

Seven Devils Public Safety Committee

Tuesday November 7, 2023

Members Present: Wayne Bonomo, Tom Bookstaver, Dick Nelson, Kay Lamber

Others Present: Town Manager Johnathan Harris, Fire Chief Matt Millsaps, Larry Fontaine, Bob Bridges

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 by Chairman Wayne Bonomo.

The Agenda and October 3, 2023 Minutes were accepted and approved.

Comments and verification were brought before those present about the number of council members at the meeting. Due to the absent of Brad Lamber, there were only 2 council members and that is not a problem. Town Manager Harris also discussed that there could be 3 or more council members present as long as there isn't any 'council matters' discussed. The Public Safety Committee is open to the public and anyone is welcome, 'council matters' are not on this committee's agenda.

Citizens Comments:

Larry Fontaine asked about verification and a discussion of a radio tower in the area of the top of the old ski slope. There was discussion between the Fire Chief, Town Manager and others about the possibility of a 'visible tower' on top of the mountain. There is a town water tank and a VHF tower used by emergency agencies of Avery County and Town of Seven Devils currently at the top of the mountain. The Planning Board has started changes to the town ordinances for radio towers for emergency services. Due to newer technology and the need to update an old radio system that will be obsolete sooner than later, there is discussion of a viper tower. Viper is set up and used by The State of North Carolina. It will be used by law enforcement (state, county and municipalities), fire departments, EMS, emergency management and other public safety agencies that need clear reliable communications in an emergency.

It was mentioned that viper radio system has been in conversations with emergency management and state highway patrol and former fire chief Bobby Powel for years. One study was done of it being by the water tank on Rocky Top but there were 'shadows' from that location. The state had looked at several locations in and just outside the city limits of Seven Devils and the location at the top of the mountain near the former ski slope is more promising.

A viper tower will need to be above the tree line and it will be visible. At this time, everything is still in negotiations. The land will need to be purchased or leased, power, possible phone or fiber optic, line of sight and many other things involved in a state (and national) wide emergency radio system are still in the works.

#### Old Business:

Fire Chief Millsaps informed the committee that the helicopter landing site at The Park at Seven Devils has been used for emergency transport. A medical helicopter had landed in the parking area for training in the past but on September 15 it was used for an emergency. The parks and recreation have donated a wind sock to the fire department. Members of the fire department have been brain storming of where and how to use it on any of the fire trucks.

Chief Millsaps has been working with fire fighter Hayes on the mapping for an emergency plan to be with the Town of Seven Devils new web site. Along with emergency plan information on the web site, there was discussion about auto call out or Hyper Reach. Due to the large number of rental property and cell phones, it might be prohibitive (\$10K a year) for a system that will ping cell phone within the city limits to alert them of an emergency.

Chief Millsaps, Tom Bookstaver, and Ed Beck did take 3202 to Valle Cruis Elementary School October 11. There were numerous classes from little little ones to older children that spent time with the truck, equipment and members. It was also discussed that in the future, Seven Devils will give a donation to Shawneehaw VFD to assist with their 'goodie bags' that they give to the children and not have our name on any items.

There will be a 'Safety Echo' sometime in the near future that is being worked on. Town manager Harris did say that the web page did have a note about the time change and to check smoke detector alarms and change batteries if the alarm allows that. Mr. Bridges said that it might be easier for some people to be given 3 or 4 'safety info' ideas/awareness once a month over time than giving 15 or 20 'safety info' thoughts at one time. Things are still in the early stages but with winter coming and we do want to stress to clean and inspect fire place/woodstove stove pipe and chimney ASAP with winter around the corner.

On October 19<sup>th</sup> there was a Fire Wise Class by the NC Forrest Service at the Community Center. Several attended and information was shared about safety of property in case of a brush or woods fire. Information will be shared on the town's web page and the future safety echo. The

main part of the class was to keep property clear of leaf buildup and sticks/branches but things like fire retardant roofing material and even where to stack fire wood was discussed.

Chief Millsaps discussed the need of air packs (SCBA – self contained breathing apparatus) to meet the new requirements that will be imposed for the fire department. The town and fire department will be looking for grants for equipment that is estimated to be \$100K.

Police Chief Harris informed the committee that DOT (department of transportation) will not leave nor provide every time a portable road sign is needed during winter road conditions or very busy holiday traffic in town.

#### **New Business:**

Fire Chief Millsaps advised the 'Burn Fire Danger Sign' near Town Hall has changed quickly. The sign is set from information by the NC Forrest Service. It jumped from level 1 to level 4 on October 31. During the meeting Town Manager Harris received a message from the county of a BURN BAN being issued. The sign by Town Hall will be updated as soon as this meeting is over.

The community college is working on an EMT bridge class. The preliminary time for this class will be in January. The current EMR class is just about to finish. The last day of that class will be next week.

Mr. Bridges along with Chief Millsaps discussed future CPR classes. It might be best in the future find out who's interested and then set the date instead of setting a date and hope it works with those interested.

There was discussion of how to keep traffic moving during busy times with the winter/holiday traffic trying to get onto Hwy 105. DOT will not be putting a stop light at the intersection of Seven Devils Road and 105. Maybe an option is having an additional officer on duty to help with congestion at the intersection.

Town Manager Harris advised that the Chestnut Ridge project should be starting by the end of the month. If weather is acceptable, it should last about 4 or 5 months.

The last brush pickup was done for the calendar year and town maintenance is now clearing town roads of leaf debris. This will also include leaf removal of culverts for any possible storm water problems.

The town has received it's first load of road chat for winter.

Chairman Bonomo discussed the emergency shelter of Seven Devils. He would like to check the towns inventory. It was mentioned that the Town Hall and Community Center's generators had their annual service and oil change.

There have been 2 members of this committee reapply for membership and 1 new application for membership. The next step will be the town council to appoint members this committee but due to the informality of this committee anyone is welcome to attend and participate with any discussions and brainstorming of safety issues for the town and local community.

*Being no other old or new business to discuss, we talked about how this committee regularly goes into hiatus over the winter months. At this time, the next meeting for the Public Safety Committee will be February 6<sup>th</sup>. If any situation were to arise before February, Chairman Bonomo can call for a meeting.*

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10am.

BE SAFE!