

## **August 8, 2024 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 August 8, 2024 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 Steven Cornine, Mary Lou DeSimone, Michael Dugan Sr., and Gary Keyser were present. Commissioner Michael Dugan Jr. was absent. deputy Administrator Hark Jr., FF Colin, FF Martin, FF Ujfalussy, and EMT Waldron were also in attendance.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** Commissioner Cornine read the following letter from Lt. Sulpy.

*Good Afternoon Chairman Cornine,  
I wanted to give a quick update and letter of accommodation to EMT Makar and EMT Bednarz for their quick response and exceptional patient care at yesterday's electrocution. Due to their response and patient care, the patient from that location has been extubated and is showing signs of improvement and is completely neurologically intact. If you can please share this with the Board at the August 8th meeting it would be greatly appreciated.*

### **APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:**

**The minutes from the July 18, 2024 Regular Meeting were reviewed.**

**Amendments to the Previous Minutes: None.**

**Commissioner Keyser made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 18, 2024 Regular Meeting, seconded by Commissioner DeSimone. All were in favor. Commissioner Dugan Sr. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent.**

**The minutes from the June 20, 2024 Executive Session were reviewed.**

**Amendments to the Previous Minutes: None.**

**Commissioner Keyser made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 20, 2024 Executive Session, seconded by Commissioner DeSimone. All were in favor. Commissioner Dugan Sr. abstained. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent.**

**The minutes from the July 2, 2024 Executive Session were reviewed.**

**Amendments to the Previous Minutes: None.**

**Commissioner Keyser made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 2, 2024 Executive Session, seconded by Commissioner DeSimone. All were in favor. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent.**

**REPORT OF THE TREASURER:** Commissioner Dugan Sr. distributed the July 2024 financials. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District is running slightly over budget but the District has made several large annual payments earlier this year. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that there were also some unexpected expenses such as the fire panel and another Engine 34 maintenance invoice. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that these items are the cost of doing business and the District has been very frugal in all areas.

Commissioner Cornine asked if the Board could see a P&L comparing this year to last year in addition to see if the percentage spent at this point are comparable.

Commissioner Keyser reported that the District is way over budget for Holiday pay. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that it is all EMS holiday pay. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that the amount paid is determined by who is scheduled to work the holiday and what their rate of pay is. Commissioner Cornine noted that while the District has spent 163% of the Holiday salary budget, the line itself is very small.

Commissioner Keyser reported that Unemployment Disability has also exceeded the annual budget. The bookkeeper reported that this is because the District had to make a catch up DCRP pension payment for staff that were enrolled late and a small portion of this payment is for employer paid disability insurance. The bookkeeper noted that this payment was not budgeted for.

Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that staff has been coming to himself or Commissioner Cornine for approval on spending requests such as a request for upgrades to sleeping quarters which the District had to deny due to budgetary constraints. Commissioner Dugan Sr. noted that he hated to deny the request because the District would like to make the quarters as comfortable as possible.

**Report of Fire Commissioner Board Committees and Chief of Department:**

**CHIEF'S REPORT:** Chief Martin submitted his Bi-Monthly report on July 31, 2024. The Board had no questions on the report.

**EMS:** Commissioner Keyser reported that there has been no movement regarding the talks with District 2 on EMS services and felt that the talks would probably come to an end because the Districts may be going in another direction.

**BUDGET:** Commissioner Cornine reported that he hopes to have a 2025 budget meeting next week.

**PERSONNEL:** Commissioner DeSimone reported that there will be an Executive Session.

**NEGOTIATIONS:** Commissioner Keyser reported that the Negotiation Committee and Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. met with the FMBA representatives on Tuesday and hopes to have a final contract for the Board at the next meeting.

**LIAISON TO THE VOLUNTEERS:** Nothing to report.

**BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS:** Commissioner Dugan Sr. thanked Lt. Belott's crew for their work rearranging the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor electrical devices to eliminate excess power usage in anticipation of a new server being installed. Commissioner Dugan Sr. noted that much of the electrical has been run off extension cords for years. Commissioner Keyser asked for clarification that the station generator covers the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor devices. Asst. Administrator Hark Jr. reported that the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor devices are covered but that the generator does not kick in fast enough to prevent the devices from shutting down. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that during this process it was noted that many staff store their bedding on the floor because there is no place to put it. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District found and hung some shelves to help and that he authorized the purchase of some plastic storage bins. Commissioner Cornine reported that during this process he was made aware that someone had previously suggested these changes and was shunned. Commissioner Cornine wanted everyone in the department to know that if they have any recommendations to make this place better they should go to their officer with them. Commissioner Cornine reported that if the officer is not receptive then the individual should feel free to go to another officer because everyone has the right to have their suggestions heard and considered.

Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the fire alarm panel was fried and needed to be replaced.

Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the cost of the bottled water for the dispenser has been consistently increasing and felt that the District should

consider running a water line that would provide filtered water. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that this would significantly decrease the cost of drinking water. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that there is a monthly maintenance cost for filters, etc. but it would be much less than the current monthly water cost. The Board agreed that this should be looked into.

**APPARATUS/EQUIPMENT AND MAINTENANCE:** Commissioner DeSimone asked why ambulance 38 is parked outside instead of in one of the bays out of the elements. FF Ujfalussy reported that Lt. Sulpy asked that the ambulance be moved indoors but it was discovered that the ambulance is not receiving power when plugged in and it was discovered that the plug on the ambulance is the issue. FF Ujfalussy reported that the ambulance is therefore dead and cannot be moved. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that it is scheduled to be looked at tomorrow.

Commissioner Keyser asked if the station gear washer is functional. FF Ujfalussy reported that there was an issue with the soap feeder system but after speaking with the manufacturer it was discovered that Tide pods could also be used. FF Ujfalussy noted that the automatic soap system has therefore been removed.

**INSURANCE:** Nothing to report.

**BY-LAWS:** Nothing to report.

**WEBSITE:** Up to date.

**PLANNING COMMITTEE:** Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the Planning Committee has not met in a while due to vacations.

Commissioner Cornine reported that he intends to bring up consolidation of the 2 Districts again tonight. Commissioner Cornine felt that considering everything that has been going on with budgets, staffing, etc. that consolidation is the only path forward. Commissioner Cornine reported that if this District gets its budget voted down next year the District will be hurting more financially than it currently is. Commissioner Cornine reported that the public seems to be demanding consolidation and the Districts need to consider it again. Commissioner Cornine reported that there are personnel matters that will be discussed in executive session tonight that will impact the consolidation discussions so it is his intention to come out of executive session and have a public conversation about consolidation. Commissioner Cornine reported that anyone who would like to participate in the discussion may stick around until after the executive session.

**LIASON TO EXEMPTS:** Nothing to report.

**RECORDS RETENTION:** Nothing to report.

**LIAISON TO HANOVER TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE:** Commissioner Keyser reported that he will contact Committeeman Cahill regarding anything that is discussed regarding consolidation tonight.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Commissioner Cornine reported that he spoke with Lt. Sulpy about the Power Truck and he expressed interest in starting the Power Truck trial now that there are sufficient ambulances and staffing. Commissioner Cornine noted that Lt. Sulpy has been studying the data regarding missed calls and it would be beneficial to have the Power Truck during high call volume times. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that Lt. Sulpy is basing his request on a report from the County outlining how many calls the District dropped over the last 6 months when the District was running 1 ambulance. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that the District received mutual aid 144 times from January 1 through June 1 and gave mutual aid 112 times with less than 50% overlapping. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that the minutes of March 2, 2023 BFC Meeting reflect that the Board agreed to suspend the Power Truck trial until such time as there was adequate staffing and trucks to start a 90-day trial period. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that Lt. Sulpy feels very strongly that there is adequate staffing and trucks to reimplement the Power Truck trial. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that Thursday, 9 A.M – 9 P.M., would be the set day for the trial with another day on a rotation based on where the needs are. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. noted that the Power Truck would be staffed by Part Time and Per Diem EMTs and would not create overtime. Commissioner Keyser noted that some of the time from Jan – June the District was down to 1 ambulance and that there were times that a 2<sup>nd</sup> ambulance and staff were available but not taking the 2<sup>nd</sup> ambulance call. Commissioner DeSimone asked if the ambulance would be driving around waiting for a call. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that the Power Truck would be stationed at the District 2 firehouse and would be utilized to respond to calls that it was closer to than the ambulance at the District 3 firehouse. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that based on the average EMS receipt of \$385 per call, the Power Truck would need to answer only 2 calls to cover the cost of the shift. Commissioner Keyser asked Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. to provide the Board with the data that he and Lt. Sulpy were looking at. Commissioner Keyser noted that there are outstanding repairs scheduled for some of the ambulances and they would need

to be completed prior to starting the Power Truck trial. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that Lt. Sulpy is asking for permission to start the Power Truck trial once the needed ambulances are in service and he will need lead time to schedule staffing, which is done a few weeks out. Commissioner DeSimone reported that she would like to see the new data about the high-volume days because the last time this was presented to the Board the data included COVID calls which inflated the volume. Commissioner DeSimone reported that she still is not keen on the Power Truck. Commissioner Dugan Sr. felt that the District should have a Power Truck Monday through Friday. Commissioner Cornine reported that he lands in the middle. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. felt that doing a 90-day trial will provide the best numbers as to whether it is a feasible endeavor. Commissioner Cornine noted that the Board could put a max cost on the trial after which the trial is over. Commissioner Desimone felt that the Board needs to ensure that if a 2<sup>nd</sup> rig is available with staff that it consistently goes out on the EMS call which is not currently happening all the time. Commissioner Cornine reported that this has been an inconsistent Board problem and the Board needs to say that the emergency at hand is the emergency that gets responded to if that is what it wants. Commissioner Cornine noted that the Board has in the past entertained conversations that the District is really here to provide fire protection and cannot do that if everyone responds to EMS calls. Commissioner Cornine reported that if this Board wants to ensure that the emergency call at hand is responded to then they need to work with the officers to ensure they know the Board's wishes and they need to accept that there may be a time when a fire call comes in that the District is not able to respond to. Commissioner Cornine reported that he is a big fan of emergency at hand but the Board needs to decide and stop just talking about it. Commissioner Cornine felt that Mutual Aid is set up for this reason. Commissioner Dugan Sr. felt that the Board should decide tonight instead of kicking it down the road again. EMT Waldron asked what Commissioner DeSimone's specific concerns are about the Power Truck. Commissioner Desimone reported that previous data showed inconsistent numbers, especially the call numbers that were provided. Commissioner Desimone felt the data in the previous report did not justify the need for a Power Truck. Commissioner Desimone also could not justify having an ambulance riding around Town waiting for a call like the county does and that any Power Truck should be parked somewhere. Commissioner Dugan Sr. felt that the Power Truck should be parked at the Whippany firehouse. EMT Waldron felt the Power Truck should start at the Whippany firehouse but potentially move to fill in the gap

created by other responding ambulances. Commissioner Keyser warned that there should be an ambulance here to respond to taxpayer EMS calls. EMT Waldron agreed but noted that there are some times when all ambulances are tied up even now. Commissioner Cornine felt that the Board should trust the staff to keep the Board in the loop while determining if the Power Truck makes sense. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to start the 90-day Power Truck trial when Lt. Sulpy feels that the apparatus and staffing levels are sufficient. Commissioner Keyser seconded the motion. All were in favor. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent. Commissioner Cornine noted that if Lt. Sulpy determines before the 90-day trial is over that the Power Truck does not make sense he hopes that Lt. Sulpy will exercise his judgement and shut it down. Commissioner DeSimone asked when the trial will start. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that he and Lt. Sulpy will advise the Board when the trial will start. Commissioner Cornine noted that once the trial starts it cannot be paused. Commissioner Cornine reported that administration should reach out to District 2 and Committeeman Cahill about the coming Power Truck trial. Commissioner Keyser made a motion that the District respond to the emergency at hand if someone is available to take it. Commissioner DeSimone seconded the motion. All were in favor. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent. Commissioner Cornine noted that any unintended consequences are on the Board and not the District staff. FF Martin asked if there were going to be guidelines for this or is the District responding to any emergency. Commissioner Cornine reported that in the interest of serving humanity, there is going to need to be discretion. Commissioner Cornine reported that ALS calls should be responded to if CUD says this District is closest. Commissioner Cornine reported that the Board will work with the officers to come up with a consistent policy and then publish it. Commissioner Cornine noted that this will not be mandatory until the directive can go out through the officers.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Commissioner Keyser asked what was going on with Rover because he heard service was ending. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that Rover is set to end on August 31 and is being replaced with Chief 360. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that the County will not let rover end until Chief 360 is up and running and the County hopes to have a training session roll out in the next week or two.

Commissioner Keyser reported that he is not in favor of having a Special Meeting to vote on any budget questions and felt that it should be included in the regular February election. Commissioner Cornine reported that he understands that it

does not look great but that if our District is awarded grant monies contingent on the taxpayers voting to contribute some money, then the District will be required to hold a Special Election or lose the grant money. Commissioner Cornine reported that if a Special Election is required the District needs to ensure that the residents are aware of the election and noted that there are plenty of platforms to get the word out about any election.

#### **REMINDERS:**

The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners will be held on Thursday, August 15, 2024 at 7:00 P.M.

The next Joint Fire Prevention Board Meeting will be held on Monday, September 9, 2024 at 6:30 P.M. at the District 2 Firehouse.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None.

#### **RESOLUTIONS:**

**Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-08-08-91 authorizing a COE be extended to FF/EMT Shay. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Keyser. All were in favor. Commissioner DeSimone abstained. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent.**

**Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-08-08-92 appointing Junior EMT Sakthi. Commissioner Keyser made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Sr. All were in favor. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent.**

**Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-08-08-93 appointing Volunteer EMT Hart. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Keyser. All were in favor. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent.**

**Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-08-08-94 appointing Per Diem EMT Desai. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Keyser. All were in favor. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent.**

**Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-08-08-95 accepting the resignation of Per Diem EMT Kruse. Commissioner Keyser made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Sr. All were in favor. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent.**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION: Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-08-08-96 to enter into executive session. Commissioner Keyser made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Sr. All were in favor. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent.**

**The Board went into closed session at 7:49 p.m.**

Personnel matters were discussed, and action will be taken.

**The Board came out of closed session at 8:50 p.m.**

Commissioner Cornine reported that during Committee Reports he mentioned that the Board was going to discuss things in closed session specific to personnel, which has taken place and now he wants to open the floor up to discussing consolidation of the fire districts and / or a new fire district. Commissioner Cornine reported that he has prepared a resolution for the Board to adopt that will trigger the process to consolidate into one fire district. Commissioner Cornine reported that the resolution would dissolve the current fire districts and create one new fire district. Commissioner Cornine reported that he Boards has discussed it previously and then tabled it. Commissioner Cornine reported that when he was nominated for Chairperson, he proposed doing shared service agreements between the 2 Districts which have not gone anywhere and there is no hope in sight for it. Commissioner Cornine reported that with the budgetary woes that we have and the building issues, consolidation is the only thing that makes sense. Commissioner Cornine reported that it will be best for our staff and the service of the community. Commissioner Cornine reported that he will read the resolution and then take any questions. (The resolution is available on the website.) Commissioner Cornine reported that the process will be that the District 3 Board will vote on the resolution tonight and District 2 will have an identical resolution before them at their next meeting. Commissioner Cornine reported that if the resolution is passed by both Boards it will go to the Township Committee and then the plan needs to be hashed out and brought to the DCA to be considered and go through the appropriate legal process. Commissioner Cornine reported that if everything goes through here will be a new elected Board of 5 Fire Commissioners. Commissioner Cornine reported that all the previous implementation plans will be utilized to present a new plan. Commissioner Cornine noted that if District 2 does not pass their identical resolution or chooses not to entertain it for too long then District 3 can choose to rescind their resolution. Commissioner Cornine opened the floor to questions, comments or concerns. Commissioner Cornine noted that if both Districts pass their

resolutions, it goes into the Township's hands and there are State laws and statutes that govern how it is supposed to proceed. Commissioner Keyser felt that the 2 Districts would present their plan to the Township. Commissioner Cornine reported that he wanted to be perfectly clear that the engagement of the Districts would be at the discretion of the Municipality and it is statutorily the obligation to assemble the plan. Commissioner Cornine reported that Hanover Township has communicated to the Districts a number of times that they want nothing to do with running a fire department. Commissioner Cornine reported that the Districts will compile all their problems and find actual solutions to them to put forth to a new Board. Commissioner Cornine reported that any and all stakeholders will be engaged in the process otherwise it will not be successful and there would be no point going through this. There were no questions or comments.

#### **RESOLUTIONS:**

**Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-08-08-97 to dissolve Fire District 2 and Fire District 3 and form a new Fire District. Commissioner Keyser made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Sr. Commissioner Desimone expressed some reservations but was in favor. Commissioners Cornine, Dugan Sr. and Keyser were in favor. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent.** Commissioner Cornine noted that Commissioner Dugan Jr. was spoken to about this prior to the meeting, expressed his reservations and ultimately came out in favor of the process.

Commissioner Cornine reported that he will provide District 2 and the Municipality with a copy of the resolution.

**ADJOURN: A motion was made by Commissioner Keyser, seconded by Commissioner DeSimone, to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor. Commissioner Dugan Jr. was absent.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

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Mary Lou DeSimone, Secretary