

**Board of Selectmen Meeting  
Oak Bluffs Sailing Camp  
July 21, 2020**

Present: Chairman Jason Balboni, Selectmen, Gail Barmakian, Gregory Coogan, Brian Packish, Ryan Ruley.

Also present: Town Administrator Robert Whritenour

Meeting called to order at 5:05 pm

1. Approval of a Resident Homesite Refinance with Martha's Vineyard Savings Bank.

**Selectmen Coogan motioned to approve resident homesite refinance. Selectmen Ruley seconded. Vote was unanimous.**

2. Request for an Alteration of Premises. Holy Ghost Association.

**Selectmen Packish motioned to approve request for alteration of premises for the Portuguese Club. Selectmen Coogan seconded. Vote was unanimous.**

3. Workshop Session regarding Fire Department Structure.

Town Administrator Whritenour Presentation: Mr. Whritenour presented 3 scenarios for review for the command structure of the Fire-EMS Department.

**Scenario A.** Two separate departments with two separate Chiefs. A critical need would be the position of EMS Captain to be filled as well. This position is needed for all three scenarios.

Mr. Whritenour explained the need for the Fire and EMS to have integrated leadership to manage and administrate the following key issues for both departments:

- Training Coordination
- Development of Policies and Procedures
- Staffing and Management of Personnel
- Financial Management
  - Budgeting
  - Revenue Control
  - Expenditure Control
- Capital Planning
- Coordination of Public Information

Historically, there has been conflict between the two departments for resources and questions the ability for these integrated leadership functions be managed with separate leadership.

Cost: EMS Chief, full-time 110-130 K  
Fire Chief, full-time minimum 100K  
Fire-Chief, part-time 50K +

**Scenario B.** Combined Chief of the Departments, similar to what is in place now.

In order for the Chief job to function successfully, an EMS Captain is needed to run the day to day ambulance to keep Chief free for 'integrated leadership duties.'

This scenario would attract 'upper' level Fire Officer candidates and gives the Fire Dept. some autonomy but the department still falls under the Fire-EMS Chief.

**Scenario C.** Department director

Similar to B but may not attract the upper level candidates of the Fire Officer III. This scenario attempts to give more autonomy to the Fire Department, by having dual leadership to fire and EMS. The Director would not be doing day to day operations but overall management and provides separation, under one leadership.

Cost:	Public Safety Director	100-120K
	Police Chief Combination – a different mechanism would need to be in place	
	Fire-Chief – part-time	50-70K
	Need EMS Captain	80-90 K

*Overview of Island Towns organization:*

**Tisbury**, under Chief Schilling, has one chief system with an Ambulance Coordinator to run the daily administrative duties for EMS.

This Ambulance Coordinator position has evolved to a management role and to separate ambulance from the Fire side. This position is now almost on par with the Fire Chief, however there is disparity in pay, which has not kept pace with increased responsibilities.

**Edgartown**, under Chief Schafer, is moving to combine Firefighter and EMS duties for a full-time fire crew, supplemented with on-call firefighters. This is in response to callouts during the workday, which now the on-call would not respond to. Edgartown also has the resources to absorb the costs of a full-time firefighter department.

*The Board of Selectmen invited input from the attending members of the Fire-EMS department, Chief Blake and Chief Greene.*

Chief Blake spoke of the departments need to be separate and have the time to identify leadership roles and define the structure of the department. He continued that he is willing to operate as the Fire-EMS 'Director' to help the departments develop leadership from within and feels that he has the skills to deal with the administration of both departments: Capital improvement; union negotiations, budget control with the ambulance; funding mechanisms are skills he feels he has been successful with as Police Chief.

Chief Greene offered that the Town needs a full-time Fire-EMS Chief, and the qualifications of a Fire-Officer III are there to help the Town progress to the next level of fire administration, budget and day-to-day management.

He continued that Chief Schillings retirement was seamless due to a Deputy being in place years before he left, and they were not looking for a replacement on the day he left. The Chief needs to be a mentor and needs to delegate a representative to handle the issues they visit every day.

Paramedic and firefighter John Gonsalves commented that he understands the animosity that has happened in the past, but with the new staff in now, he can see both sides and can see it moving forward. He sees a need for a Fire Chief and Fire Prevention officer and EMS Captain. Full-time Deputy could include the fire prevention officer position.

Other comments from department staff revealed there was a general consensus of opinion in favor of combined leadership, succession planning and support for Lt Bradley with managing the transport program.

Re-occurring issue was coverage of fire calls during the day. EMTS cannot attend alarm calls while they are on EMS duty.

Selectmen Packish spoke that he supports the overarching administrative leadership with clear delineation between the departments. With the scenarios presented earlier, at this time he would be the most in favor of Scenario C.

Firefighter Allen DeBettencourt asked if there was a committee formed, Chairman Balboni, said that all deliberations and discussion on re-structure of the Fire-EMS would be done in open meeting with the BOS.

The BOS all agreed they found this input and discussion important to have with Fire-EMS staff and this will be continued to the next meeting on July 28.

**Selectmen Packish motioned to adjourn. Selectmen Coogan seconded. Vote was unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm.**

Submitted by:

Wendy Brough  
Assistant Town Administrator.