

**October 6, 2016 Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners**

**District #3 in the Township of Hanover**

**County of Morris, Cedar Knolls, New Jersey**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on October 6, 2016 in accordance with the Public Meeting Act of 1975, Chapter 231.

**ATTENDANCE:** Commissioners Peter DeNigris, Robert Callas, Maria Florio, Tom Quirk, and Michael Dugan were present.

Also in attendance were Chief DiGiorgio and Administrator Schultz. In addition; Lieutenant Frank DeSimone, Firefighter/EMT/Inspector Michael Bellot, Fire Company Vice President Joseph N. Martin, and Fire Lieutenant Tim Costello were present.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None

**CORRESPONDENCE:** Commissioner Callas noted he received the Certificate of Liability Insurance for the Rabies Clinic being held on November 4<sup>th</sup>.

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:** A motion was made by Commissioner Callas, seconded by Commissioner Quirk to approve the minutes of the September 15, 2016 meeting. All in favor with the exception of Commissioner Dugan who abstained.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Commissioner DeNigris reported the budget process has started. He is waiting for the new tax numbers and hopes to have the information by the next meeting. If anyone has anything they would like included in the budget to please let him know as soon as possible.

Commissioner DeNigris referred to the Capital Proposal Expenditure Report that had been distributed and noted some decisions need to be made including a decision about Ambulance 38.

Commissioner DeNigris asked Chief DiGiorio if there has been any further communication with Revenue Guard. The Chief stated he reached out to the CEO and informed him the committee would like to meet with him to discuss the possibility of collections for non- residents/Whippany.

Commissioner DeNigris proposed to the Board the possibility of increasing the charge to transport people to the hospital (when the current contract expires) as that number hasn't changed in about four-five years. He felt the increase is warranted to offset the cost of operations that go up every year. The Committee felt it was a valid recommendation and asked for further research before making a final decision.

Commissioner Dugan asked the Chief for a run down on each project. The Chief noted the biggest expense is the replacement of Ambulance 38. The current estimate to purchase new ambulance will cost \$232,000, while remounting the current box on a new chassis will cost \$175,000.

Manhole: Commissioner Dugan noted while digging along Mountain Avenue a sewer line was discovered. The Sewer Authority verified it was an active line and reported their finding to Mike Wynne. As a result, Wynne has requested a manhole be put there. An estimate from the Contractor puts the cost at \$11,000. Commissioner Dugan reported it's not feasible at this time as it would push the cost of the project over the legal limit. Dugan explained the issue to Wynne and stated if absolutely necessary it would be put in the budget for Capital Improvements next year. Commissioner Florio would like someone from the Sewer Authority/Township to verify the need and whether it is required by law because the cost to the taxpayers will be high.

Electric Expense: These are tied in with phone system. Administrator Schultz explained that with the anticipation of putting in a new phone and an electronic sign system there will likely be other changes i.e., where it is located, adequate outlets, etc., The electric sign board will measure 4 ft. x 8 ft. and will cost approximately \$17,500. That cost includes the sign and the computer system. The brickwork would be extra. Fire Company Vice-President Joe Martin offered to bring this item up at the next meeting and see about the possibility of splitting the cost with the Fire Company.

Bay Floors: Resurfacing the Bay floors should be a priority. \$40,000 cost is inclusive of all three floors.

The Chief feels the priorities are the ambulance and the telephone system.

Commissioner Florio stated a concern that she is not knowledgeable about ambulances and would prefer a decision be made by a committee who would make a recommendation to the Board. That Committee should consist of individuals who know the equipment, know exactly what we need and are familiar with our budget, etc.

Commissioner Callas stated he feels this Board should make the decision about whether to remount or buy/lease, and then look for input from a Committee about how to move forward with the Board's decision.

Commissioner Quirk also noted there are two pieces of apparatus getting up in age and will be quite costly to replace. He advised the Board they need to be cognizant of those impending costs. Administrator Schultz added the cost of a Ladder Truck is \$1,200,000.

Commissioner DeNigris confirmed the following will be put in the Capital Expenditures: \$175,000 for remount, as well as costs for electric and phone, bay floors, and electronic sign.

Commissioner DeNigris vetoed several items requested by the Chief to be capitalized but rather instructed him to purchase them now. They include 2 gear racks, an upgrade on the generator, and the replacement of three entry doors.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Callas to accept the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Commissioner Florio. All in favor.**

#### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF AND BOARD COMMITTEES:**

**Chief's Report:** The Chief distributed his report to the Board and highlighted a few items.

- He explained the change in how he is reporting statistics on his report.
- He reported on the seminars he attended at the convention.
- He noted the \$1.4M in upgrades at County Communications Center.
- Commissioner Quirk and the Chief have made progress on the Motor Vehicle license checks.
- Four members responded with MAB to Hoboken, but the call was cancelled and they returned.

- He noted there have been numerous communications with a Committeeman regarding 911 call.
- Sent an email and memo to the part-time EMT applicants. It is the Chief's plan to move forward.
- Distributed a copy of his budget summary to the Board.

**EMS:** Nothing to report

**Budget:** Commissioner DeNigris reported there have been no September costs reported yet.

**Liaison to the Volunteers:** Commissioner Quirk reported he met with President Dobson about the bell refurbishing. Several volunteers are also interested in being involved. He noted President Dobson is very appreciative.

Commissioner Dugan gave an update on the bell and stated it is being sent to Back Street Auto, who will sand blast it so the material can be identified. It will then be returned to the committee, or if they prefer they can go and view it up there and then decide how they would like to proceed with the refurbishing.

Commissioner Dugan remarked the bell is damaged. The part that was mounted to the concrete block is cracked but noted it could probably be welded. Before it goes out for repair it needs to be set on a piece of cardboard to make a template so when they build the pillar they know where to set the mount.

Commissioner Quirk noted he was told by several people, although he doesn't know what research has been done, that the bell actually predates the Board so it belongs to the Fire Company. Commissioner Dugan said there was no challenge about ownership and he agrees it belongs to the Fire Company, the Board is just offering to sand it down. Commissioner Quirk stated the offer is definitely there but wants to be certain the Board is not over-stepping and that this is something the Fire Company actually wants done. Fire Company Vice-President Joe Martin who was in attendance stated it is very much appreciated and they are looking forward to seeing it when the sand blasting has been completed.

**Building and Grounds:**

- **Roof Project:** Commissioner Dugan reported there is progress being made including sanding, priming, flashing, snow guards replaced, and the

entrance door to the back of the ladder bay has been caulked. Painting still needs to be done. The record can reflect they will be finishing the punch list items.

- **Apron Project:** Commissioner Dugan stated there was a walk through prior to the meeting. The Engines will be going back inside this weekend. The ambulance bay should be poured tomorrow. Work will start on the pipe for the sewer line. As a result, the two bathrooms and the slop sink in the ladder bay will be shut down for approximately one week. Commissioner Dugan asked those in attendance from the Fire Company to please pass on that information. The ballards are on the Change Order for tonight along with the side walk outside the ambulance bay.
- Change Order 2 approves \$3,000 for extra concrete for pipe going out to the storm drain and the curb, and \$7,200. for sealing. In discussion with John Kovacs he questions why we are paying for sealing? In order to put money back into the project he took \$7,200 out, as we are closing in on the 20% that we can exceed the original bid by.

**Apparatus/Equipment Maintenance:** Chief DiGiorgio reported Ambulance 38 body work has been repaired.

The Ladder Truck is going out in about two weeks.

**Insurance:** Chief DiGiorgio stated a check was received back from Workman's Comp for approximately \$9,000. This refund is due to the auditor error.

**Communications:** Nothing to report

**By-Laws:** Commissioner Florio stated the by-laws are on hold until the Policy and Procedures manual has been finished. Commissioner Quirk reminded the Board there was a suggestion from the Fire Company to add a second Open to the Public to the Agenda.

**Website:** Administrator Schultz stated there has been progress.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

**Absence:** Commissioner Callas noted that at the last meeting there was a discussion about attendance at meetings and requested everyone be notified of an absence. A text notification would be the preferred method of communication.

**Hiring:** There was a very lengthy discussion about hiring personnel. Many opinions and concerns were discussed. Highlighted are some of those comments and opinions:

Commissioner Dugan recapped last year's discussion on whether to leave funds in the budget for possibly hiring a new person. He recalls at that time the board agreed that they were in need of staffing on EMS and the Fire side, and that was the reason the board decided to leave money in the budget. There was also some discussion on what positions needed to be filled and whether to leave money in or take it out. There were several scenarios discussed.

1. Fill the shortage by hiring more per diems;
2. Look into hiring full time EMTs because the majority of the over-time or shortage was on the EMS side;
3. A third possibility was hiring a Firefighter /EMT so it added to both sides.

Commissioner Dugan asked if anybody recalled anything different.

Commissioner DeNigris added there was money left in the budget because it was approved and when approved you can't take it out. However, whether it is spent or not or not is a different issue. He recalls the board was not unanimous on whether it was needed and what kind of person was needed. He pointed out in the Preliminary Budget Meeting the Chief asked for one full-time Firefighter/Inspector and that is what was in the budget last year. It hasn't been done so far, so he's putting it back in and he will provide the dollars in 2017. The Chief is also asking for 3 per-diem EMTs.

Commissioner Dugan asked about the number that was approved from last year. The Chief said the number agreed to last year was 13.

Commissioner Florio questioned whether this will solve the problem about getting a second ambulance out on a weekend. She stated we are maintaining two ambulances, but cannot get two ambulances out at certain times. Chief DiGiorgio responded that it will not solve the second ambulance issue, what it solves is the over-time issues. Chief DiGiorgio stated "We need to identify the number of shifts. The second ambulance is getting out when the staff is full M-F from 8am-6pm because we have two per diems in the Fire House to staff the first ambulance. Between 8am- 6pm there is the ability to staff the other. However,

from 6-8 am and 6-10 pm we basically do not have the staff to do so. In my budget plan for this year I would like to change the current work schedule for the career staff. It allows two firefighters to be on the fire apparatus from 6am-10pm. Two firefighters are best for safety reasons, one a fire officer and the other a firefighter. Based on my concept, a fire officer and firefighter will come on duty at 6am and work till 2pm. The other fire officer and firefighter will relieve them at 2pm and work till 10pm. That provides coverage for 16 hours a day where currently only 8 hours a day, weekdays M-F from 6am-10pm is covered.”

Commissioner Florio asked if 10pm -6am is strictly per diem overnight? The Chief responded “Every overnight shift, with the exception of Friday night, is covered by one per diem. So, one per diem and one volunteer is what is covering the overnight shifts right now. That gets one ambulance out.” Based on the fire crew’s decision from last year to change the shift, instead of doing a 12 hour shift the volunteer crew decided to go to a 10-6 shift and free up that 4 hours. By switching and having two and two a fire officer and a firefighter that bring two firefighters guaranteed into the fire house. Over the last three or four meeting it has been identified that training and compliance is something that has been turned over to the career staff. There was also concern about the Junior Firefighters, Junior EMTs, and Probationary Staff being in Fire House unsupervised during those four hours. Now with supervision, the problem has been solved for another four hours. The ideal plan is to maintain at least two people at all times on the fire apparatus. In order to maintain that concept on the weekends we have to add a floater. That person would need to be flexible. Doing the tally there are a minimum of 40 days out of the year where someone would need to fill that open shift due to PTO.

The Chief noted the current budget impact on the taxpayers to add one career Firefighter and one EMT/ Fire Inspector impacts the average District 3 households in Cedar Knolls \$ 0.88 . Comm. Florio asked if following a Committeeman’s recent issue if there was any discussion on how Whippany could help financially on the EMS side to be able to provide a second ambulance and help us provide adequate staffing. She noted the \$.88 is taxed to District 3 but the ambulance responds to both District 3 and District 2, so part of the stress and financial limitations are because we aren’t getting any assistance from District 2. Even though District 2 is

being billed, they are not paying. This is a town-wide problem and it has to be shouldered fairly among all residents.

Commissioner Quirk stated that District 2 has asked to put an ambulance over there and that it was our decision to keep them here and we are collecting the funds. It's not their fault that we are not collecting the out of pocket.

Commissioner Dugan stated we have the agreement with the town to provide EMS.

The Chief told the Board that Chief Cortright told him he can't send us an extra guy because then they have no one to cover their fire truck.

Commissioner Florio felt District 2 should be advised that we are prepared to hire a Firefighter/EMT/Inspector. We should ask them to come up with a third of that cost, half of which serves their district. I think they would want to help us.

Commissioner Callas says a decision has to be made. He thinks the Chief's plan could work by increasing to two on at one time. That floater can be utilized as EMT, Firefighter, and maintain two for 16 hours a day. Staffing is down, and we have tried everything. We can either increase our staff by volunteer which we have been trying to do, or add to the career staff.

Commissioner Dugan asked Firefighter/EMT/Inspector Mike Bellot when he is on the 2pm-10pm shift when the truck rolls out how many are on the truck with him. He responded generally one other. He further added that as someone who works here he feels we definitely need a Full-time EMT/Fire Fighter/ Fire Inspector.

Commissioner Quirk stated we are moving towards becoming a full-time fire department and added there is a difference in liability between volunteer and full-time career staff.

The Chief read from the mission of the District which is to provide a service to the community with highly trained members. The mission is to provide fire protection, EMS services to the residents, guests and visitors of the residents of Hanover Township and Cedar Knolls. He notes it does not say specifically volunteer or full-time.

Commissioner Quirk reminded everyone a few months ago the plan was to inform the public that if we don't get volunteers we are going to have to hire firefighters.



The Chief explained there was a recruitment drive survey and he sat with three individuals at the beginning of June and gave them a FEMA guide. They were going to put together a survey and incentive to take the survey and have it ready for Hanover Township Day. The questions were not so much asking if they would join, but if you chose not to join would you be willing to put additional dollars in your taxes. Unfortunately, it didn't happen. Commissioner Quirk didn't think the survey would be helpful, he recommended advertising in the newspaper and state "We are in dire need of volunteers, if you cannot volunteer we will need to hire".

Comm. Dugan invited Fire Lieutenant Tim Costello to speak on the issue. Lieutenant Costello provided a lengthy dialog based his opinions from his years of service and also offered suggestions on the best way to approach this matter from a political side. Commissioner Florio feels a discussion with the town should be about the disparity between the towns.

Commissioner Dugan asked Fire Lieutenant Costello if in his opinion we are staffed well. Fire Lieutenant Costello stated that in his opinion he does not think so, he feels there are gaps.

Commissioner Dugan asked the Board if they were prepared to make a decision. I think we need to make a decision. It's one person for now.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Dugan, seconded by Commissioner Florio to hire a full-time EMS/Fire/Inspector. Commissioner Dugan and DeNigris in favor, Commissioner Quirk opposed. Motion passed.**

Commissioner Florio asked for a commitment to go to the Township Committee and be put on a work session to discuss what is coming in the future.

**Policy:**

Chief DiGlorgio asked if anyone agreed it would be a good idea to send the draft policies to Mr. Trimboli for his review and comment so not to get dragged down on certain things?

Commissioner Florio wanted to first discuss some simple items to subsets before it goes to Trimboli. She notes on page 19 in new version under Class B Violations regarding Driver's License Policy, in two paragraphs there is reference to "Chief

Officer of the Fire District” and asks if it should read “Fire Chief”. Chief DiGiorgio clarified it should read “Fire Chief.”

There was a question from Commissioner DeNigris about an item on Page 13 concerning whether elected officials have the right to have access to employee files.

On page 25, under Video Surveillance, regarding who the Chief reports to if there are any issues. The text repeatedly refers to “a member of the Board”.

Commissioner Florio feels it should be more specific. The Board has identified a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman and they should be the point person. She feels the responsibility should be consistent with one person. Chief DiGiorgio will adjust.

On page 17 – Commissioner DeNigris identified a missing component in the Resignation Policy. The Chief will add the person an employee resigns to.

**Action Item: Chief DiGiorgio will email the draft to Mr. Trimboli with a note that the information obtained in the draft was through JIF documents, similar to the Township of Hanover.**

Once the draft is returned with Mr. Trimboli’s comments the Board will make a final review.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Commissioner Quirk brought a concern to the Board about Stand-By calls. He feels if a call comes in for a Stand-By or MAB it should be volunteers who respond, not per diems. This concern is for Stand-By and MAB **only**, not Emergency Calls. The Chief will review and come up with clearer parameters.

Commissioner Dugan gave an explanation of why he felt it was okay to approve Vehicle 30 to transport food and alcohol to the Convention. He stated the official request came late, but it was requested on Wednesday. Circumstances prevented the request from coming in a more timely manner. He stated there had been brief discussion at previous meeting so the Board was aware of the potential request. His decision was based on building a more open relationship with the Fire Company.

Commissioner Callas agreed that while there was a discussion at a prior meeting no decision was made and the discussion had not closed. Commissioner Florio noted and read from a policy stating equipment is used for official business only.

HIPAA – Dugan reminded the board to be mindful of HIPAA when discussing matters at the meetings.

Chief DiGiorgio clarified some misinformation about a Committeeman’s recent 911 call. He stated the ambulance was discharged within 1.5 minutes of the call and it was a total of 29 minutes between the call being received and the patient being wheeled into the hospital. He noted that is a remarkable response time. There was question about whether the County needs to say on the record “Please hold on the line, I need to ask you a few questions, an ambulance is being dispatched.” It was confirmed on audio recordings that the caller was indeed notified at the start of the conversation. However, the caller did not want to answer questions and hung up. It was not a about response time, but rather questions and concerns about how the system works. He was not educated enough to know there was more than one person responding to his call.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 20, 2016 beginning at 7:00 p.m.

**RESOLUTIONS:**

Commissioner Callas read **Resolution 16-10-06-97** appointing Beata Gelman as a Volunteer member of the Fire District. **Commissioner Dugan made a motion, seconded by Commissioner DeNigris to accept the resolution. All in favor.**

Commissioner Callas read **Resolution 16-10-06-98** designating eligibility for healthcare benefits for employees. **Commissioner Dugan made a motion, seconded by Commissioner DeNigris to accept the resolution. All in favor.**

Commissioner Callas read **Resolution 16-10-06-99** authorizing change orders to the apron replacement/improvement project, authorizing the expenditure of \$3,800. **Commissioner Dugan made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Callas to accept the resolution. All in favor.**

**ADJOURN:**

**A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Quirk, seconded by Commissioner Callas, all in favor.** The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

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Robert Callas, Secretary