

Corinth Law Enforcement Study Committee Report

Following last year's discussion at town meeting regarding the contract for Orange County sheriff, the select board created the Corinth Law Enforcement Study Committee and designated the following individuals to serve on it: Jon Saken, resident, Catherine Haley, Town Service Officer, Chris Diaz, Town Constable, Mike Tkac, former Hartford, VT police officer, Kenya Lazuli, member of the Town Planning Commission, and Jeff Spiegel, member of the Corinth Community Coalition and facilitator for the committee. The Study Committee was charged by the Select Board to make 3 recommendations by June for law enforcement in Corinth.

The Study Committee convened in May. It contacted town officials from Bradford, Topsham, Newbury, Chelsea, Washington and Randolph about their law enforcement services and asked if they would consider policing cost and coverage sharing with Corinth. None of the towns chose to pursue that proposal.

Chris Diaz reported on various incidents in which he was involved in the last year. These included underage drinking, neighbor conflicts, ATV traffic, animal control, geriatric health issues, domestic abuse.

On May 9th, we completed our deliberations and sent the following recommendations and rationales to the Select Board and expressed our willingness to meet with them to discuss our report. Upon receiving our recommendations, the Select Board expressed their deep appreciation to the committee.

Recommendations and Rationales For Corinth Law Enforcement

Recommendation: No longer contract with OCS: Call State Police for Emergencies

Rationales:

1. 3 hours of unspecified coverage from OCS is not desired
2. OCS may not want to contract for only 3 hours
3. Currently OCS has 3 officers assigned to courts leaving 1 for the entire county to patrol
4. OCS has not responded to emergencies in Corinth
5. OCS has insufficient certified deputies
6. Some calls require a certified police officer to accompany other service providers
7. No accountability or oversight for services rendered

Recommendation: From the \$9,500 budgeted for OCS, increase service time and compensation for Town Constable to \$30/hr; Reimburse constable for job related expenses up to \$250 annually; Compensate for travel time and specified hours; Work after hours should be directed to state police or compensate constable for overtime

Rationales:

1. Provides for more patrolling and visibility
2. Constable is vulnerable to more dangerous conditions
3. Has not been compensated for travel time
4. Has not been compensated for serving criminal and civil paper work and evictions
5. Responds to calls when OCS or state police don't show up
6. \$15/hr is not a livable wage for a constable who puts his life at risk
7. Creates accountability with specified hours
8. Constable enforces town ordinances and civil services
9. Increase mileage compensation to federal IRS standard rate

Recommendation: Advertise and hire a local certified police officer to serve as a second constable who can respond to criminal cases; Add to the annual budget, funds for prevention programs and education

Rationales:

1. A certified police officer can respond to criminal cases
2. Having no police officer puts the local constable legally at risk
3. A licensed police officer has qualified immunity
4. Prevention programs have the potential to reduce the need for law enforcement