



**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
TOWN OF NEW MARLBOROUGH
OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
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**Tara B. White, Chair
Michele Shalaby
Nathaniel H. Yohalem
Board of Selectmen**

**Minutes of Selectmen's Meeting
Monday, October 27, 2014**

Board Members Present: Tara B. White, Chairman
Michele Shalaby
Nat Yohalem

Others Present: Michael Skorput, Administrative Assistant
Sharon Fleck, Administrative Secretary
Graham Frank, Police Chief
Eric Munson III, Police Chief, Sheffield
Joyce Hackett
John Wrinkle
Dan Litchfield

The meeting of the Board of Selectmen convened at 6:35 p.m.

Chairman White announced the only thing on the Agenda was Tasers.

Selectman Shalaby read a prepared statement to the residents in Town that presented the Board's position on the use of tasers. Historically the former Police Chief, Scott Farrell, supported the use of tasers as a means of protecting police officers and EMT personnel from dangerous situations without having to use firearms. Michele further expressed the Board's trust in our Police Chief and the officers who work for the Town. She then read a statement from Scott Farrell supporting the Town's decision to use tasers.

Joyce Hackett expressed her thanks to the Board for listening to her concerns regarding tasers, citing different abuses that have been noted in other communities. She was uneasy about the safety of using tasers and felt that tasers, if used improperly, could cause bodily harm or death. She was concerned about the Town having a clear policy regarding tasers.

Police Chief Munson responded to Ms. Hackett's concerns and provided additional information regarding training, State policies, police and EMT protection and tasers vs. firearm use. He acknowledged Joyce's concern and stated those questions have been raised many time before. Chief Munson reported that the State requires 16 hours of training, with subsequent yearly follow-up training, before the use of tasers can be approved. He explained that the State of

Massachusetts' Executive Office of Public Safety guidelines for using tasers is much more stringent than in other States. He also explained that the tasers are monitored for each and every use, and if used excessively, the State has the option to revoke the Town's ability to use tasers. Every month that data is downloaded and a report is sent to the Executive Office of Public Safety. If a taser has been deployed to restrain someone, a Use of Force Report must be sent to the State. Chief Munson has written a policy concerning Sheffield's use of tasers that he then explained was given to Chief Frank, so that he could tailor that policy to New Marlborough. That policy then has to be sent to the State for approval. Tasers cannot be used on children or on people over the age of 70. He explained that if a person felt they were erroneously tased, they have the option to file a report with the District Attorney's Office, the Board of Selectmen, Executive Office of Public Safety or with the Police Chief. However, an officer must also file a report every time there is an incident.

Training - Chief Munson explained that when he went to training, he had the option of being tased, and he chose to do it. He said he was down for five seconds and then immediately back to normal, but also explained he would not want to do it again. During training they are taught where and where not to tase people, after care for people who have been tased, how to remove the probes, officer safety and what an officer should do after tasing someone in order to stay safe. Chief Munson's policy states that probes should be removed by a physician who will then evaluate the person's condition. Tasers have a range of 15 to 35 feet; Sheffield uses the 15 foot tasers.

Comments from the residents supported the use of the Police Department using tasers as an alternative to firearms. As an example, Dan Litchfield stated he would not want to be a police officer along on Rt. 57 pulling cars over in the middle of the night with only a sidearm.

John Wrinkle, a former Connecticut State Trooper, also supported the Town's decision to purchase a taser, as a more effective tool to use as opposed to pepper spray or a defense baton, but less lethal than a firearm. He further stated the use of the taser protects the police office, suspect and citizen.

Selectmen Yohalem stated that ultimately the responsibility lies with the Board of Selectmen. He explained he has complete faith and trust in our Police Department to act responsibly. He further stated that if someone felt they were improperly tased, they could file a complaint with the Board that would then take action if the accusation were true.

Being that there was no further business to be brought before the Board, a motion was made, seconded and so voted by all members to adjourn the meeting at 7:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Fleck
Administrative Secretary