

Regular Meeting of the
Board of TFD Fire Commissioners

DRAFT -- Meeting Minutes – March 15, 2023
Thompsonville Fire Station, 35 N. Main Street, Enfield, CT

1. Call to Order:

By Comm. Perry at 7:02 pm.

2. Roll Call:

Present were Comm. Perry, Comm. Gillespie, Comm. Bouthiette, Comm. Pliszka, and Comm. Crowley (arrived at 7:12 pm). Also, present were Chief Deskis and Administrative Asst. Steneri.

MOTION *to incorporate a presentation into the Treasurer's report regarding tax collection and billing* made by Comm. Perry, seconded by Comm. Pliszka.

Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 4-0.

3. Treasurer's Report:

Maureen Brennan, Secretary/Treasurer of Enfield Fire District 1's Board of Fire Commissioners, said she contacted Quality Data Services company. The Town of Enfield uses this company for their tax billing. I contacted them to see what options there were. Ms. Brennan discussed several cost proposals, what services are included, and answered questions.

The Board thanked Ms. Brennan for coming to the meeting and giving the presentation.

Comm. Perry said Lisa Foy is going to give the Treasurer's report. Ms. Foy said the cash utilized for the month of February was \$160,000. The District is still below budget through February. The salaries are down and so the related accounts are down as well. The pension contribution was scheduled for February but it wasn't made. Admin. Asst. Steneri said our pension management company was supposed to send me the paperwork for direct deposit. The District is also under budget due to the government grant received that was not included in the budget. So, I don't think you will go over your budget. Comm. Perry said that additional money will be used towards the next budget.

Comm. Perry asked Ms. Foy to attend any upcoming budget meetings. The Board will decide on several dates, give them to Ms. Foy, and adjust them if needed.

Comm. Perry said that means we are looking okay. Ms. Foy said the budget is on track. It could go the other way with a few events.

The Board thanked Ms. Foy for giving the report.

4. Chief's Report:

Chief Deskis said the union negotiations are almost complete. It should be voted on shortly.

Chief Deskis said the department responded to a structure fire in Suffield this past weekend. The members did a good job. That department has been using our more often because they don't have someone in charge at the moment. There is a rumor going around that I am going to be the new Fire Chief for the Suffield Fire Department. I have spoken to the members here. I enjoy working at this department. The person that spread that rumor will be disciplined.

Chief Deskis said I received an estimate for the surge protector. I spoke with Comm. Gillespie about it.

Chief Deskis said our old SCBAs were sold for \$2,500. They will be shipped out to Chili later this week.

Chief Deskis said several hydrants in our district have been hit by vehicles. I'm glad we budgeted money for repairs because we have fixed two already.

Chief Deskis said there are safety messages on Ring cameras that say Thompsonville Fire District #2. This is a new platform to put out to the community. A message was sent out for yesterday's storm.

Chief Deskis said the department has applied for two grants. One is from CT Water Company and the other is from FM Global.

Chief Deskis said I have handed out my proposed budget requests. There are explanations for everything I have put into the budget. Please review and make any suggestions or changes. There is a significant increase in the proposed budget due to union contract negotiations. Negotiations have been going on for almost a year and we have to make up for that one year. Comm. Perry said that is a one-time payment though.

Chief Deskis said Comm. Pliszka had looked up the numbers for excess funds. There is \$705,920. We received a supplemental check for \$41,631. The car taxes we got

was \$353,177. The Fire Marshal fees are \$90,185. That is a total of over one million dollars. That has to be spent in the budget coming up. The Board can decide how to use that money.

Chief Deskis said one of the sheets includes the formulations for the Union's wages. It includes salaries, Social Security, overtime, and increases over the years.

Comm. Perry asked is the mill rate listed on your sheets. Chief Deskis replied yes. That million dollars will keep the mill rate the same. Comm. Pliszka asked what does that mill rate do. Does it pay off the truck? Chief Deskis said that is not the total with the truck paid off. That million dollars is keeping the mill rate the same with the increase in salaries. There is \$900,000 that can be used to pay off the apparatus.

Comm. Pliszka asked are the salaries broken down by number of employees. Chief Deskis replied yes. Comm. Pliszka asked him to send the Board all of that information.

Comm. Pliszka said I noticed that some of the employees' retro pay is the same. Does this include overtime? Chief Deskis said that is what they are owed over the time period of contract negotiations. Comm. Pliszka said those numbers should all be different. Chief Deskis said right. Comm. Pliszka said a lot of these numbers are the same though. They are going to have to be readjusted.

Comm. Perry said we need to schedule some budget meetings. I would like to have them on Comm. Pliszka's days off. Comm. Pliszka said I am not here next week but I am available any time after that. Comm. Perry said we will need to have at least two meetings. Chief Deskis said I am going to need our accountant's and the Union's help figuring out the overtime. It's going to be too much to get all those numbers in a two week period. Comm. Perry said we are going to have to review this budget line item by line item.

Comm. Pliszka said some of these numbers went down. Chief Deskis said a member came off of heart and hypertension. The trust was overfunded so that went down.

Comm. Perry said I don't see the payment for the apparatus on here. Chief Deskis said we have to figure out what we are going to do about that. Comm. Perry said this is a working budget so we have to have a meeting to go over this.

Comm. Crowley asked is there any retro pay owed to the chief and the administrative assistant. Chief Deskis said no because we are not in the Union. Comm. Perry said the Board hasn't discussed their raises. Comm. Crowley said I just don't want to get caught short-handed. Comm. Perry said the Board has to work on the budget.

Chief Deskis said the Union still has to vote on the contract. Comm. Perry said they vote on it. Then it is presented to us and we vote on it. Then it has to be posted on our website. Admin. Asst. Steneri said it can be posted on our website but it is not required to be. Comm. Pliszka said the charter says the Board is authorized to approve labor

contracts. All labor contracts must be voted on and approved in public. Comm. Perry said maybe that is where I got the public part.

The Board members discussed possible meeting dates. The Board agreed to hold a budget meeting on March 22, 2023.

Comm. Gillespie asked about vacation and sick-time payout. Comm. Pliszka said that is only budgeted when a person is eligible to retire. Comm. Gillespie asked what about the inspector's salary. There are things in here that I have questions about. Comm. Perry said we can discuss all these things at the budget meeting. This is a very rough draft.

5. Public Communications:

Firefighter Miarecki said it seems like the Board is hesitant about consolidation. My concern is being the last district invited in. I want our district to have some say in it. The longer we wait, the less say we are going to have.

Comm. Perry said I am going to suspend the rule about going back and forth. The biggest thing for the other districts is the staffing. We already have the staffing. There has to be another district to consolidate with and there has to be a plan. The other districts aren't at that point yet. We can't have a consolidation committee if the other districts aren't ready to consolidate. All the districts do talk about consolidation. It is something that this district wants to go forward with. We want to consolidate; we just don't have another district to consolidate with at this point in time. Chief Deskis said I have asked about what their consolidation plans are and it falls on deaf ears. Comm. Bouthiette said we are an established department. We have everything in place. We have to protect our assets and the body. Firefighter Miarecki said I understand what everyone is saying. I don't want to be the last district to consolidate. That was a concern of mine. Comm. Perry said we are staying on top of this. Right now, Hazardville and Shaker Pines aren't taking any other districts. Chief Deskis said the Town says we need to put a plan together but we can't do that when we don't know what we are doing. Comm. Crowley said the most important thing is that our members don't get left out. In the past the other districts did not want to consolidate with us because of our debt. I would love to see consolidation but knowing that our members are safe. Comm. Perry said Hazardville and Shaker Pines are consolidating because of staffing. Once those two are consolidated then another district can be added.

6. Commissioners' Communications:

None.

7. Old Business:

None.

8. New Business:

None.

9. Approval of Minutes from February 15 regular meeting:

Admin. Asst. Steneri said there are no minutes for February's meeting. I did not attend the meeting and I don't think it was recorded. Chief Deskis said my recording is messed up.

Comm. Pliszka said I think we missed discussing the department credit card and surge protectors. Comm. Gillespie said the surge protectors are done. We just need to figure out which company we are going to use.

Comm. Pliszka said what about the credit card. Chief Deskis said he got an M&T Bank application. We can bring it to the next meeting. Admin. Asst. Steneri said it can be added to the budget workshop meeting's agenda.

Comm. Pliszka said we should still talk about the surge protectors. There are three bids. I would like to have Comm. Gillespie pick one. Comm. Gillespie said I reviewed the last bid that was sent to me. My concern is there is not a lot in it. I think the best price is with Bartholomew Electric. Comm. Pliszka asked which option do you like. Comm. Gillespie said the second option. I know it's more expensive but it is going to supply us with what we need. Storm season is coming. We could stop losing things quickly. This needs to be done.

Comm. Pliszka asked what area will the money to do this come from. Chief Deskis said the building fund. Comm. Gillespie said in the long run we are going to save money by not paying for things that are broken. This is something that should have been done when the station was built.

10. Executive Session: a) Personnel: Chief Deskis and Administrative Assistant Steneri:

MOTION to enter into Executive Session made by Comm. Crowley, seconded by Comm. Perry. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 4-0 with Comm. Pliszka abstaining. Comms. Perry, Bouthiette, Crowley, and Gillespie and Admin. Assistant Steneri entered into Executive Session at 8:11 pm. Admin. Assistant Steneri left Executive Session at 8:26 pm. Chief Deskis entered into Executive Session at 8:27 pm.

Out of Executive Session at 8:50 pm.

11. Possible Action regarding Executive Session:

MOTION *to give Administrative Assistant Steneri a three percent raise starting July 1, 2023* made by Comm. Crowley, seconded by Comm. Perry. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 4-0.

12. Adjourn:

MOTION *to adjourn* made by Comm. Crowley, seconded by Comm. Perry. All in favor by ayes at 8:52 pm.