

**TOWN OF GUILFORD
EFFICIENCY TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JUNE 1, 2010
7:00 P.M. – GUILFORD TOWN HALL**

Present:

Task Force Members: Michael Dowley, Chairman Gary Gilbert, Jim Galvin,
Town Officials: Selectman Charles Havrda
Fire Department: Chief Charles Herrschaft, Assistant Chief Wayne Vetre
Fire Commissioners: William Dwyer, Barbara Hemming, Ken Wilson
Clerk Karen Quercia

Mr. Gilbert called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

1. 7:02 – 7:03 p.m. Approval of minutes of the May 18, 2010 meeting.

Motion: Upon a motion by Mr. Dowley, and seconded by Mr. Galvin, the Efficiency Task Force voted to approve the minutes of the May 18, 2010 meeting.

*Approve: Dowley, Galvin, Gilbert,
Oppose: None
Abstain: None*

2. 7:03 – 8:25 p.m. Discussion with Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief and Fire Commissioners.

Mr. Gilbert began by explaining the purpose of the Task Force. He explained that there were some members of the BOS who felt the Police and Fire Departments should not be interviewed by the Task Force since both departments had recently undergone individual studies. He went on to explain that the Task Force felt that there was information that both the Fire and Police Departments could provide about how their respective departments were run that could be shared with other departments in town.

Mr. Wilson explained that the Guilford Fire Department has been in existence since 1852, and was all volunteer until the 1990's when the ambulance service needed assistance responding to calls and so integrated paid members into the department.

He explained that there are three types of departments: all career; all volunteer; and a combination of both career and volunteer, which is the type that Guilford has. The addition of career manpower was needed to respond to the approximately 3400 calls the department receives each year. Some of the types of calls they respond to are: motor vehicle accidents, structure fires, car fires, and marine incidents. The department has a dive team and a Hazmat team. The department also provides mutual aid to other departments in the region.

Mr. Wilson distributed a copy of the Fire Department Organization Chart and explained that the Board of Fire Commissioners has oversight of the Fire Department. The Chief reports to the Commission, and always keeps the Commission in the loop. The Commission does not get involved in the day to day operations of the department, but they do provide assistance when needed.

The Chief and Assistant Chief are appointed by the Commission and oversee the day to day operations of the department. There are four divisions within the department: A, B, C, and D. Department members work a 42 hour week, a 24 hour shift on, three days off, and another 24 hour shift on.

The department has one administrative assistant who is the sole billing agent for all of the ambulance revenue. The department complies with all HIPPA and confidentiality regulations. The department has hit their target revenue two years in a row, generating \$850,000 annually, and is on target to meet their goal again this year. This revenue goes into the General Fund. The department also generates approximately \$2,000 annually from burning and blasting permits.

The Fire Assistant Chief for the volunteers is elected for a three year term by the volunteers. Four deputy chiefs are elected to represent their respective companies at the department level.

There are four fires stations in Town:

Washington Engine Co. 1, Graves Avenue
Eagle Hose Co. 2, Whitfield Street
FC Spencer Hook & Ladder Co. 3, Water Street
North Guilford Co. 4, Durham Road

The Town does not own the individual fire company buildings; the companies own them and maintain them with funds from their annual drive. The Town pays the utilities for the buildings, and owns the equipment. There are a few pieces of antique equipment such as a horse drawn cart, which are owned by the companies. There is a brush truck in active service, Unit 1-8-4, which was purchased by the volunteers.

Guilford is 17 miles long and covers 48 square miles, and the Fire Department prides itself on its response times, which are second to one. The Chief sets expectations for response times whether a call comes in during the day or night, and expects those expectations to be met.

The Fire Department shares custodial service, landscaping, and lawn care with the Police Department. The Fire Department also provides snowplowing service for the PD.

There are two employees of the Fire Department that seek out and apply for grants. This helps the department budget, as well as the taxpayers of Guilford. To date the department has received \$2,000,000 worth of grant funds. Assistant Chief Vetre saved the Town \$300,000 by obtaining a grant for new Scott air packs. The Department also received the SAFER grant for the eight new firefighters who were recently hired. A grant for digital camera equipment was just obtained by a department member. This equipment will be used for training purposes. The department tries to do its part to save the town money by pursuing grant opportunities.

The Task Force asked Assistant Chief Vetre if he would recommend the Town consider hiring a grant writer. Assistant Chief Vetre replied that it could be beneficial to have a person dedicated to doing the research and exploring opportunities for the different departments. Currently the Fire Department works independently to seek out grant funding, with the exception of obtaining budget figures from the Finance department, or getting a DUNS number. The Chief added that grants are highly specialized and the applicant needs to know the jargon and buzz words to use when filling out an application.

Mr. Galvin asked if the Department had ever been refused a grant. Assistant Chief Vetre replied that it took three years to get the grant for the air packs and four years to get the SAFER grant. The grant applicant needs to fit the criteria of the grant. Guilford's grants get to the final stages of the grant process, but often Guilford does not have as great a need as other towns due to the per capita income, or the age of a piece of apparatus, for example.

The Chief noted that the Assistant Chief is very vigilant and tenacious in pursuing grant opportunities. If Guilford is not awarded a grant, he follows up to find out why, and learns from each application. Guilford is unique in getting support from State representatives as well. Mr. Wilson pointed out that Guilford actively pursues grant opportunities and is seen as a progressive department because they try to stay current with technology and apparatus.

Mr. Wilson reviewed the hiring process. The Department hires both Firefighter/EMTs and Firefighter/Paramedics. It is critical to hire the right people with the right qualifications. An independent, specialized firm assists with the testing. The firm is excellent and the department has had a lot of quality candidates. All applicants must have Firefighter I, II and EMT or Paramedic licenses. They take a written test and professional oral boards (done by the independent firm) and then have oral interviews with the Commissioners. The candidates are presented by rating and rank.

By the time they are assessed by the Commissioners, the candidates have met all the necessary qualifications. The Commissioners generally ask 4-5 questions of each candidate. They are assessing personality and attitude to insure a good fit with the department.

The Human Resources department is only involved in the hiring process to the extent that they send out the letters to the candidates, informing them of a conditional offer (or not). During negotiations, the First Selectman designates a representative from the Town to sit in, usually the Town Attorney and Human Resources Director.

The Human Resources Director also distributes the pension summaries to the employees. This past year the summary was distributed six months early which created some problems.

The Fire Commission does the performance evaluations for the Chief and Assistant Chief. They consistently meet or exceed expectations.

The Assistant Chief does the performance evaluations for the Captains on the careers side of the department. They are done regularly on an annual basis, but if there are issues which need to be addressed, they are dealt with immediately. Disciplinary action is taken if necessary, and if a probationary period needs to be extended, it is. Evaluations and disciplinary actions are documented.

Mr. Dowley noted that performance evaluations are positive devices. He asked if there was a process by which the department sets objectives and goals. Responses are reviewed daily, and three hours of training is required daily. This is especially important because the paramedics do direct patient care. Every call is reviewed. There is a quality assurance person at the department level, and also at the sponsor hospital. No other organization is reviewed as much as the Fire Department.

The para-military nature of both the Fire and Police Departments separate them from other Town departments. Mr. Wilson stressed that The Fire Department is well managed and is the best along the shoreline if not in the State. The nature of their business requires them to be working and training all the time. The Chief and Assistant Chief have high expectations for all staff; career and volunteer.

The Chief noted that you cannot compare a public safety department to general government, nor apply the same standards. The Fire Department standards and policies have to be black and white. The work they do directly affects people's lives.

The Police and Fire Departments are excellent at sharing resources. They all know who they work for, - their respective commissions. Ms. Hemming stated that the Commission receives numerous letters from the public praising and thanking the Fire Department for their service. The Chief stated that his motto is "never say no" to a request from the public. If a resident asks them to get a cat out of a tree, they will try to. If someone has an emergency and needs the water shut off in the middle of the night, they will do that, too.

During the last storm, they pumped out 180 cellars in less than 24 hours. Some residents even stated that they were going to vote no for the budget, but changed their mind based on the service they received from the Fire Department.

Mr. Wilson stated the Department has a comprehensive duty manual. Every new hire receives one, and is required to read and abide by it. It includes a history of the department and the department's mission statement. It is a common sense approach duty manual.

Mr. Galvin asked about a line item in the budget for fire hydrant rental. The Chief explained that the Town pays approximately \$18.00 per hydrant. He also explained that the CT Water Company pays property taxes in Town.

Custodial services are shared with the Police Department. The fee is \$4800.00 annually. The career staff is also responsible for cleaning headquarters. All vehicle maintenance is done in house, except for major engine rebuilds or transmission rebuilds. Four firefighters are also licensed mechanics. The department cannot afford to have a vehicle out of service, which is why they do the maintenance themselves. This also helps keep maintenance costs low.

As regards Worker's Compensation, by contract the department does not have light duty, due to the expense of replacement costs. The department makes sure a First Report is always filed, and they understand the importance of a paper trail. Everyone agreed that accident prevention, just like fire prevention, is critical. Due to the high level of training, and consistent use of safety equipment, the Fire Department has a low level of claims.

Mr. Dwyer discussed Worker's Compensation Claims and the role of the insurance company. He described a claim involving an employee from another department who was injured when the proper equipment was not used. His opinion was that the insurance company did not respond to requests for treatment in a timely fashion. Mr. Galvin stated that an employee has the right to refuse to perform a task if the proper equipment is not provided. Mr. Havrda stated that issues of training and skill are also involved.

Mr. Dowley asked the Chief how Guilford's staffing compares with other comparable towns. Guilford is basically the same as Branford and East Haven. One key difference is that a large part of Guilford does not have hydrants. There are areas of town that have 10,000 square foot homes and no hydrants. This situation requires manpower, and the department is still not at the staffing level recommended by the MMA study.

Mr. Gilbert asked about IT opportunities that could create greater efficiencies such as improving the workload, increasing productivity and software enhancements.

Assistant Chief Vetre stated that the department is updating their mobile data to improve reporting from the field. The department is in the forefront of utilizing the technology that is out there, other towns are looking at what Guilford is doing. They do need some laptops. The more portable the technology is, the more efficient the department can be. The CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) system is geared to mobile data.

Mr. Gilbert asked about dispatch. The Chief stated that there is complete redundancy. The department handles approximately 5,000 911 calls per year. 98% of the calls are responded to within 30 seconds to 1 minute. A joint dispatch for police and fire would not work. There is a conflict between the two mindsets. The Fire department is an emergency medical dispatch, and the Police department is more administrative. The police department's dispatch is not big enough to handle the fire department. There is also a security component to having a separate dispatch that is not in a public area.

In response to a question regarding regionalizing a dispatch center, the Chief responded that a local touch is important. A regional dispatch center may not know the difference between *Beech* Road and *Beach* Road. There would be no per capita cost savings by moving to a regional dispatch system.

Mr. Havrda asked if there were any issues with the new Fire Headquarters. The Chief responded that the building is great. Mr. Havrda also asked about Yale Guilford. The facility has affected the volume of runs into New Haven.

The Task Force asked about infrastructure and roads in town. The Hubbard Road Bridge has improved response times by 3-4 minutes. A road connecting Route 77 and State Street would also be very beneficial. There are areas of North Guilford that are difficult to get to, such as Old Pent Road. There is a mutual aid agreement with Durham so that they are the first responders in that area. The Town could put in a process stone road with a gate for emergency vehicle access only, but the people on the street do not want to open the road up. The gate would be the biggest expense in extending the road.

Mr. Gilbert asked the Chief if there were any recommendations he would make to improve things with other departments. The Chief stated that he has no problems communicating with anyone. If he has a problem, he tries to first solve it at the department head level, or discusses it with the First Selectman.

The Efficiency Task Force thanked the representatives from the Department for their time and input.

3. 8:25 – 8:35 New Business

Mr. Gilbert reported that he presented the ETF preliminary report to the Board of Selectmen. There were two different newspaper articles about the report; each of the articles had a very different tone.

4. 8:35 – 8:45 New Business

Mr. Dowley reviewed the updated job description book which Mr. Goldblatt provided at the last meeting. He expressed disappointment that there was not much difference from the job description book that was provided in January. The Organization Chart that was used was the original one, not the one that was reviewed and agreed upon at a recent meeting with the First Selectman, Human Resources Director and In-House Counsel.

Mr. Dowley suggested that in order to facilitate the update of the job descriptions, each supervisor and individual who does the work review update the descriptions, and/or have the Commission who oversees a department review them.

Mr. Havrda agreed to act as liaison with the First Selectman to get this issue resolved. Mr. Dowley agreed to draft a memo outlining the unresolved issues with the Job Descriptions book. A copy of that memo is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Gilbert reported that he met with the First Selectman regarding the trash collection done by the Parks & Rec department. There are unresolved safety issues with the way the trash is currently collected. He would ask that the Finance Department provide the following:

- The fully burdened cost of the function (Mr. Maynard has provided hours, days, rate and employees)
- The cost to sub-contract the work
- Cost of a performance Bond for field damage

Mr. Gilbert would like guidance from the Board of Selectmen as to whether the issue should be pursued or dropped. The Task Force should be focusing in issues that are supported by the Board of Selectmen.

The Task Force agreed that the next meeting be a “catch-up” meeting to review their progress to date.

The Efficiency Task Force meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Quercia
Clerk

June 1, 2010
Report to Efficiency Task Force

Subject: Evaluation of Town Job Descriptions resubmitted to the ETF on May 18, 2010.

Little progress has been made since January.

- The primary organization chart used to organize the book of Job Descriptions submitted on May 18, was the color chart originally developed by HR in response to the ETF's request for a current Town-wide organization chart. Members of the ETF, the First Selectman, In-House Counsel, HR Director and others met in April (the 20th I believe) and after reviewing the HR color chart and a chart developed by the In-House Counsel, jointly agreed upon a more comprehensive chart. A draft of that chart, dated May 16, was submitted in the ETF's preliminary report to the BOS on May 17. It would have been more accurate to use the agreed upon comprehensive chart as the primary chart for the book of Job Description.
- 18 job titles (out of approximately 93) do not match the job titles on the departmental organization charts leaving the reader to guess which titles match.
- 13 of the job descriptions are not signed, dated and/or approved. They would be virtually useless if required for supporting rationale in a legal inquiry.
- While most all of the redundant or no longer applicable job descriptions were removed from the book, at least two of the job descriptions in the book do not show up on any of the organization charts.
- There are three job descriptions for Administrative Assistants in the Park and Recreation Department section but I noted only two AA's shown on the chart.
- The biggest concern and most difficult to determine are the number of job descriptions which may be inconsistent with the actual work being performed today. For example, the chart for Park and Recreation shows two receptionists reporting to an Administrative Assistant. However, I did not note in any of the three AA job descriptions specific supervisory responsibilities.
- 28 of the 93 job descriptions (30%) are 10 years old or older. A number of the management job descriptions were developed in the 80's. Reviewing the 28 would be a good place to start making certain the descriptions match the required job functions.

M. Dowley
ETF