# TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

## *POLICE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES*

**August 20, 2026**

### Present

- David Hogan, Selectman and Committee Chair
- Mary Ann Wolf, Committee Member
- Brian Hughes, Committee Member
- Jesse Moore, Ambulance Chief
- Ed Reller, Committee Member
- Wendy Underwood, Police Officer/Officer in Charge
- Rebecca Kelley, Committee Member
- Gordon Kemp, Committee Member
- Emily Sherwood, Committee Member - arrived after approval of the prior meeting minutes

### Guest

- Justin Sanctuary, Chief of Police, Town of Walpole

### Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Chair Hogan asked for comments or corrections to the minutes of the August 6, 2026 meeting.

Mary Ann Wolf noted that she had suggested amendments to the draft minutes.

**Motion:** Ed Reller moved to approve the August 6, 2026 meeting minutes as amended.

**Second:** Mary Ann Wolf.

**Vote:** Motion carried, with Gordon Kemp voting in opposition.

### Discussion with Walpole Police Chief Justin Sanctuary

Chair Hogan welcomed Walpole Police Chief Justin Sanctuary and explained that the Committee had been formed to investigate options for the future of the Alstead Police Department.

The Committee asked Chief Sanctuary to discuss possible cooperative arrangements between Walpole and Alstead, including a shared Police Chief, contractual services, regionalization, supplemental coverage, or other potential models.

Chief Sanctuary stated that Walpole is not presently seeking to operate another municipality's police department. He indicated, however, that Walpole could potentially consider a temporary contractual or supplemental arrangement if Alstead needed assistance while rebuilding or restructuring its department.

Chief Sanctuary did not recommend a shared-Chief arrangement. He noted that a Chief serving two municipalities would answer to two Selectboards and that each community has its own expectations, priorities, and approach to policing. He expressed a preference for police departments remaining directly accountable to the individual municipality they serve.

Chief Sanctuary noted that the Alstead Selectboard should speak directly with the Walpole Selectboard if combining town coverage is something Alstead wants to pursue.  He does not have the authority to commit to an agreement.

### Local Police Department Versus Outside Coverage

Chair Hogan reviewed the range of options being considered by the Committee, from continuing the existing Alstead Police Department with a newly hired Chief to contracting for outside services or relying primarily on the New Hampshire State Police.

Chief Sanctuary discussed the differences between local policing and State Police coverage.

He emphasized the value of local policing in addressing lower-level complaints, developing familiarity with residents and recurring situations, and intervening before problems escalate into more serious incidents. He noted that these benefits are difficult to quantify financially but can have significant value to a community.

Chief Sanctuary described local control, accountability, community familiarity, and transparency as significant advantages of maintaining a municipal police department.

He stated that State Police provide an important service and reliably respond to significant incidents, but their broader geographic responsibilities can limit their ability to address routine municipal complaints and provide the same level of community-oriented policing.

## Sheriff's Department Coverage

The Committee discussed the possibility of contracting with the Cheshire County Sheriff's Department.

Chief Sanctuary encouraged the Committee to speak directly with municipalities currently using Sheriff's Department services and to compare the actual services received with their costs.

He stated that contracted Sheriff's coverage can provide useful dedicated patrol time, but the Town should closely examine:

- The number of contracted hours;
- When those hours would be provided;
- What activities would be performed during the contracted period;
- What happens when calls occur outside the contracted period;
- Who handles follow-up investigations;
- The cost relative to employing local officers; and
- The degree of local control retained by the Town.

The Committee discussed hybrid arrangements in which municipalities rely upon more than one outside law-enforcement agency for different functions.

## Mutual Aid and Regional Cooperation

Chief Sanctuary discussed Walpole's reliance upon mutual aid relationships with neighboring law-enforcement agencies.

He explained that departments frequently assist one another across municipal boundaries. Although such assistance occasionally results in questions about one town's personnel working in another community, mutual aid reduces the number of officers each individual department would otherwise need to employ for backup and significant incidents.

Chief Sanctuary stated that Walpole values having Alstead officers available in the region and that maintaining capable neighboring police departments improves law-enforcement coverage for all surrounding communities.

The Committee discussed regionalization as a possible longer-term trend for municipal services.

Chief Sanctuary and Committee members noted that fire, EMS, animal-control, and other municipal services increasingly use cooperative or regional arrangements. Regional police arrangements were also discussed as a possible future model, although Chief Sanctuary indicated that Walpole is not presently seeking to take over Alstead's department.

## Part-Time Administrative Police Chief

Chief Sanctuary suggested that Alstead seriously consider employing a part-time Police Chief whose primary responsibility would be departmental administration.

He stated that a retired New Hampshire law-enforcement officer could potentially provide administrative leadership while supporting Officer Underwood and allowing the Town's patrol officers to concentrate primarily on active law-enforcement duties.

The Committee discussed the increasing difficulty of finding a traditional "working Chief" who can simultaneously handle the growing administrative responsibilities of a Police Chief while also maintaining a substantial patrol and investigative workload.

Chief Sanctuary stated that the administrative demands placed upon Chiefs have increased substantially and that the combination of Chief and patrol responsibilities can lead to excessive working hours and burnout.

He advised that small-town officers must be capable of handling a broad range of investigations and responsibilities and that finding a candidate who possesses both strong administrative skills and current street-level investigative experience can be difficult.

## Staffing and Workload Analysis

The Committee discussed the importance of determining the actual workload of the Alstead Police Department before selecting a future staffing model.

Members discussed reviewing calls-for-service information in greater detail and evaluating whether the Department's workload supports:

- Two full-time police officers;
- One full-time and one part-time officer;
- A part-time administrative Chief with separate patrol staffing; or
- Some combination of local officers and contracted coverage.

The Committee noted that the appropriate staffing model should be based not simply upon the title of Officer in Charge or Police Chief, but upon the actual administrative, patrol, investigative, and community-policing workload of the Department.

The Committee also discussed how calls handled initially by an outside agency may later require follow-up by the local Police Department, potentially resulting in duplication of workload.

## Availability and Response Considerations

The Committee discussed the practical limitations of law-enforcement staffing throughout the region.

Members noted that references to "24-hour coverage" do not necessarily mean that an officer from a particular agency is immediately available within the municipality at all times. Mutual aid, overlapping responsibilities, geographic coverage areas, and officers already committed to other incidents can all affect actual response availability.

The Committee agreed that these operational considerations should be evaluated when comparing local, contracted, and State Police service models.

## Future Review

The Committee will continue gathering information from law-enforcement agencies and municipalities using alternative policing arrangements.

Future analysis will include:

- Review of Alstead Police Department calls-for-service and workload data;
- Comparison of full-time, part-time, and hybrid staffing models;
- Further evaluation of a part-time administrative Police Chief;
- Costs and service levels associated with Sheriff's Department coverage;
- Availability and limitations of State Police coverage;
- Potential short-term supplemental assistance from neighboring departments; and
- Longer-term opportunities for regional cooperation.

## Adjournment

At approximately 6:00 p.m., Chair Hogan called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded.

**Vote:** Motion carried, with one vote in opposition.

The meeting was adjourned.