

## **January 8, 2026 Special 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 January 8, 2026 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 Gallagher, Mary Lou DeSimone, Michael Dugan Sr., Thomas Harrington, and Gary Keyser were present.

Administrator Hark Jr., Asst. Chief McGuinness, Deputy Chief Costello, Lt. Gilson, FF Martin, and members of the public were also in attendance.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** Mr. Atkinson asked how the District proposed building up the savings account if the District has to dip into savings for any amount that it goes over budget each year in future years and if any portion of the referendum would be utilized. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District does not currently have a plan to rebuild the savings account because the District is having a hard time finding enough money to operate and that the referendum money will be utilized for the 2026 operating budget with none slated for savings. Mr. Atkinson noted that if the District continues to need to dip into savings that eventually the savings will be depleted. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that at that point the District will go out of business but hoped that there will be a change coming in 2026.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

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

**The minutes from the December 18, 2025 Regular Meeting were reviewed.**

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

**Commissioner Harrington made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 18, 2025 Regular Meeting, seconded by Commissioner DeSimone. All were in favor. Commissioner Gallagher abstained.**

**The minutes from the December 4, 2025 Executive Session were reviewed.**

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

**Commissioner DeSimone made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 4, 2025 Executive Session, seconded by Commissioner Gallagher. All were in favor.**

**REPORT OF THE TREASURER:** Commissioner Dugan Sr. distributed the preliminary December 2025 financials and reported that the District is slightly over budget.

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

**MONTHLY REPORTS:** Asst. Chief McGuinness distributed his monthly report and asked if anyone had any questions. Asst. Chief McGuinness reported that tomorrow morning the old chairs in the Commissioners' Room will be removed and replacements will be brought in.

Deputy Chief Costello reported that there are currently 16 active volunteers according to the new qualifications that the Board approved and 12 inactive volunteers. Deputy Chief Costello reported that the mandatory trainings are published and they need to be done by the end of the month so there may be some changes after that.

Deputy Chief Costello reported that the changes that he proposed for the Volunteer Incentive Plan regarding standby credit have to be revisited because the current proposal causes double dipping for standby credit.

Deputy Chief Costello reported that he and Chief McGuinness are working on the 2026 training plan.

Deputy Chief Costello reported that there is one new member on the Fire side.

Deputy Chief Costello reported that he is working with FF Martin on transferring items from Car 37 to Car 31 before Car 37 is put up for sale.

Commissioner Dugan Sr. asked if there were indeed 28 operational volunteers. Deputy Chief Costello confirmed the number but noted that they are divided between active and inactive. Commissioner Keyser asked what the criteria was for an active volunteer. Deputy Chief Costello reported that the criteria are that all mandatory training requirements are completed by the end of January, making 20 calls each year, and being in good standing. Deputy Chief noted that interior firefighters are also required to have live burn training but if this requirement is not met the firefighter would just not qualify as an interior firefighter.

Commissioner Keyser reported that there are volunteer EMS coming in now and he thinks they have to do 24 hours a month. Deputy Chief Costello reported that

they are asked to do about 24 hours a month to cover shifts but it is not written anywhere. Deputy Chief Costello noted that volunteer EMS basically have to do shifts because they cannot respond from home anymore since the firehouse is staffed 24 hours. Deputy Chief Costello reported that in order to get in their 20 calls a year the volunteer EMS need to do shifts but he does not hold them to 24 hours a month only asks them. Commissioner DeSimone asked for clarification that none of this is in writing just verbal. Deputy Chief Costello confirmed that asking for 24 hours a month is not in writing but the Volunteer Incentive Plan has the 20 call and training requirement in writing. Deputy Chief Costello felt that the volunteers need to be coming out to calls because that is why they are volunteers. Commissioner DeSimone felt that saying something verbally is not the same as having it in a written document and she has a problem with it. Deputy Chief Costello agreed and reported that in addition to revising the Volunteer Incentive Plan he is writing the minimum volunteer standard so that the Incentive plan can tie into it. Commissioner DeSimone reported that the Volunteer Incentive Plan calculations need to be simplified or no one will understand them. Deputy Chief Costello reported that the double dipping issue makes the calculation more complex but agreed that it should be as simple as possible. Deputy Chief Costello reported that he will have to make sure that each volunteer is informed of their status on a monthly basis to ensure they are clear about where they stand with all the requirements. Commissioner DeSimone felt that the formula for the Volunteer Incentive Plan should be included in any document. Deputy Chief Costello reported that he will also include examples illustrating the calculations and give a presentation at one of the Fire Co. meetings. Commissioner DeSimone asked Deputy Chief Costello to have Asst. Chief McGuinness look at the revised document. Deputy Chief Costello reported that he works with both Asst. Chief McGuinness and Administrator Hark Jr. but noted that he is open to feedback from anyone.

**EMS:** Nothing to report.

**BUDGET:** Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the 2026 Budget was submitted to the State and the public hearing on the budget will be on January 15<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the 1<sup>st</sup> postcard about the 2026 Budget and referendum was mailed along with a press release and postings on social media. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the PR firm has sent over the draft 2<sup>nd</sup> mailer for the Board to review.

**PERSONNEL:** Commissioner DeSimone reported that the Board needs to go in to Executive Session.

**NEGOTIATIONS:** Nothing to report.

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

**BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS:** Commissioner Gallagher asked that the holiday wreath be removed from the building.

Commissioner Gallagher reported that the plumber has completed his work on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor men's room drain issues. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the plumber identified the reason for the back up as a Separation in the waste line under the Commissioners' Room floor. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the estimated cost to fix the waste pipe is \$15,000 so the District will not be able to perform the maintenance. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the plumber recommended some additive that the District can use in the bathroom drain until the District is able to have a new pipe run.

Commissioner Harrington commended the crews on keeping the walkways salted and asked them to shovel the crosswalk after the plow came through.

**APPARATUS/EQUIPMENT AND MAINTENANCE:** Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District is completing the paperwork on a new mechanic to perform preventative maintenance on the apparatus and possibly be used for some emergency maintenance. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District QPA recommended that the District have multiple mechanics on file so that there is no chance that the District exceeds the allowable expense threshold for a single mechanic.

Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District was involved in a couple minor crashes. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that Ambulance 39 should be back in service on Monday.

**INSURANCE:** Nothing to report.

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

**WEBSITE:** Up to date.

**PLANNING COMMITTEE:** Nothing to report.

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

**RECORDS RETENTION:** Commissioner Gallagher reported that the District is aiming to have records ready for destruction in February.

**LIAISON TO HANOVER TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE:** Commissioner Keyser reported that he attended the Township Reorganization Meeting where every Committee member gave a report for 2025 and what they are expecting to do in 2026. Commissioner Keyser reported that Committeeman Cahill made mention of the merger between Fire District 2 & 3 will be done in 2026.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Commissioner Gallagher reported that he spoke with the home owner whose property is adjacent to the District property that is leased to the Post Office about a fence with a gate that they would like to put up that would extend 22 inches onto the District property. Commissioner Gallagher reported that the fence would not disturb any existing structure and would basically be on the brush on the side of the property. Commissioner Gallagher noted that if the District agrees to the proposal that the resident would need to sign paperwork stating that the District is not responsible for the fence nor liable for any injuries that occur on the 22 inches of property or the fence. Commissioner Gallagher recommended that the District involve legal counsel to craft the agreement or contract. Commissioner Dugan Sr. felt that the agreement would need to include a clause allowing the District to terminate should they decide to sell the property at a later date. Commissioner Harrington made a motion to move forward with the process and to involve legal counsel regarding the fence and gate, seconded by Commissioner Gallagher. All were in favor.

Commissioner Gallagher reported that the post and rail fence that rotted away on the side of the firehouse needs to be replaced. Commissioner Dugan Sr. suggested lining up big boulders where the fence was and thought the District could look into getting them donated. Commissioner Keyser reported that the committee should look into options and the District will decide based on how the budget goes.

Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District received a notice from the USPS leasing agent outlining changes to the new USPS lot rental contract. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the changes include that the District is responsible for maintaining the property including plowing snow and cutting grass. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that this request is not acceptable nor is the request that the District provide the USPS with a hold harmless agreement. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District has sent the notice to the District attorney to figure out. Commissioner Dugan Sr. suggested that the

District have our attorney draw up a contract which will be presented to the USPS agent and if it is not acceptable the District will terminate any agreement with the USPS regarding the use of the parking lot. Commissioner Keyser asked for clarification because he thought that the District had already sent a contract to the USPS agent that was going to be signed. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District has been going back and forth with the agent for about a year on the contract and now it appears to be going backwards instead of forwards with it. Administrator Hark Jr. felt that the District should go through an attorney now because there is the added complication of the fence that the resident would like to put up. The Board agreed to allow the attorney to handle both potential contracts.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Commissioner Keyser reported that the District had a procurement policy in affect that expired on December 31, 2025. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to extend the procurement policy until March 31, 2026. The motion was seconded by Commissioner DeSimone. All were in favor.

**REMINDERS:**

The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners will be held on Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 7:00 P.M. at which the public will be able to comment on the 2026 budget.

The next Special Joint Fire Prevention Board Meeting is scheduled for January 19, 2026 at 7:00 P.M. at the District 3 firehouse.

The next scheduled Joint Fire Prevention Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 6:30 P.M. at the District 3 Firehouse.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None.

**RESOLUTIONS:** Commissioner Gallagher read Resolution 26-01-04-01 adopting a temporary budget for 2026. Commissioner DeSimone made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Harrington. All were in favor.

Commissioner Gallagher read Resolution 26-01-08-02 authorizing a MOA with HTPD for RFT. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Harrington. All were in favor.

Commissioner Gallagher read Resolution 26-01-08-03 authorizing shared services with Boonton. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner DeSimone. All were in favor.

**Commissioner Gallagher read Resolution 26-01-08-04 accepting the resignation of EMT Mauro. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Harrington. All were in favor.**

**Commissioner Keyser asked that Resolutions 26-01-08-05 and 26-01-08-06 be held until after Executive Session.**

**Commissioner Gallagher read Resolution 26-01-08-07 appointing Per Diem EMT Wilson. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Harrington. All were in favor.**

**Commissioner Gallagher read Resolution 26-01-08-08 appointing Per diem EMT Weinert. Commissioner DeSimone made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Sr. All were in favor.**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION: Commissioner Gallagher read Resolution 26-01-08-09 to enter into executive session. Commissioner Harrington made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Sr. All were in favor.**

**The Board went into closed session at 7:47 p.m.**

Personnel matters were discussed, and action will be taken.

**The Board came out of closed session at 8:45 p.m.**

**RESOLUTIONS: Commissioner Gallagher read Resolution 26-01-04-05 offering a COE be extended to Volunteer Firefighter Manning. Commissioner Harrington made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Sr. All were in favor.**

**Commissioner Gallagher read Resolution 26-01-04-06 offering a COE be extended to Volunteer Junior EMT Kuo. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner DeSimone. All were in favor.**

Commissioner Gallagher made a motion to create a list of FF/EMT candidates that will remain in effect for 1 year, seconded by Commissioner Harrington. All were in favor.

Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to update the TD signature cards to have Commissioners Mary Lou DeSimone, Michael Dugan Sr., Robert Gallagher, Thomas Harrington, and Gary Keyser along with Administrator James Hark Jr. listed as signatories and have Theresa Timper-Lepore added as a conductor of

business. Commissioner Dugan Sr. clarified that Administrator Hark Jr. will also have online access and Theresa Timper-Lepore will have read online access and the ability transfer between the 5 District accounts. Commissioner DeSimone seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Commissioner Keyser asked when the Board will appoint the Chief of Department. Administrator Hark Jr. reported that the Board will appoint the Chief effective the second to last pay period in January or the 1<sup>st</sup> of February with the formal swearing in taking place in March.

Commissioner Keyser noted that the Chief submits a monthly report for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Board meeting of the month and questioned whether the Chief needs to be present at the 1<sup>st</sup> Board meeting each month. Commissioner DeSimone felt he did not have to come to the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting. Commissioner Dugan Sr. felt that the Chief should be present at all Board meetings in case questions came up for him. Commissioner Harrington agreed with Commissioner Dugan Sr. Asst. Chief McGuinness reported that he does not mind coming to both meetings and suggested playing it by ear. The Board agreed.

**ADJOURN: A motion was made by Commissioner Harrington, seconded by Commissioner Gallagher, to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

---

Robert Gallagher, Secretary