

July 16, 2020 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 July 16, 2020 in accordance with the Public Meeting Act of 1975, Chapter 231.

The Board observed a moment of silence for all those who have given their lives in service of their communities and nation.

ATTENDANCE: Commissioners Robert Callas, Michael Dugan Sr., Michael Dugan Jr., Robert O'Hare, and Thomas Quirk were present.

Chief DiGiorgio, Administrator Schultz, Lieutenant DeSimone, Asst. Chief of EMS DeSimone and EMT Waldron were also in attendance.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None.

CORRESPONDENCE: None.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:

The minutes from the June 18, 2020 Regular Meeting were reviewed.

Amendments to Previous Minutes: None.

Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 18, 2020 Regular Meeting. Commissioner Callas seconded the motion. All were in favor.

The minutes from the June 30, 2020 Special Meeting were reviewed.

Amendments to Previous Minutes: Commissioner O'Hare asked that a sentence stating that attorney – client discussions were held be added to Items Discussed in Executive Session section.

Commissioner Callas made a motion to approve the amended minutes from the June 30, 2020 Special Meeting. Commissioner Dugan Sr. seconded the motion. All were in favor.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER: Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that a new check signing process would be implemented for the next meeting. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that instead of signing an individual voucher for each check, a list of the checks to be signed that night would be emailed to the Board prior to the meeting. The Board would then approve the payments at the meeting and sign a voucher attached to the list of checks. Commissioner Dugan Sr. noted that three signatures will still be needed on each check. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that this process is being implemented as part of a corrective action to comply with the audit. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the changes to the procurement policy was sent to each of the Board members and asked for a motion to adopt it. Commissioner Quirk reported that he did not think he received it before the meeting. Commissioner Dugan Sr. outlined some of the other changes to the procurement policy. Commissioner O’Hare asked for a motion to adopt the changes to the procurement policy to comply with the Audit’s corrective action plan. Commissioner Quirk asked for a few minutes to review the document before the vote. The Board agreed to vote on this later in the meeting. After the Chief’s Report Commissioner Dugan Sr. made the motion to adopt the changes, seconded by Commissioner Quirk. All were in favor.

Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the June 2020 YTD financial reports and a preliminary July 2020 P&L were distributed to the Board. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that it did not look like the District was terribly off budget at this point but noted that the organization is only through half the year and there is some money to be made up. Commissioner Dugan Sr. felt that as long as the expenditures and overtime are kept down, and EMS income rebounds, the District will hopefully not be in as bad a position as originally thought. Commissioner Dugan Sr. noted that this is contingent on not having another COVID-19 spell.

Commissioner Callas made a motion to accept the Treasurer’s Report, seconded by Commissioner Quirk. All were in favor.

Chief DiGiorgio asked the bookkeeper when the next city tax check was expected. The bookkeeper reported that the 3rd quarter check is normally received in August.

Report of Fire Commissioner Board Committees and Chief of Department:

CHIEF'S REPORT: Chief DiGiorgio distributed his Bi-Monthly Report and outlined the following items:

Chief DiGiorgio reported that he received notification of the passing of former Chief and exempt member Robert Grabowski Sr. and noted that bunting was placed on this firehouse and the Whippany firehouse. Chief DiGiorgio noted that membership was notified.

Chief DiGiorgio reported that as outlined in the report, the Fire & EMS has gotten busier. Chief DiGiorgio noted that there were some unique calls listed on the report along with some fatalities.

Chief DiGiorgio reported that Fire Division training will resume on July 20th.

Chief DiGiorgio reported that Fire Prevention continues to do their job with 57 of 60 Life-Hazard Use Inspections completed.

Chief DiGiorgio reported that EMS Officers met with three perspective EMT Volunteer membership candidates.

Chief DiGiorgio reported that the District has participated in a good amount of Community Events this past month as outlined in the report.

Chief DiGiorgio reported that he spoke with a Deputy Chief from Belleville who contracted with a company called Millennium Strategies for the COVID reimbursement process from FEMA. Chief DiGiorgio reported that he has contacted Millennium Strategies to set up a meeting to find out if it would be beneficial for the District to contract with them. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the Deputy Chief from Belleville indicated that his district had already received some reimbursement and also got money from the county through the Cares Act. Chief DiGiorgio reported that Millennium Strategies found this money for the Belleville district and felt that it would be worth exploring. Chief DiGiorgio reported that Millennium Strategies charges fees on an hourly basis and includes their fees in the reimbursement application. Chief DiGiorgio noted that this means that the District would potentially only have to pay 25% of the actual cost of this service.

Chief DiGiorgio reported that five interviews were conducted for EMS candidates.

Chief DiGiorgio reported that the Lieutenants Reports are attached to his report.

Chief DiGiorgio concluded his report and asked if there were any questions.

Commissioner O'Hare asked for clarification on the fire code violations that were noted in Lt. McGuinness's report. Chief DiGiorgio reported that while responding to an alarm at Shoprite, it was noted that a 53-foot tractor trailer with extension cords running to it appeared to be a fixed trailer. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the violations were minor.

Commissioner Callas asked for more information on the Marriott violations. Chief DiGiorgio reported that an anonymous complaint was received on Saturday that the hotel was locking exits. Chief DiGiorgio reported that Lt. McGuinness met with a hotel representative and found seven doors were padlocked shut. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the Chief Engineer for the hotel was called and told that they needed to be removed. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the Chief Engineer refused to remove the locks. Chief DiGiorgio reported that upon hearing this, he went to the hotel on Saturday night. Chief DiGiorgio reported that he and Lt. McGuinness walked the whole facility with the engineer on duty. Chief DiGiorgio reported that two of the locks had been removed by this time but the rest remained in place. Chief DiGiorgio reported that another three were removed that night. Chief DiGiorgio reported that a happy medium was found for the rest based on the layout and utilized space of the facility. Chief DiGiorgio reported that he met with the General Manager this Tuesday and two of the doors that remained locked are being replaced with doors that will resolve the issues. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the hotel had a security issue where people not staying at the hotel were being let in. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the pool area is one of the problem areas and people who were staying there were opening the pool area door and letting in people from outside. Chief DiGiorgio reported that all the people were asked to leave the premises but returned another day and managed to gain entry again through the pool area door. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the group stole from the mini bar area on this occasion. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the pool area has 4 means of egress and that the one in the back of the area no longer has an egress sign and has planters in front of it. Chief DiGiorgio reported that in the back by the kitchen and loading dock there were four exit doors, two of which were allowed to remain locked. Chief DiGiorgio reported that other doors that were allowed to remain locked serviced the grand ballroom and other smaller ballrooms. Chief DiGiorgio noted that there are no events being held in these rooms currently and no staff is working there so one door with panic hardware was required to be open but the remainder could

be locked. Commissioner Quirk asked for clarification that the locks are temporary until the ballrooms are being used again. Chief DiGiorgio confirmed that the locks were temporary and there is signage that states No Entry on this portion of the building. Commissioner Callas was concerned that the hotel did not notify the Fire District before placing the locks and that it took an anonymous tip for the District to find out.

EMS: Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that there was a meeting on Wednesday regarding staffing attended by Commissioner O'Hare, Chief DiGiorgio, Administrator Schultz, Lt. Belott, and himself. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District is still paying a lot of overtime and there are still a lot of shifts that need to be covered. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District will continue to pay overtime each pay period because of the lack of personnel right now. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that he and the bookkeeper went over some numbers and additional numbers were gone over at the meeting. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the money that has not been spent from the EMS salary budget due to lack of personnel would cover the cost of hiring two more full time EMTs and recommended that the Board do so. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District will be in trouble by the end of the year if it continues to pay overtime out at the current rate. Commissioner Quirk asked for clarification that the recommendation was for two fulltime EMTs. Commissioner Dugan Sr. stated that he recommended hiring two fulltime EMTs. Commissioner O'Hare reported that Lt. Belott spent a lot of time analyzing the work schedule and this is what is necessary to fulfill staffing needs and continue to provide the services that the District has been providing. Chief DiGiorgio gave copies of the staffing schedule to the Board. Commissioner O'Hare noted that hiring two more fulltime EMTs, along with the current part time EMTs, would allow the District to have coverage to fill in the current voids. Commissioner O'Hare noted that this was looked at from a staffing level, a budgetary level, and a financial responsibility level. Commissioner O'Hare reported that the group looked at the situation from every angle and this is the best solution. Commissioner O'Hare reported that the EMS Committee, himself and Commissioner Dugan Sr., are recommending that the Board move forward with this plan. Commissioner Quirk reported that he has said various times that the District needs more fulltime EMS support and agreed with the plan. Asst. Chief DeSimone noted that of the candidates in the pipeline, a couple had indicated that they would be willing to work part time or fulltime.

Asst. Chief DeSimone recommended that the candidates be hired part time to try them out before switching them to fulltime. Commissioner O'Hare noted that any candidate would be hired as probationary which would address these concerns. Asst. Chief DeSimone noted that she would not want them to leave other positions in case it did not work out for them here. Commissioner Quirk asked if the District could legally hire them as part time and then give them 40 hours a week. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the policy is that anyone scheduled over 28 hours a week is eligible for health insurance because they are considered full time. Chief DiGiorgio noted that they could work 40 hours a week but could not be scheduled for it, they could be asked to fill in an open shift and agree to it. Commissioner Quirk asked if they would need to be paid overtime after 28 hours per week. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that they would only get overtime over 40 hours a week but that some of the part-time EMTs get an hourly rate of \$22 / hour, which is more than the hourly rate of a new fulltime EMT. Chief DiGiorgio noted that one of the candidates had indicated that they would not need to receive health insurance because they were getting it elsewhere. Commissioner Dugan Sr. asked if any of the candidate had another fulltime job. Asst. Chief DeSimone indicated that one of the candidates already had a fulltime job and that she would hate to see the person lose that job if they came here and did not like it. Chief DiGiorgio felt that that was a challenge with anyone who takes a fulltime job and they would have to know what they are getting into with accepting the fulltime position. Commissioner Callas asked if the new positions had been budgeted for. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the new positions were not budgeted for but there is enough budget money in the EMT Salary budget to cover the positions. Commissioner Callas asked if the need for these positions is temporary because of the pandemic. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the need was not temporary, but that there is not enough staff to cover all the open shifts. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that getting EMS volunteers and per diem employees has become increasingly difficult to do. Commissioner Quirk felt that the call volume supports having more EMS personnel. Commissioner Dugan Sr. noted that the call volume had fallen off for a few months but are now going up again. Chief DiGiorgio noted that this current two week pay period the District paid 99 hours of EMS overtime. Commissioner Callas felt that there had to be other issues that contributed to the staff shortage that need to be addressed at another time. Commissioner Dugan Sr. noted that

the District got behind the 8 ball with staffing and never caught up.

Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that there has not been enough interest in part-time and per diem positions to allow the District to fill the open shifts with this type of staff. Commissioner O'Hare asked Chief DiGiorgio to confirm that the District lost 7 people in the couple of months. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the District lost 3 Per Diems and 4 Volunteers. Commissioner Callas felt that there were other issues beyond COVID and that the Board has been talking about the staffing issue for quite a while. Commissioner Callas wanted to be sure that the Board went about solving the issue the correct way. Commissioner O'Hare reported that after analyzing all the different options, the committee felt that this is the best way to go.

Commissioner O'Hare asked Commissioner Dugan Jr. if he had any comments. Commissioner Dugan Jr. reported that he supports the hiring plan. Commissioner O'Hare asked Commissioner Quirk if he had any more comments. Commissioner Quirk had no additional comments. Commissioner O'Hare asked Commissioner Callas if he had any more comments. Commissioner Callas had no additional comments. Commissioner O'Hare asked if the Board needed to make a motion to approve the hiring plan. Commissioner Callas asked if it would require a resolution. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that there were resolutions but they were for conditional offers of employment and asked if they were specifically for fulltime positions. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the resolutions were for conditional offers of employment for compensated employment but did not state whether it would be Per Diem, Part-Time or Fulltime and were added to the agenda so the hiring process could be moved along. Commissioner Dugan Sr. felt that the Board needs to approve hiring two fulltime EMTs and also approve the conditional offers of employment for the candidates before them tonight. Commissioner Quirk asked if there were two candidates that were willing to take fulltime positions. Chief DiGiorgio reported that if the Board agrees at this juncture that the District will appoint two fulltime EMTs, there are two candidates for the full time positions. Commissioner Quirk asked how many full time EMTs the District would have under the new staffing plan. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the new plan would have 4 full time EMTs. Commissioner Quirk asked how many part time EMTs there would be. Chief DiGiorgio reported that there are currently 3 part time EMTs and the number of Per Diem EMTs is fluid. Commissioner Callas asked if this plan would have an effect on FF Sulpy. Chief

DiGiorgio reported that FF Sulpy would not be affected in his current position of firefighter / EMT.

Commissioner O'Hare reported that the District will be going out for bids for third party EMS billing.

BUDGET: Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the 2021 Budget process has not started yet but asked everyone to start thinking about items that they would like to see included in next year's budget. Commissioner Dugan Sr. noted that he would like to see the contract with the FMBA settled so that he would have solid salaries numbers for the 2021 budget. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that there will be more discussions after the Planning Committee meets again because there were some ideas that they will look into that may impact the budget. Commissioner O'Hare asked Asst. Chief DeSimone to give some thought to items that the EMS Division would like to see included in the budget. Asst. Chief DeSimone reported that there is a list of items that she will forward to Chief DiGiorgio.

PERSONNEL: Commissioner Quirk indicated that an Executive Session was needed.

NEGOTIATIONS: Commissioner Callas reported that contract negotiations with the FMBA will start at the end of summer.

LIAISON TO THE VOLUNTEERS: Chief DiGiorgio reported that there is a tentatively scheduled meeting on Tuesday and asked if the District could keep the tables and chairs until then. Commissioner Quirk preferred that the tables and chairs be kept at the firehouse until they were no longer needed instead of transporting them back and forth.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS: Nothing to report.

APPARATUS/EQUIPMENT AND MAINTENANCE: Chief DiGiorgio reported that the batteries on ambulance 38 were replaced.

INSURANCE: Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported there is a resolution before the Board tonight to change the District's Workers Compensation Insurance policy provider. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the change will save the District money and the initial prohibition on Junior Members has been resolved. Commissioner Dugan Sr. recommended that the Board approve the change in

provider. Commissioner O'Hare reported that Administrator Schultz indicated that the Workers Compensation Insurance premium would go from \$91,000 to \$77,000 per year. Commissioner Dugan Sr. noted that the saving would come in handy this year since the District is a little strapped. Commissioner O'Hare reported that Administrator Schultz worked very hard on this, both researching providers and double checking items such as the premiums, premium renewal, junior member coverage, and provider references. Commissioner O'Hare thanked Administrator Schultz for all his hard work on this matter and noted that the new provider would be Benchmark Insurance. Chief DiGiorgio noted that Administrator Schultz identified the Junior Program as the main reason that the insurance rate was so high and that when he forwarded that State Junior Program guidelines, the premium that was quoted was reduced.

COMMUNICATIONS: Nothing to report.

BY-LAWS: Nothing to report.

WEBSITE: Commissioner Dugan Jr. reported that the website is up to date.

PLANNING COMMITTEE: Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the committee has a meeting on Wednesday at 8:30 A.M.

LIASON TO EXEMPTS: Nothing to report.

RECORDS RETENTION: Nothing to report.

LIAISON TO HANOVER TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE: Nothing to report.

OLD BUSINESS: Commissioner O'Hare noted that the FEMA reimbursement item under old business has already been discussed. Chief DiGiorgio asked where the appointing of a data entry person stood. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the Board will hold off on the data entry position until a couple of items are decided. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the first item is a decision on Millennium after meeting with their representative. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the second item is deciding if Administrator Schultz and the bookkeeper can handle the data entry on their own.

Chief DiGiorgio asked if there was any progress on the staffing guidelines that he sent to the Board. Commissioner O'Hare reported that he has not had a chance to read it yet and that it is still pending.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

REMINDERS:

The next regular meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners will be held on Thursday, August 6, 2020 at 7:00 P.M.

The Joint Fire Prevention Board Meeting will be rescheduled.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None.

RESOLUTIONS:

Commissioner Quirk asked if the Board needed to discuss any of the resolutions in Executive Session prior to voting on them. Commissioner O'Hare did not think that this was necessary.

Commissioner O'Hare asked if anyone had any objections to voting by consent agenda for the following resolutions. There were no objections.

Commissioner O'Hare read Resolution 20-07-16-64 adopting the 2019 Fire District Audit.

Commissioner O'Hare read Resolution 20-07-16-65 declaring a Utility Trailer as surplus authorizing sale of the item.

Commissioner O'Hare read Resolution 20-07-16-66 appointing Part-time EMT Bergman.

Commissioner O'Hare read Resolution 20-07-16-67 to make a conditional offer of employment for Compensated EMT to A. Danielson.

Commissioner O'Hare read Resolution 20-07-16-68 to make a conditional offer of employment for Compensated EMT to T. Alimov.

Commissioner O'Hare read Resolution 20-07-16-69 withdrawing a conditional offer of employment from L. Sevillano.

Commissioner O'Hare read Resolution 20-07-16-70 terminating Per Diem EMT Watkins.

Commissioner O'Hare read Resolution 20-07-16-71 appointing Probationary FF Sulpy.

Commissioner O'Hare read Resolution 20-07-16-72 appointing Probationary FT EMT Cobleigh.

Commissioner O'Hare read Resolution 20-07-16-73 appointing Workers Compensation Insurance Provider.

Commissioner Quirk made a motion to introduce the resolutions, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Jr. All were in favor.

Chief DiGiorgio asked for clarification that the Board was authorizing him to offer two EMT candidates full time positions. Commissioner O'Hare agreed that he was authorized to do so.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Commissioner O'Hare read Resolution 20-07-16-74 to enter into closed session. Commissioner Callas made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner O'Hare. All were in favor. The Board went into closed session at 7:59 P.M.

Personnel matters were discussed. Action will not be taken.

The Board came out of closed session at 8:52 P.M.

ADJOURN: A motion was made by Commissioner Callas, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Sr., to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Thomas Quirk, Secretary