

**GILFORD BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**Work Session**  
**Gilford Police Department Dispatch**  
**January 13, 2010**  
**Town Hall**

The Board of Selectmen convened in a special work session on Wednesday, January 13, 2010, at 6:00 p.m., at the Gilford Town Hall, 47 Cherry Valley Road, Gilford, NH. Selectmen present were Gus Benavides, Kevin Hayes and John O'Brien. Also present were Town Administrator Scott Dunn and Executive Secretary Sandy Bailey. In attendance representing Belknap County was Sheriff Craig Wiggin and representing the Gilford Police Department were Chief John Markland and Deputy Chief Kevin Keenan.

Chairman Benavides advised members of the public in attendance that this special work session is being held to consider the possibility of closing the Town of Gilford Police Department Dispatch from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. This is based on a budgetary issue and the Board will not be making any decisions tonight. He has reviewed Deputy Chief Keenan's response and objection to the proposal and is aware that he is not supporting the proposal.

Deputy Chief Keenan asked the Board members if they had any questions of him or the other two members of the panel. Selectman Hayes stated that the Board has to find a way to close a budget gap. He acknowledged that Deputy Chief Keenan's report is negative and asked if, given the amount of expense involved, if he would reconsider his position if this were to be studied at the County level. Deputy Chief Keenan replied that if an extensive panel of experts were involved, he would not be opposed to a study of the situation. He does feel that the process would be quite extensive and take a great deal of time to complete.

Selectmen O'Brien asked Deputy Chief Keenan if they have ever considered combining their dispatch with the City of Laconia. Deputy Chief Keenan replied no, but any such arrangement would also require a study of the possibility and an extensive process to complete. Deputy Chief Keenan pointed out that most citizens appreciate having a local dispatcher to speak to in an emergency.

Brief discussion ensued regarding the 911 system. Sheriff Wiggin explained how a call is handled when it is received by a 911 operator. He also pointed out that his office and the Gilford Police Department share mutual concerns regarding alarm systems, transferring calls, accommodating other Town frequencies and SPOTS computer security. Although the towns and services required in Belknap County have grown, it has been nine (9) years since the Sheriff's Office has added any personnel. He provided statistics on calls handled by Belknap County, particularly during the third shift.

Sheriff Wiggin continued with his presentation, stating that the volume of calls during the third shift is the biggest concern, as this time period can be very busy with multiple call-ins at one time. Dispatchers are scheduled according to demand during peak times and presently the County employs seven (7) full-time dispatchers and a couple of part-time ones. Sheriff Wiggin also commented on risk management issues that may arise when an officer brings a subject into the Police Department and no one else is there.

Sheriff Wiggin explained how the Grafton County Sheriff's Department functions. They currently service sixty-three (63) communities but it did take a great deal of time to have that infrastructure in place to accomplish that. Sheriff Wiggin also stated that he is open to looking at the prospect of regionalized dispatch.

At this time, he would be happy to be able to tell the Town of Gilford that he can assume the third shift dispatching, but it is a very involved and expensive process. His 2010 budget has no provisions for any additional expense that would be incurred if they were to take over Gilford's third shift dispatching.

Selectman Hayes questioned if a value could be placed on the dispatch services to the Town of Gilford. He also pointed out that the Town of Gilford is already paying for Belknap County Dispatch in their County appropriation. Sheriff Wiggin then went into some detail on how Grafton County charges a per call fee. Selectman Hayes further stated that he was surprised to see so many other costs associated with changing over the third shift dispatch services.

Selectman O'Brien questioned why the Fire Dispatching is able to handle so many towns. Sheriff Wiggin pointed out that fire departments are not proactive like police departments are. The police radio transmissions are much more interactive and their activities and demands are very different from that of fire departments. In addition, once command is established at a fire scene all transmissions are transferred to a different frequency.

The possibility of booking subjects at the Sheriff's Office was discussed. Sheriff Wiggin stated that they do not have an intoxilyzer there and in addition, many subjects are released and not taken into custody. Chief Markland also stated that there are also disadvantages to having an officer out of town for 20-30 minutes to travel to the Sheriff's Office in Laconia.

In closing, Sheriff Wiggin stated that his office and the Gilford Police Department enjoy a good working relationship and he would be happy to assist the Town in any way. Deputy Chief Keenan inquired when the Board would be making a decision on this matter, since he currently has a dispatcher position opening and he would like to move forward. Chairman Benavides stated that they will make a decision at their next meeting. Selectman Hayes advised Deputy Chief Keenan that they still have a budget issue to solve and would welcome a plan from them to save the needed funds.

The work session was completed at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John T. O'Brien  
Clerk