

MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
Tuesday, July 26, 2011
7:06 p.m.

The meeting of the Board of Selectmen was held at 7:00 pm in the Sharon Town Hall with Selectman William Heitin, Selectman Walter Joe Roach and Town Administrator Benjamin Puritz

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Selectman Heitin said the Executive Session Minutes will be held.

- **VOTED:** (Roach/Heitin) Voted to approve the Regular Session Minutes of July 19, 2011.

APPROVAL OF POLICE DISPATCHER CONTRACT

- Town Administrator Puritz said this is a three year agreement starting in FY '12 with a 2% increase in FY '12 and a wage reopener for FY '13 and FY '14. There is a modest uniform allowance increase. In addition any dispatcher with perfect weekend attendance will earn one family leave day off per year.

- **VOTED:** (Roach/Heitin) Voted to approve the Police Dispatcher Contract from FY '12 – FY '14 as written

APPROVAL OF SMEA CONTRACT

Selectman Heitin said that this item will be held until next week's meeting.

The Board took a recess awaiting the arrival of Chairman Powell

- **Chairman Powell joined the meeting at 7:33 pm**

LANCE BENJAMINO: FIRE CHIEF FINALIST

Mr. Benjamino who is currently the Fire Chief in Middleborough said he is married with one child and lives in Hanson. He began his career in Randolph and was the Chief in Halifax. He became the Chief in Middleborough more than two years ago. He said has been both a paramedic and an EMT for over 20 years. In response to a question by Selectman Roach he discussed his involvement with call fireman. He said currently in Middleborough there are 14 call firefighters who work on box alarms. Mr. Benjamino said that he believes there is a place for call firefighters. However, he strongly believes that they need to be certified and trained because they face the same challenges as regular firefighters. He said in Middleborough it is difficult to utilize call firefighters because of the fact that Middleborough includes 72 square miles. He also discussed his involvement with regional call centers. He said he is on the Fire Science Advisory Board for Massasoit Community College which has just established a campus in Middleborough. He said training is expensive and they are hoping to be able to work with this new program for training. Mr. Benjamino discussed his grant writing experience which is extensive – in Halifax he obtained \$475,000 in grants for items such as a fire truck, a computerized EMS system and a regional grant with Plympton. In Middleborough he most recently obtained a \$2.2 million grant to staff the three fire stations and to develop a municipally run ambulance service that would offset the cost of the additional 16 firemen during the first two years of the grant. He said currently the Town and Firefighter Union are in an impasse as the Town wants concessions from the Firefighter Union in order to accept the grant. He also received a \$135,000 grant through the Executive Office of Public Safety to help fund staff. He said two of the stations are closed with one of them closed 100% of the time and the other 60% of the time. He also discussed his budgetary experience. Mr.

Benjamino also discussed his community involvement. Selectman Heitin asked Mr. Benjamino if he would accept the position if offered. Mr. Benjamino said the large grant he received has created much more controversy and negativity than he anticipated. He said if the Town accepted the grant he would see it through. He said however, it doesn't look like things are moving forward. The Town of Middleborough has to make a decision by August 6th regarding acceptance of the grant. However, the Town is thinking of asking for an extension. Selectman Roach asked Mr. Benjamino what he would do if the Sharon offers him the position and then the extension is granted. Mr. Benjamino said that once he made a commitment to Sharon he would follow through. He said he spoke to Homeland Security who is the grantor, and it is very unusual for them to give an extension. Chairman Powell asked Mr. Benjamino to speak about his firefighting experience and his command structure recommendations. He also asked him to speak about his current residency in Hanson. Mr. Benjamino said that he knows some of the Sharon firefighters and is confident that they could take control of a fire until he arrived. He said last year in Middleborough there were 124 structure fires. He said his home in Hanson is midpoint between Sharon and Middleborough time wise. He said his management style includes a progressive clearly defined discipline policy as well as a rewards policy. He said his management style is lead by example or "management by walking around" which means talking with the firefighters. He also believes in setting goals and vision then evaluates and adjust. He characterized this as performance management. He discussed his experience in collective bargaining. Mr. Benjamino said that even though he doesn't live in Middleborough he is very active in the community. Town Administrator Puritz asked Mr. Benjamino to elaborate on his staff evaluation process. He said that when he arrived in Middleborough there were no standard operating guidelines or procedures or uniform response directive Mr. Benjamino said he developed standard operating guidelines with input from the firefighters. He also developed with the assistance of the firefighters a uniform response directive. Mr. Benjamino said the annual Fire Department budget in Middleborough is \$2.55 million. There are 30 full-time firefighters and 14 call firefighters. He said he was recruited to move from Halifax to Middleborough and the position was better for his family benefit wise. He said he believes Sharon is a great fit for his management style.

- **VOTED:** (Powell/Heitin) Voted unanimously to move into Executive Session to discuss SMEA bargaining update, Real property – lease amendment HFY Administration Building and declare The discussion of these items in open session would be detrimental to the Town and at the end of Executive Session adjourn for the evening.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25p.m.

Powell: Aye
Roach: Aye
Heitin: Aye