

APPROVED
WORK-SESSION MINUTES OF THE MILFORD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
July 17, 2019

PRESENT: Gary Daniels, Chairman Mark Bender, Town Administrator
Paul Dargie, Vice Chairman Tina Philbrick, Recording Secretary
Mike Putnam, Member Chris Gentry, Videographer
Laura Dudziak, Member
Chris Labonte, Member

Chairman Daniels called the work session to order at 5:30 p.m., introduced Board members and then led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. The purpose of this meeting is for the Board to discuss some high level questions regarding dispatch prior to the July 29th meeting that will include Board members from Wilton and Mont Vernon.

He referred the Board to questions he prepared and sent via e-mail. He would like to get those questions answered prior to the next meeting to be better prepared going into the meeting.

How does your town use MACC?

- Ambulance
- Fire
- Police
- We are thinking of using it for DPW and Water Utilities.

Selectman Putnam said DPW and Water Utilities go through MACC Base, the only thing they don't have is radio communications. The radios would be more of a town thing, not MACC Base. Chairman Daniels said he's looking to find the things that would need to be fixed in Milford; the other Towns would have no interest in Milford's Water Utility and DPW.

Does the current MACC service fulfill all your communication needs?

Chairman Daniels said the Police have a problem, is it more the equipment or dead zones that they can't get too? Selectman Putnam said a little of everything. Chairman Daniels said he thought through a memo from Jeff Marshall on the Fire Department that, they were also experiencing dead zones. Administrator Bender said the items that Jeff brought up were: downtown oval area in the building coverage, physical security and suitability that may relate more to the single site on Federal Hill, age and type of equipment, single points of failure and the inability to integrate into today's data infrastructure.

Mike Viola, Chief of Police said for clarification, they don't have a problem with their portables, it's more the infrastructure. Chairman Daniels said some officers said they can't talk from here to there. Chief Viola said they can't, but it isn't the portables, it's the antenna infrastructures. Their portables and systems in the vehicles are good. There was some discussion about why the portables should work. Craig Frye, Police Captain said the portables trying to get to MACC Base is the issue and sometimes the consoles in the vehicles have issues.

Chairman Daniels asked if Ambulance has any problems. Administrator Bender said no. Selectman Putnam said we should update all the equipment. Chairman Daniels said he doesn't want to fix just the equipment; he wants to fix the problems too. Selectman Labonte asked what the procedure was to let MACC Base know there's an issue. Selectman Putnam said they would notify Jason Johnson, the Director of MACC Base and he addresses it to the best of his ability. Chief Viola there isn't a procedure or protocol; they e-mail and notify him as needed. After they notify Jason, he makes the necessary calls. Our problems are dead spots and infrastructure that need to be fixed.

Selectman Dudziak said she thought we were hiring a consultant to answer all of these questions. Chairman Daniels said yes, some of the answers will come out with the consultant but we may be able to get a head start on answering the questions and maybe fixing them. Selectman Dudziak said she doesn't see how we answer these questions without a consultant. Selectman Putnam agrees. Chairman Daniels said it doesn't hurt to identify everyone's problems and figure out how much it will cost to fix our problem. Selectman Dudziak said the only thing she wants to know from the other towns is, are they willing to invest money to improve and upgrade the systems. The engineers can tell us how much it will cost.

Chairman Daniels said several figures have been thrown out and many reports have been written but he still doesn't know who owns what equipment and what it will cost for Milford and the other towns to fix their problems and what they will be willing to pay. Selectman Dudziak and Selectman Putnam both replied, that is what the engineer is for.

**APPROVED MINUTES OF BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORK-SESSION -
7/17/2019**

Chairman Daniels said we already have information from previous studies. The Milford stand-alone came back with a \$2,500,000 that should fix everything. Selectman Putnam said there was a \$1,500,000 number for the MACC Base fix. Selectman Labonte asked if anyone has ever done a comparison between the two numbers to see the difference of what's in there. Selectman Putnam said you can't really compare because two different companies are saying they can offer 95% coverage and one is cheaper. Selectman Labonte said one discussion included radios. Selectman Putnam said he doesn't remember that.

Chairman Daniels asked if the \$1,500,000 fix include new antennas to meet 95% coverage. Craig Frye said the \$1,700,000 number from Beltronics in January was a Milford only fix to include new antenna sites. Administrator Bender asked if it included full cost to include antennas actually built? He thought the actual construction cost wasn't included in that.

Jason Johnson, MACC Base Director said the number provide to MACC Base from Beltronics didn't include the suggested new towers. That would require an engineering study. The \$1,500,000 included the cost of installation and the physical device of the antennas, the towers were rounded numbers. Also not factored in were the lease space items. They were designed around 95% coverage for all towns except Lyndeborough at 91% or 92% because a portion in that town didn't have any homes there. Chairman Daniels asked what antenna sites are not owned by MACC Base. Jason said they don't own any of them, they lease some. Milford is ponied onto MACC Base's lease for Federal Hill.

Selectman Labonte clarified that in the \$1,500,000 or \$1,700,000, or whatever that proposal was there wasn't a hard number, but there is money in the proposal for the tower. Jason said yes, some of the towers would be leased sites and some would be built sites. Selectman Labonte clarified that the \$1,500,000 or \$1,700,000 isn't a Milford only fix; it's a MACC Base fix. Jason said yes, there were issues on how to fund it between the towns. We currently split it by population.

Chairman Daniels asked how the contract would be effected if you brought in another customer. Jason said it would take money off the top for each of the three member towns. It would lower the other town's rates. The original intention when we brought Lyndeborough in as a customer was to use that money specifically for infrastructure improvements. The end game after going to the individual Boards was to lower their cost.

Should MACC be a system (owning all equipment and infrastructure) or a service (owning the central equipment, with towns providing their own remote equipment and infrastructure)?

Selectman Putnam said that is something we would have to discuss with the three towns. Chairman Daniels said they will talk about it with the three Boards but he wants to know how our Board feels about it.

Selectman Labonte said it depends, for example if we keep it at MACC Base, all of the dispatch equipment up there would be its own system and the towers would be MACC Base or the Town's. Chairman Daniels said the towers would belong to the towns that use them for their communication. Selectman Labonte asked if we would only transmit on Milford only antennas. Chairman Daniels said Milford would have to get into an agreement to use the other town's antennas/towers.

Selectman Labonte asked if that would be an additional agreement other than the MACC Base agreement. Chairman Daniels said yes. He wants to get an idea of the needs of each town, where their problems are, and what would it cost them to fix their problems. Milford being the larger town will have the larger cost.

Selectman Labonte said some people may feel putting a repeater in a vehicle may be the fix, everyone looks at the fix differently and that fix could be less expensive than a whole system. Chairman Daniels said repeaters work for Mont Vernon because they only have two cruisers. It doesn't work for multiple vehicles. His understanding is that you start stepping all over each other. Not all fixes work for each town. Selectman Labonte said the consultant would be able to answer what each town needs for a fix.

Captain Frye said to clarify, the \$1,700,000 given to Beltronics, their first paragraph states, "the Town of Milford is seeking to obtain a new VHF wireless communications infrastructure for public safety and other public agencies within the surrounding communities. The initial information stage will serve to allow Milford Police, Fire, EMS and Town services to implement and improve radio coverage. This system is modular and expandable to provide coverage for additional communities should they wish to participate. This is for a Milford only fix, not regional. Jason said it as a

**APPROVED MINUTES OF BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORK-SESSION -
7/17/2019**

different quote. Captain Frye replied, it was the one we were given in January. Jason said this isn't the one that MACC Base brought back to the Town. Captain Frye said it's the one that Jared presented at the Deliberative session that they came up with in two days that they said they couldn't give to him, three months prior. Jason said the one he's working off from has a similar number and is about a year or two older than that one.

Chairman Daniels said if we have figures that are conflicting, we need to figure that out. Selectman Putnam repeated that is what the engineer is for. Chairman Daniels said what happens when they come in with a different figure than someone else has already given us a study. Selectman Putnam said we go by the engineers. We will have three quotes to look at and we will decide which quote will work for us.

Administrator Bender said that isn't a price for equipment, it's the cost for the consultant to do the analysis and lead us up to an RFP which will be the price of the equipment. Selectman Putnam said that is what he meant to say and thanked the Town Administrator for his clarification.

Chairman Daniels said he's hearing that we need to sit down and figure this out but we shouldn't be doing anything until the engineering comes back. People want us to start something now. We can't put it off for two or three months, then we will be behind. Selectman Putnam said we can talk to the other towns because we will only be going in there with half the information because we don't have number to work with.

Selectman Labonte said he feels we need to talk to the other towns because we've left them in the dark. All the conversations have been about a Milford only dispatch. He asked how many conversations were had with the other towns after we decided the possibility of a Milford only dispatch. Chairman Daniels said none, but he wants to put what's been done behind us. He doesn't want to get into a meeting with the other towns and say, we really can't talk about anything until the engineering study comes back. We can identify what the other towns are going through and what needs to fit together with a system.

Selectman Dudziak said, haven't we asked before what their problems were? She remembers a couple of meetings when she was first on the Board. Chairman Daniels said in the past we have but the answers have changed. At one time Wilton didn't have a problem, now they do. Mont Vernon fixed their problem with repeaters. Their primary interest is needing a signal to communicate. They would like to stay with MACC Base. Selectman Dudziak asked if there was willingness on their part to contribute financially to upgrading MACC Base. Chairman Daniels said that is one of the things we will talk about. The questions are, what are you willing to contribute to commonly used equipment in one location that all three towns use and you take care of your own infrastructure in your town or are you willing to contribute to a system to help all three towns.

Selectman Putnam said it isn't like the radio system shuts off at the Milford or other town lines. The antenna locations to benefit each town will be difficult to figure out. Chairman Daniels said it would still be good to have a figure to understand the cost. Selectman Putnam said we don't have to reflect back on previous numbers. Jason said the \$200,000 difference of the two previous quotes has to do with the Microwave system that Mont Vernon owns from a grant. Chairman Daniels asked what would become of the microwave system if Mont Vernon were to leave MACC Base. Jason said that would be a conversation between Milford and Mont Vernon.

Selectman Labonte asked if each town being responsible for their own infrastructure would work in a centrally owned dispatch center. Jason said it has potential but if you are all using common frequencies, there are certain times where an antenna physically located in Mont Vernon would benefit Milford and so forth. As far as cost per usage, unless you were strictly logging every single in and out transmissions and billing after the fact, it would be a billing nightmare. If you want to own what's physically located in your town as long as it plugs into the system it doesn't matter who owns it as long as it all plays well together. The biggest concern they run into from things being owned by the individual town is who pays to maintain it and who can say there is a problem with that site. Captain Frye agreed, it can work and does work for other towns. The flexibility is that if you are unhappy with the service you can leave.

How should MACC costs be apportioned?

Chairman Daniel's asked if we were apportioned based on population or usage. Jason said population; it's the fairest way to do it. Chairman Daniels asked how is Hillsborough's apportionment is done. Jason said it varies, some have a flat fee, and some are population based and some are call volume. The county ones are based on a bill that comes from

**APPROVED MINUTES OF BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORK-SESSION -
7/17/2019**

the county budget which includes more than just the dispatch center cost. The Town of Lyndeborough voluntarily came to MACC Base at cost greater than they were paying Hillsborough County due to a service issue.

Chairman Daniels asked the Board their thoughts on apportionment. Do we stick with population based or split it three ways. Milford has the largest population of senior housing so they would use more Ambulance Services. Other towns have passed ordinances against certain types of housing. Selectman Labonte and Selectmen Dargie spoke against splitting it three ways.

Chairman Daniels asked how often the population count gets adjusted. Jason said every 10 years, it's due again in 2020, and it goes according to census. They don't use the estimated ones that come out every year.

Chairman Daniels said in the past, MACC Base talked about updating equipment with a ten year bond. He asked for the Board's thoughts on that. The contract said that if you were part of that, you were committed to paying your share even if you dropped out. Selectman Labonte said there has to be some accountability. If you sign into a 10 year contract and drop out in year three there would have to be a more substantial reason other than we wanted our own communications center. Chairman Daniels said, what if three years down the road, two other towns decided to come in. Do the three original members continue to pay for the 10 years or does it get disbursed over the new members as well. Selectman Labonte said it would be something that would have to be negotiated in the contract.

Administrator Bender said there is language in the existing IMA that allows new members to join and pay a portion of the fixed cost on capital assets. That could be used as a guideline for your discussion. Chairman Daniels asked if it would be apportioned on population and how would that work if they came in on year five years are they only committed of five years of paying off that bond. Administrator Bender said those are the details that you would have to work out. Selectman Labonte said maybe it's time to look into new options to fit today's standards.

Chairman Daniels asked how everyone feels about MACC Base continuing and owning all the equipment or going to centralized equipment. Selectman Labonte said it would depend on how the contract is written. Chairman Daniels said that has to be determined prior to writing the contract. Selectman Labonte said he wasn't sure how he feels. Selectman Dudziak said she isn't prepared to take a position on that. Chairman Daniels asked what information was needed in order to give an opinion on that. Selectman Labonte said it goes back to the fix and what needs to be done.

Captain Frye asked if he meant new equipment or old equipment. Chairman Daniels said they were with the understanding that the old equipment doesn't cut it. Selectman Putnam said it has to be new equipment. The only problem with MACC Base is the equipment because no one wanted to put money into it. The question is, is the town of Milford big enough that we go on our own and absorbed the cost and have other towns go on board as customers? Either way it needs to be fixed.

Chairman Daniels said when he talks about equipment; he means what we have in MACC Base now. When he talks about infrastructure, he means antennas and things. Selectman Labonte said he doesn't see a difference if Milford owns the equipment. We own our dump trucks at DPW, does that mean they are up to par and replaced when needed. We had opportunities to upgrade the equipment at MACC Base what makes you think we will update our own equipment.

Chairman Daniels said it becomes part of the agreement in your town to take on that responsibility. Most of the antennas are being leased. He's in favor of updating the equipment, but only if it fixes the problem. He doesn't see that fixing the equipment will necessarily fix the problems we have now. It will also take the addition of other infrastructures. Selectman Putnam said some equipment would need to be replaced in certain sites plus additional upgrades of other antenna locations so we can get to the 95% coverage.

Selectman Labonte said if we own our own antenna and it needs an upgrade, what's to say we will do it. Chairman Daniels said it would be part of the contract we would have with others that may be leasing it from us. We have to start making a commitment sometime. Selectman Labonte said there is nothing saying the town will vote to do any upgrades. Chairman Daniels said that's true with anything put on a warrant; it's up to the voters. Emergency communications needs to rise to the top and that's why we are here now. It's going to be costly, it's overdue. Talking with the other towns will guide our decisions.

**APPROVED MINUTES OF BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORK-SESSION -
7/17/2019**

Selectman Labonte asked if department heads will be invited to the meeting on the 29th, he feels that other departments need to weigh in. Chairman Daniels said they've already been invited. He also said Water Utilities and DWP are local problems, not MACC Base problems.

Shawn Pelletier, Captain Milford Police Department asked if a timeline with other towns has been discussed for when to come to an agreement. He is concerned that two years from now we will still be sitting here and our radios still won't work. Chairman Daniels said that isn't his intent. He is thinking weeks or months. He would like to have an idea by the end of the year.

ADJOURNMENT: Selectman Putnam moved to adjourn at 6:36. Selectman Dudziak seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed 5/0.

Gary Daniels, Chairman

Laura Dudziak, Member

Paul Dargie, Vice Chairman

Chris Labonte, Member

Mike Putnam, Member