

Thursday, March 24, 2011  
CIAB Meeting Minutes

Present at this meeting: Joel Favazza, Donald Fryklund, Roland Hadley, Janet Rice, Fire Chief Dench, Sander Schultz.

Mr. Hadley: Call to order at 6:35 p.m.

The CIAB: Unanimously approves the minutes for the March 1, 2011, meeting as amended.

Chief Dench from the Gloucester Fire Department returned to discuss the remainder of the Fire Department's requests

Mr. Hadley: Will the dispatch center upgrade be compatible with the proposed new combination station you requested with the Police Department?

Chief Dench: Yes, if the building is built within the next 3-5 years. If it takes 10 years to get a building, the console is going to be obsolete and not worth moving over.

The CIAB: What are you currently using?

Chief Dench: The current dispatch is from the 1970s. We have one old computer that is essentially useless due to its poor performance, we are in the process of upgrading the radios, and the remainder of the setup is a mess of wiring known as the "rats' nest" that no technicians are willing to work on.

To replace the current dispatch center with an adequate system will cost \$317,000. This price is quoted by AllCom.

Mr. Frkylund: Are there any other vendors?

Chief Dench: We inquired with several companies but AllCom was the only company to respond.

We currently use software called Firehouse and we would like to stick with them as we have existing maintenance contracts, etc.

Chief Dench introduced Sander Schultz, the EMS coordinator with the GFD, to the CIAB and asked him to elaborate on the current technological status of the GFD and how it needs to be upgraded.

Mr. Schultz: Currently, Firehouse sits on the city server and can be accessed by desktops at the fire stations. However, we are currently using a pen and paper dispatch protocol that severely limits our ability to track and/or analyze data.

Mr. Hadley: Will the use of Firehouse software with the proposed AllCom dispatch center be compatible with the police system?

Mr. Fryklund elaborated on the benefits of the entire city being networked together.

Mr. Schultz: There is often bridge software available that can link programs like Firehouse to other programs being utilized by other departments.

Chief Dench and Mr. Schultz explained the need for the city needs to move toward a regionalization of the 911 response effort that links at least all the emergency response departments in Gloucester, and if possible, Cape Ann.

Mr. Favazza: Would the move to a new joint facility with the GPD be a good time to convert to a regional dispatch?

Chief Dench: We have not yet formally discussed this idea with other communities and wouldn't want the construction to be contingent on the regional dispatch being enacted.

Ms. Rice: Would the proposed dispatch center be able to be utilized in a modern regional setting?

Mr. Schultz: Everything the GFD is asking for would work in such a setting.

Mr. Hadley: Let's move on to the request for two ambulances.

Mr. Fryklund: What are the advantages of having ambulances in the GFD?

Mr. Schultz: 911 EMS is an unprofitable business regardless of the community—so any private company utilized as the city's primary EMS would need to be compensated by the city.

Our current system is a fire department-based EMS. Our ambulance drivers are firefighters (dual role personnel). About 60% of calls to the GFD are EMS related, which translates to roughly 2200-2400 transport calls per year. We bill for service and get some money back. The revenue in 2010 was roughly \$975,000. Medicaid and Medicare are the primary bill recipients. Private insurance companies are billed at 220% of the Medicare billing rate. At bottom, if you look at all associated costs, the EMS service brings in about \$1mil and costs about \$1.6mil.

We have two dedicated ambulances in service at all times. It should only take three ambulances to maintain a service level of two ambulances but, because ours are in such bad shape, the GFD uses four. One ambulance is always staffed with paramedics and the second ambulance is staffed with paramedics about 50% of the time.

Our fleet is comprised of a 2009 International called "Big Red," custom built by the GFD, in great shape, and loved by the GFD; a 2002 International that is a piece of junk; a 1997 International that is in rough shape but is the 2nd most used ambulance by preference and reliability; and a 1993 Ford that is smaller than the others and handy as an extra ambulance and for events like Fiesta.

We use Beauport as the City's first backup and Lyons as the City's second backup when our ambulances are not available.

We are requesting two new ambulances so that we can get rid of the 2002 and 1997 Internationals. We would then have three good ambulances to maintain the 2 full time vehicles plus the 1993 Ford for extra capacity and special events.

Mr. Favazza: If companies like Beauport can turn a profit by doing various transports for dialysis, etc., and still provide the city with backup service, why doesn't the GFD increase its revenue to support new ambulances by getting in on the transport business—especially if you're going to keep the 1993 Ford?

Mr. Schultz: It is often talked about but might not be feasible.

Mr. Fryklund: In that case, why not just get one new ambulance and have Beauport and Lyons back you up more often?

Chief Dench: NIMS (National Incident Management System) regulations call for our departments to be able to handle our community. Additionally, during special events like Fiesta, everyone needs to be able to be coordinated from one command.

Ms. Rice: How much does each ambulance cost?

Mr. Schultz: \$250,000.

Mr. Fryklund: Is any grant money available?

Mr. Schultz: No.

Let me be clear, I want to be coming back every 5 years asking for one ambulance—but I can't do that unless we get back on track with two this year.

Mr. Hadley: Chief, you are also asking for a pumper truck. How do you prioritize these requests?

Chief Dench: Pumper > Ambulances > Dispatch Upgrade. However, I have more than enough pumpers currently with the outlying stations remaining closed—we have two functional pumpers from 2005, two dysfunctional pumpers (one from 1975, one from 1998), and a new one coming soon. As such, I suppose this year I want: Ambulance 1 > Pumper > Ambulance 2 > Dispatch Upgrade.

The CIAB agreed to hold its next meeting on Tuesday, March 29, 2011.

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.