

TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP

October Snowstorm

January 7, 2012

The Town Council meeting was held in the Moose Hill Council Chambers, Town Hall, 268B Mammoth Road, Londonderry.

PRESENT: Town Council: Chairman, Sean O'Keefe; Vice Chairperson, Joe Green; Councilors: Tom Dolan, John Farrell, Tom Freda (9:20AM); Town Manager Dave Caron.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman O'Keefe opened the meeting at 9:00 AM with the Pledge of Allegiance.

I. Overview of Event

Town Manager Dave Caron presented an overview of the early season snow storm. On Saturday October 29th 2011 into Sunday October 30th an early winter storm dropped 8-10 inches of heavy wet snow on trees with leaves still on. That heavy snow took down trees, tree limbs and power lines across the entire state. Once again, Southern New Hampshire was dealt a critical blow to the power grid; within hours of the first snow 90% of the Town was without power and many streets were blocked with trees and wires.

Initial damage assessment was completed early on Sunday morning placed this event on the same electrical service disruption magnitude as the Ice Storm of 2008. Factors conducive to restoration efforts include fewer streets were blocked; the weather was much more temperate and no additional storms were forecasted.

After the initial damage assessment a small emergency operations center was opened at the fire department. Coordination of emergency operations was jointly shared with on duty supervisors of Fire, Police and DPW. Priority items were the clearing of blocked roads and restricted travel areas and emergency assistance calls. Realizing that this would be a multiday event and after receiving requests for sheltering of citizens the decision was made by Emergency Management Director to begin shelter operations at 12 noon on Sunday. The ALERT team was notified as well as the School Department and arrangements were made to open the shelter.

State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was notified of our operational level and needs via phone and Web EOC. PSNH representative was contacted with our infrastructure priority items. PSNH gave initial projection of 72 hours before major restoration of power service due to widespread outages and major circuits affected.

Town Manager Caron expressed appreciation for the time and effort volunteered to the community during this event by members of the ALERT team.

II. PSNH Presentation

Public Service Company of New Hampshire was represented by Elizabeth LaRocca, Community Relations Manager, Southern Division; Mark Sandler, Southern Division Manager; Bob Allen, Supervisor of Vegetation Management; Jay Yergeau, Derry Area Work Center supervisor; Doug Frazier, Hooksett Area Work Center supervisor; Mike Skelton, Director of Communications.

Elizabeth LaRocca lead a Power Point presentation regarding the storm, its impact upon PSNH customers both state-wide and in Londonderry, and how the Town can assist PSNH with its recovery efforts.

Mr. Sandler responded to questions on the Town's circuitry posed by Councilor Farrell.

Mr. Yergeau responded to a question from Councilor Farrell regarding the express circuit on Adams Road; Mr. Allen set forth the process by which PSNH must follow to obtain permission to trim trees, both generally and on scenic roads.

After some discussion, the Council concurred to work with PSNH to enhance trimming on Adams Road in order to increase reliability of the express circuit located on that road.

Ms. LaRocca responded to Councilor Farrell's question that PSNH encourages its customers to use the toll free number or log onto the website to report outages, however PSNH continues to review better ways by which to communicate with its customers.

Mr. Sandler responded to Councilor Dolan's question regarding communities mandating that utilities be installed underground in newer developments. Mr. Sandler stated that not a lot of communities have such a requirement, and the installation of underground utilities present a different set of challenges, as the infrastructure needs to be replaced every 25-30 years.

Mr. Allen responded to Councilor Dolan's question regarding the tree trimming budget and gaining tree clearance "to the sky"; PSNH commissioned a study after Hurricane Gloria to determine the appropriate level of tree trimming required to maintain the system's dependability. Typically, routes are maintained every 4-5 years. Mr. Allen further stated that PSNH has increased its tree trimming resources from 85 contracted crews in 2008 to 100 crews in 2012.

Councilor Dolan suggested that the Town and PSNH work to publicize safety procedures for residents who have purchased generators.

Mr. Sandler responded to Councilor Freda's question that PSNH currently cannot monitor power usage by specific address, but does know when devices or circuits are not working, which gives PSNH a general indication of the outage's severity.

Mr. Skelton addressed this issue of reporting outages with Blackberries, etc...and responded that PSNH is working towards the goal of making outage reporting more technologically advanced. Mr. Skelton will provide a project timeline to the Council.

Councilor O'Keefe suggested the Town operate an emergency communications center during these events to assist customers with PSNH reporting issues.

In response to a question posed by Councilor Green, Mr. Allen stated PSNH's preference to complete more extensive tree trimming along its system's backbone, and cited expense and obtaining permission as obstacles to achieving that goal.

Mr. Yergeau responded to Councilor Green's question that repairing an underground line would not cause an entire area or circuit to be off-line.

Ms. LaRocca responded to Councilor Green's comments about workers not being visible for 2-3 days by explaining the priority restoration work required before trucks can repair lines in neighborhoods, such as work at substations and distribution lines, after which repairs can begin on the backbone and feeder lines.

Mr. Yergeau further commented that crews were in the community on Day One of the event, making repairs per the protocol list. Mr. Sandler stated that PSNH does not wait for an adequate number of crews to arrive from outside the area, but begins work immediately.

Mr. Frazier spoke of his experience operating the Hooksett service center (which services North Londonderry) that residents may not see crews initially due to all the off-road repairs required to restore power. Also, he suggested that residents not inundate crews with questions or concerns, as the crews as issued assignments and do not make the decision where they are going next.

Councilor O'Keefe expressed his appreciation for PSNH's attendance this morning, and stressed the importance of tree trimming.

Mr. Frazier spoke to the issue of generator safety and eliminating the danger of back-feeding lines.

Mr. Skelton responded to Councilor Green's question that PSNH is reviewing a rebate program for residents who purchase generators, and noted that most of PSNH's revenue stream is regulated by the PUC and/or State Legislature which would require their involvement.

Tony, DeFrancesco, 1 Chesire Court shared his observation that the current reporting system used by PSNH is outdated, and questioned why downed trees were still evident along major routes several days into the event, posing a hazard to the traveling public.

Julie Hempfield, 6 Lori Lane expressed difficulty with accessing information from PSNH, and suggested the Town adopt regulations to regulate tree growth/trimming.

Rick Irvin, High Range Road also expressed his concerns about lack of feedback from PSNH, and encourage them to undertake hardware enhancements which would give PSNH more specific information regarding location and severity of outages.

Maureen Comfort, 14 St. Andrews Way shared Mr. Irvin's concerns about hardware enhancements, and questioned whether PSNH facilities have kept pace with growth in NH. Ms. Comfort also expressed concerns with PSNH's message that customers will be billed for a trouble response if the cause is not with PSNH's system, and requested that 55+ communities should be added to PSNH's restoration priority list.

Mr. Allen responded that PSNH's tree trimming frequency is standard for the Northeast, and recent legislation (RSA 231:145) will help accelerate the property owner approval process to trim.

Maria Newman, Otterson Road, suggested that residents be polled in advance of an emergency regarding their preferences to allow trimming along their property.

Mr. Yergeau responded to a question from John Loker, 34 Parmenter Road, that PSNH and the homeowner share responsibility for damages resulting from outages, surges, etc... depending upon the particulars of the situation.

Jeanne Lamarre, 4 Chase Road shared that she was advised during the 2008 Ice Storm by a Connecticut utility worker that she lived on a "bad string", and that PSNH needs to provide better information.

Representative Dave Lundgren, 23 King John, commended PSNH for its restoration efforts but expressed his disappointment with ongoing maintenance which should have helped minimized the severity of damage.

Representative Al Baldassaro, 41 Hall Road, stated that PSNH underestimated the severity of the storm, faulted the Town for failing to remove a tree for six days on Lawson Farm Road, and suggested the use of GIS to track outages and the use of smart meters.

State Senator Sharon Carson, 19 Tokanel Road, thanked PSNH for being responsive to customer complaints after the 2008 Ice Storm and suggested input from citizens on the use of smart meters. She suggested that PSNH post examples on their website of dangerous tree situations, from which property owners could review, then grant permission to PSNH remove trees. She encouraged PSNH to share more information about its grid.

In response to a question posed by Councilor Dolan, Senator Carson opined that concerns about superseding local control would probably defeat state legislation requiring the installation of underground utilities in new developments.

David Colglazier, 6 Moulton, suggested that PSNH file a claim against a homeowner's insurance for damage incurred as a result of falling trees.

Director of Public Works Janusz Czyzowski corrected Rep. Baldassaro's comments about trees impeding traffic well into the event.

Mr. Sandler reaffirmed to Councilor Green that beyond the monthly customer service charge, all other fees are based on usage; therefore these latter charges don't accrue when a customer is without power.

Ms. LaRocca responded to Councilor Green that PSNH has made tremendous improvements to their facilities in Londonderry.

Councilor O'Keefe again thanks PSNH for their participation in the workshop, at which time PSNH representatives exited the meeting.

III. Town Overview

The Council reviewed the Town's response to the event, with discussion around the following:

- 1) Councilor Farrell suggested that internet service be made available at the Shelter.
- 2) Chief MacCaffrie responded to a question from Councilor Dolan regarding sheltering of pets.
- 3) Chief MacCaffrie suggested value scheduling two briefings per day at set times, information from which could be shared with the Council to expand the information distribution process.
- 4) The Council suggested engaging the School District for their email and pamphlet distribution lists and procedures, to assist with information distribution.
- 5) The Council directed staff to begin the process to permit and construct a stationary electronic sign in the vicinity of the Town Hall complex.
- 6) The Council directed that Town's website be enhanced to permit, at a minimum, one-way Twitter communication.
- 7) Better communication to the Council on event specifics.
- 8) Establish a formal system with PSNH regarding communications and support for restoration activities.
- 9) Engage the Planning Board to review and consider expansion of tree trimming authority.
- 10) Councilor Green has an extensive list of items to consider under this matter, which the Council concurred to schedule for a future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Farrell made a motion to adjourn at 1:14 PM, second Councilor Dolan. Council's vote was 5-0-0.

Approved by:

Town Council

Date: 01/16/12