



On Monday May 21 Selectman Elaine M. R. Strobel and First Selectman Edward B. St. John voted to re-appoint their ill-conceived and highly-ineffective fire commission. Selectman Hal Lynch strongly voted against the re-appointment of the commission. The Fire Department applauds his decision and we deeply appreciate his support.

Reappointing a commission that the Fire Department does not recognize and does not welcome is just another example of the breakdown of leadership at the Town Hall. It is our elected officials passing their responsibilities off to someone else. Deciding whether or not to approve going out to bid on a 25 year old pumper and a 27 year old rescue truck is not brain surgery. It is obvious, especially when you have two additional pieces of apparatus that will be over 20 years old next year.

Mr. St. John is quoted in the May 30, 2007 edition of Voices saying, **“If you remember right, they [the Fire Department] came before us, “ and it was their recommendation, that they didn’t want to deal with us.” If this is a correct quote then it is a bold-face lie.** The Fire Department has always wanted to deal with the Board of Selectman only. It has been our contention that it was their decision to go out to bid on apparatus and we have been urging them to do their job through the entire course of events that started in 2003.

Nothing illustrates this more than the June 2006 Selectman’s meeting in which Fire Chief Paul Perrotti read a prepared statement summarizing the events leading up to the appointment of a fire commission, and asking the Selectmen for an “up or down vote” on apparatus replacement. You can watch this video by pointing your browser to -

<http://www.middleburyfire.org/meeting1.mov>

Instead of taking that vote, they appointed the fire commission.

It is now one year later and we are still no closer to replacing apparatus, because of their unwillingness to do their jobs. Instead, they want the fire commission to review our specs, to further delay and to derail the entire process. The Fire Department no longer recognizes the fire commission and will not give them any specifications for apparatus. **Allowing un-**

**trained, uninformed, and politically motivated individuals to examine the specifications of lifesaving equipment is reckless, and the Fire Department will not put fire fighter and public safety in jeopardy to humor a vindictive First Selectman.**

**Specifications for Engine 2 were prepared back in February of 2003**, and the Selectman's Office still can't seem to make a decision about this life and property saving equipment.

It is also apparent that Mr. St John forgot that he said **"The decision is ultimately that of the Fire Department"**, as quoted in the May 24, 2006 Voices.

Mr. St John is also quoted in the May 30, 2007 Voices saying **"This board has all the authority in the world, whether they like it or not, to provide oversight or anything."** We would like to remind Mr. St. John that, **"They"** meaning the Fire Department are a group of dedicated volunteers that have faithfully served this community for 66 years. The key word here is **VOLUNTEERS. If enough of our members get fed-up with the antics of this arrogant First Selectman, the Town may be faced with a much bigger problem on their hands than simply replacement of aging fire apparatus.** We think he should show a little more respect for those of us who put our lives on the line, jeopardize our safety and inconvenience our families all in the name of protecting our neighbors in this great community.

William Stowell was quoted in the May 30, 2007 Voices article stating that he was in support of the fire commission. Bill Stowell is not the voice of the Fire Department and does not represent the rank and file who feel a deep resentment towards the fire commission. He is entitled of course to his opinion, however, his opinion would have a much greater value if he was actually involved with the Fire Department, which he is not, and has not been since he resigned his position as Department Secretary during the highly contentious Selectmen's election of 2005. Bill is on the Veteran's list and has not run on fire calls for years. He is not in-touch with the day-to-day operations of the Department.

There has always been oversight of the Fire Department, and the fire department has never been against financial oversight. There have been two Board of Finance Liaisons who have worked with the Chief for years. However, it is the job of the Board of Selectmen to oversee this Department. Passing their responsibilities off to their political minions is irresponsible and reckless.

**It is the Fire Department's position that this entire fiasco has nothing to do with oversight, and has everything to do with "getting even."** It is apparent that Elaine Strobel and Ed St John have declared war on the Volunteers of this community. The Fire Department wants to foster a close working relationship with a new Board of Selectmen, without the interference of a fire commission. **One man's hatred for the Fire Department should not jeopardize the safety of an entire community.**