create realistic budgets. They are starting to manage their overall financial picture.

JB explained our work process as far as budgets go, and having a good idea of where we stand.

*Kara explained their next step was to go to the public and let them know what they are thinking as far as the Police Department goes. Let them know the different thoughts that they are contemplating, find out what the public can accept. JB feels after speaking with Smitty Pignatelli, that this is something the State would endorse, maybe some start up monies available. Response is an important issue. JB stated that Chief Ilnick was by far the best, most organized chief that Chester had had. Rene agreed.

Dan explained how he feels the department should be run, hopefully with local officers. Unfortunately, there are not many that would meet the requirements his department would need. Dan give an overview of policies, etc. that he has instituted in Chester, which has made a big difference in Chester.

There would be much coordination between Police, Fire, Ambulance, State Police, Northampton Office, etc. Dan looking at all that coordination and what it would take. Would need to include Berkshire County also. Talk of expenses, records management and the location of the Police Chief in both towns, office hours, officer reporting, budgeting, etc. Road coverage about the same at 66 miles. Talk of difference in Police budgets., and how its delineated. Budgeting cruiser costs also.

Joshua suggested there is some DLTA monies available. which would help with applying for another pool of funding to help do an exploratory study using an outside consultant. It would help to compete for an E & R grant under best practice.

Kara informed the group that they are looking for what will happen at the end of the month, which is the time span for their interim chief. She would like to pursue the start of Dan's coming in as interim, Let him explore this concept more thoroughly. Bill seemed to feel maybe we should start the process of combining Blandford and Chester. More discussion of time, public discussion, possibly a multi town meeting? All agreed, why not? Andy pointed out the differences from "shared services" and "regional services". They are different, and that needs to be explored. The discussion then turned to Treasurer and Tax Collector services and the possibility of being able to offer someone a fulltime benefited position, which currently is not done. All agreed that the Hilltown Collaborative is a model for other entities and felt the State was heartedly behind these efforts.

Kara explained Blandford's current plan with Treas/Tax Collector? Finance Director. Barbara explained our current organization with 20 hour Administrator and 25 hr. Asst. Admin/Highway Asst. Also discussion of Assessors organization and how it works in each town.

After more discussion it was motioned and seconded to have their next meeting of the towns on Monday, July 23, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. at the Blandford town hall.

Move to adjourn. Seconded.

Recording Secretary. (as per recording)

Patricia Carlino

Chester Town Administrator

Barbara Huntoon, Vice Chairman

John Baldasaro, Chairman

Rene Senecal, Clerk