

# BROOKFIELD PUBLIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, May 22, 2024, 5:30 PM

Brookfield Town Office, 40 Ralph Road, Brookfield, VT

## UNAPPROVED MINUTES

The following members attended, Mike Stoddard, Michael Rutkovsky, Ed Neas, Stuart Edson and Lew Stowell. Guests attending were Sheriff George Contois, Orange County Sheriff's Department, and Linda Kelly. Members of the public attending were Chief Kevin Wheatley, BVFD, Amy Ingrassia, Assistant Town Treasurer, Jack Zebora, Brookfield E911 Coordinator, Connie Karalekas, Anthony Sferlazza, Joshua Jonestein and Russell Hotchkiss, OCSD.

- A. 5:30: Call to Order. The meeting came to order at 5:30 PM.
- B. Review, and revise or approve the April 17, 2024 meeting minutes. Mike Stoddard made and Michael Rutkovsky seconded a motion to accept the April minutes as written. Approved: 5-0-0.
- C. Questions or issues brought by members of the public.
  - a. Jack Zebora-
    - i. Rt 65 Heliport: Jack stated that the heliport was not accessible. Kevin Wheatly stated that the fire department did not use the heliport. Jack will inform E911 that it is not needed.
    - ii. Multiple Thefts: Jack stated that there had been three thefts in Brookfield recent weeks. There was a \$2000 log splitter on Route 12, a car dolly on Route 14 and a \$1500 chainsaw on Eagle Peake Road. He urged people to be aware.
    - iii. Green Trails Parking: Jack said there was a parking problem looming with the New Green Trails Inn. He said there could be as many as 61 parking places needed. There were comments by Anthony Sferlazzo about bars overserving customers that resulted in problems. Joshua Jonestein introduced himself as the new owner of the Green Trails Inn and said he wanted to correct all of the rumors being spread about the Inn. He had no intention of having that many customers or needing that many parking places. He was complying with all of the necessary permits and wanted to be part of the community. He assured the group that he would be responsible in monitoring alcoholic consumption. He encouraged people to talk with him before repeating incorrect information.
  - b. Connie Karalekas who lives on Route 65 in Pond Village recounted an experience she had on Saturday Morning (May 18, 2024) at about 1:30 AM. She was awake in her bedroom and heard popping sounds. Her bedroom has a street light outside and she has a clear view of the road passing her house. She then looked to see the three vehicles (a small pickup truck followed by a small sedan then a small pickup truck) pass her house at a high rate of speed from the South with someone on the passenger side of the rear vehicle (small pickup truck) shooting at the other vehicles with some kind of pistol. They continued North and did not return as far as she knows. She was not able to see license plates or identify any of the occupants. Stuart Edson asked her if she had reported this to the police. She said no and then explained why. In early Winter she had someone drive up her driveway after midnight and come onto her porch for some purpose, perhaps to break in. She worried that she might not have locked her kitchen door and called E911 and got a VSP dispatcher. Because the intruder left her porch while she was talking to the dispatcher, the dispatcher said he or she would have to wake someone up to respond and because it was no longer urgent, they would not send anyone. They also did not follow up later with her. She concluded that she would get the same treatment this time and did not call. Stuart urged her to call law enforcement in the future. Even if they do not respond, it is important for the police to know what is going on and it may affect ongoing investigations. There

was discussion and Sheriff Contois recommended some sort of neighborhood watch be formed.

- D. Sheriff George Contois- Orange County Sheriff's Department-Guest: Law Enforcement Contract Renewal Proposal for FY2025. Sheriff Contois made a short presentation about his department and its problems but stated they were on the mend. When Lew Stowell asked him about a reported \$100,000 deficit, he corrected Lew; saying it was over \$100,000. He now has three patrol deputies and two construction project deputies. He mentioned that the two deputies doing construction project work had no interest in patrol work or response to late night events when Jack Zebora was concerned about the construction project deputies being too tired to respond. Sheriff Contois stated that the department was charging \$90.00 per hour for the construction project work. Sheriff Contois was offering his contract to Brookfield for \$65.00 per hour.
- E. Review and Discussion of OCSD activities including patrol hours, bills and reports. The May bill and report was passed around the committee and the FY 2016 to FY 2024 hours and cost report was shared with those present.
- F. Recommendations for Brookfield FY2025 Law Enforcement Contract. A motion was made by Stuart Edson and seconded by Mike Stoddard to recommend to the select board that the town enter into a contract with the Windsor County Sheriff's Department for FY 2025. There was discussion by members of the committee about the performance and fragility of the Orange County Department and the favorable impression of the Windsor County Department by the attendance of Sheriff Ryan Palmer at the April meeting as a guest. Lew Stowell mentioned that five law enforcement agencies had been contacted as part of "due diligence" by the committee: Barre Town PD, Northfield PD, Washington County Sheriff's Department, Windsor County Sheriff's Department and Orange County Sheriff's Department. Randolph PD was also considered but it was felt they were still in the process of re-establishing themselves. Only Orange County and Windsor County were willing to enter a contract with Brookfield for law enforcement services. Both Orange County and Windsor County are charging \$65.00 per hour in their proposed contracts. Stuart Edson stated that Windsor County Sheriff's Department already has contracts with the towns of Chelsea and Tunbridge which makes it easier to provide coverage to Brookfield. Sheriff Palmer only wants to provide coverage until the Orange County department can fully recover. The motion to recommend the contract with Windsor County to the Select Board was passed unanimously, 5-0-0
- G. Linda Kelly-Guest- Parking in Brookfield Pond Village Proposals. Linda mentioned several items concerning parking in Pond Village. She was concerned that Brookfield residents did not know it was unlawful to park on state highway 65 in the vicinity of the Floating Bridge, that it was illegal to park on town highways, including Stone Road in Pond Village during mud season. that there was a no parking zone on the West side of Stone Road. She hoped that the no parking sign on the North end of Pond Village be installed soon. She urged that signs be posted directing drivers looking for legal parking to go to the parking lot at the town office at 40 Ralph Road. She mentioned that the Brookfield Community Partnership (BCP) did not wish that their parking area be used for public parking. She stated that the Town of Brookfield owns a portion of the southern entrance to the BCP parking area. Stuart Edson cautioned the group that we should be careful about contacting the Vermont Agency of Transportation. The Select Board should be left to maintain the delicate balance with the agency. The town road crew will be installing another No Parking sign soon on the West side of Stone Road ¼ mile North of the Route 65/Stone Road intersection. While Linda was presenting her issues, Russ Hotchkiss, Orange County Deputy arrived and asked to speak about the Orange County Sheriff's Department Contract. Lew Stowell granted him permission to speak but informed him that the committee had already voted to recommend the Windsor County Sheriff's Department for the FY 2025 contract. Russ explained the ways he was trying to engage with the public including waving at passing

vehicles while on patrol in Williamstown and Brookfield. He stated that he felt he could provide better service than Windsor County. He also mentioned that the speed cart was monitoring Stone Road Southbound traffic near the emergency entrance to I-89. Michael Rutkovsky thanked him for his work.

- H. **Orange County Joint Select Board Law Enforcement Committee Status.** Lew Stowell explained that both he and Stuart Edson were representatives for Brookfield and had learned a great deal attending remotely. Sherrif Contois and Sheriff Marcoux from Lamoille County Sheriff's department had been guests. Sheriff Palmer is scheduled to be a guest at the June meeting.
- I. **Emergency Management Shelter Volunteer Program Status.** Amy Ingrassia stated that the shelter group was trying to get the Brookfield Elementary School on the American Red Cross list of shelter locations.
- J. **E-911 House Number Signs Project Status.** Michael Rutkovsky said that the employees at Work Safe in Berlin that had provided him a verbal quote for house number signs no longer worked at Work Safe. He hoped to get a written quote soon.
- K. **Traffic, Parking and Road Name Sign Progress.** Stuart Edson reported that Tim Higgins, Road Foreman had performed a traffic sign inventory. Stuart would ask for a copy. He stated that any traffic sign monies not already spent would be used for other important purposes. He suggested that the committee urge that those funds be used to buy posts and signs early in the fiscal year in 2025 and succeeding years.
- L. **June 2024 Public Safety Message.** Judith Irving, a member of the shelter group sent the committee a suggestion from the New York Times about preparing for another Summer of Canadian wildland fire smoke. Lew Stowell mentioned that there were people in Brookfield with vulnerabilities to the smoke. Amy Ingrassia stated that she was one of them. Lew asked the committee about suggestions how to use the information in a special safety tip. Stuart Edson suggested that Lew write a special safety tip using the information but not promote specific brands of equipment that were recommended in the New York Times article. The proposed June Safety Tips were also discussed. Both were approved 5-0-0.
- M. **Acknowledging the time and date of the next meeting.** 5:30 PM June 19, 2024.
- N. **Inviting one or more guest(s) to the next meeting (June).** Jon Jickling will be invited to speak about the progress of the Emerald Ash Borer in Orange County and Brookfield.
- O. **Final Public Comment.** Stuart Edson suggested that the use of the FY 2025 \$200 for safety vests be reconsidered. He stated that the lack of pedestrians in Brookfield wearing reflective vests was not from the lack of money but a lack of a strong educational effort. He proposed considering something like attractive safety tip handouts to pedestrians not wearing reflective vests. This will be looked at in future meetings.
- P. **Entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting.** Michael Rutkovsky made and Ed Neas seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. Approved 5-0-0 at 7:06 PM.