

Regular Meeting of the
Board of TFD Fire Commissioners

APPROVED -- Meeting Minutes – September 20, 2023
Thompsonville Fire Station, 35 N. Main Street, Enfield, CT

1. Call to Order:

By Comm. Perry at 7:00 pm.

2. Roll Call:

Present were Comm. Perry, Comm. Bouthiette, Comm. Gillespie, Comm. Pliszka, and Comm. Crowley. Also, present were Lindsey Allard, Beirne Wealth Consulting Services, Chief Deskis, and Administrative Assistant Steneri.

3. Update from Beirne Wealth Consulting Services:

Ms. Allard said it's very nice to see everyone. I met with some of the employees to go over their 457 plans. If anyone has questions, feel free to call me. We still have concerns regarding market volatility. The Fed chose not to raise interest rates today but may do so later in the year. That will bring more volatility to the stock and bond market.

Ms. Allard reviewed the performance report as of June 30, 2023.

4. Chief's Report:

Chief Deskis said the department won a \$71,000 grant through the AFG FEMA assistance program. Congressman Joe Courtney stopped the station on September 11th to see what equipment we will be replacing.

Chief Deskis said the new apparatus is in Connecticut. The truck is very nice. I am impressed with the work that the apparatus committee did.

Chief Deskis said the government trust is doing well. Our plan manager, Anthony Pace, would like to come to the next board meeting to discuss the plan.

Chief Deskis said the station is still having plumbing issues. A plumbing company that visited the station is going to send an estimate. The pipes have ninety degree bends. The floor will have to be dug up. It should not affect the heating in the floor.

Chief Deskis said the department has a new firefighter, Dan Kosicki. He started this month.

Chief Deskis said he will be having ankle surgery next Friday and will be out for a week or two. I will be able to come to the office after that but can't respond to calls.

Comm. Perry said the pitch on the floor might be causing the plumbing issues as well. Chief Deskis said Roto-Rooter used a camera to inspect the pipes and gave us a quote. Captain Richardson said there might be an issue with the concrete. Comm. Crowley asked who designed the plumbing. Chief Deskis said it's in the book. The warranty has expired. Comm. Crowley said this needs to be fixed as soon as possible.

5. Treasurer's Report:

None.

6. Public Communications:

Captain Provencher said the Union would like to continue the labor management meetings. We would like to discuss the deputy fire marshals. The MOU is ending soon.

Captain Provencher said the Union would like to discuss the Covid policy. Comm. Perry said that is more of a personnel issue. Chief Deskis said that is the old policy. Captain Provencher said the MOU expired when the public health crisis ended. We would just like some clarification. Comm. Perry said that can be discussed with the chief. Captain Provencher said it should be discussed before the policy is implemented.

7. Commissioners' Communications:

Comm. Pliszka asked did the department received a check for Scott Ellis's gear. Admin. Asst. Steneri said yes.

Comm. Pliszka said the storm drain in the back parking lot is sinking. It floods back there. Special Operations should come and do a training exercise. Chief Deskis said he will mention it at the chiefs' meeting tomorrow.

8. Old Business: a) Update on Tax Collection, b) Alarm Panel Repair, c) Lawn Repair, d) Robert's Rules of Order, e) Charter Revision Commission, f) Official Department Photographer:

Update on Tax Collection:

Comm. Perry said she, Comm. Pliszka, and Admin. Asst. Steneri attended a meeting at Enfield fire station regarding tax collection. The District only has an MOU with the Town and they can back out any time. A draft contract is included in your packets. I'm sure everyone has questions about it. My concerns are the first installment, their line of credit, and a four percent increase in fees every year. If the Board members can submit their questions to Admin. Asst. Steneri by next week, she can compile them and email them to Dan. Then we can have the answers in writing. Comm. Gillespie said he agreed with that.

Comm. Perry said the District needs to start moving on this. Comm. Pliszka said the districts' numbers are all wrong. Comm. Perry said she isn't sure if all of the other districts will go with this company. All of their figures are based on five districts. Comm. Pliszka said Shaker Pines has already said no. Hazardville will probably say no. Enfield Fire discussed it. Comm. Perry said North Thompsonville is going to do it. But they have to look over everything. We will have to explain that people will receive a separate bill from the fire departments.

Comm. Crowley asked will the Tax Assessor handle all of the appeals. Comm. Perry said yes. The District will have to pay people back. The appeals are against the assessment. The District does not do the assessment.

Comm. Pliszka said the tax bills will be sent out in July. The District will receive one hundred percent of its money by September 15th. About fifty percent of people use escrow so we will receive that money right away. The company needs to know by February if we are going to do this. We need to look into the cost of drop boxes. Comm. Perry said it all has to do with the setup.

Comm. Pliszka said a newsletter will be included with people's tax bills. People who have an escrow account will receive an index card stating the amount paid to the fire district.

Comm. Perry said this decision needs to be made on a timely basis. There is going to be a lot of education to the public. All of the districts will do this together. There is a lot of work that has to be done.

Comm. Pliszka said some of the districts think they are going to receive interest for late payments. They will not. Comm. Perry said the districts don't receive interest from the Town right now.

Comm. Pliszka said we have to figure out the drop boxes. Comm. Perry said our drop box is going to be secure.

Comm. Crowley said this is something that the districts didn't initiate.

Alarm Panel Repair:

Chief Deskis said Total Security Protection Systems' bid came under. I'm not sure if things are running smoothly there. Comm. Perry said you will have to go and talk to the company. Comm. Gillespie said let's get it done.

Lawn Repair:

Chief Deskis asked do we want to do the lawn this year. Comm. Bouthiette said the prices were high. Chief Deskis said one bid was \$4,500. Comm. Bouthiette said that is ridiculous. We can buy grass seed. Now is the time to plant it.

Comm. Perry said it's going to be hard to put topsoil on. Chief Deskis said the yard is all sand. Comm. Perry said maybe we can use plants and mulch.

Comm. Pliszka asked are they going to dig up outside due to the plumbing issues. Chief Deskis said they are going to have to know where all the bends are. There is an oil separator outside.

Comm. Crowley said he agrees with Comm. Bouthiette. Now is the time for grass seed.

Comm. Perry said we are going to hold off on that.

Robert's Rules of Order:

Comm. Perry said there are some things that we are not following. Certain things need to be done at the beginning of the meeting like moving items on the agenda and approval of minutes.

Comm. Perry said executive session can be called at a regular meeting if needed. That can't be done during a special meeting. Admin. Asst. Steneri said a special meeting's agenda cannot be changed.

Comm. Bouthiette said the Pledge of Allegiance is said at the beginning of meetings. Comm. Crowley said it is not part of Robert's Rules but it's something the Board can accept.

Charter Revision Commission:

Comm Perry said with everything that is going on right now, that is a big task to take on. Our attorney has to review the Charter to see what can be changed. Comm. Crowley said everything is on the table any time a charter is opened up. Comm. Perry said we can open it up if there is something big enough that we have to change.

Comm. Perry said she thinks this should be tabled at this time. Comm. Pliszka said it is a huge task. There were hours of research. Comm. Perry said we would need people from the district.

MOTION to table *Charter Revision Commission* made by Comm. Bouthiette, seconded by Comm. Crowley. Discussion: Comm. Crowley said there is no time available. Roll Call- Motion passed 5-0.

Official Department Photographer:

Chief Deskis said he would like to hold off on it. Comm. Gillespie said this was discussed at the last meeting about insurance. Why is this person still riding in our trucks? Chief Deskis said we have a liability waiver form. Comm. Gillespie said he doesn't agree with it. It is a liability issue and we are going to get ourselves into a jam.

Comm. Crowley said he doesn't have a problem with a photographer as long as it is done in a positive manner. Comm. Perry said he would have to show us his pictures before they went out. Comm. Crowley said I'm in favor of it as long as he doesn't get in the members' way. Chief Deskis said it is up to the officer to decide if he rides on the truck or not. The officer is in charge of the person in the truck. Comm. Gillespie said this is not a ride along. This person is here all the time. Comm. Bouthiette said he is has a problem with making this person an official part of the department. If he is taking pictures for the department, then the department is liable. It's fine if he wants to do that on his own. Comm. Crowley said he is in favor of him riding along as long as he is not officially part of this place. Chief Deskis said he will call the insurance company tomorrow about the waiver form. Comm. Crowley said he would have to sign the form every time he rides with us. Comm. Perry said he would need to sign a form saying he is not part of the department and he does not represent it. Comm. Bouthiette said this is for anyone who rides along.

Comm. Pliszka suggested contacting the police department to see what kind of form they use. It says Thompsonville Fire Department Photo Unit on his Facebook posts. That means he is connected with the department. Comm. Bouthiette said he cannot put that on there. Chief Deskis said he will talk with him.

MOTION to not have an official department photographer made by Comm. Perry, seconded by Comm. Crowley. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 5-0.

9. New Business: a) Liaison Report – Smoke Detectors, b) Knox Box Policy, c) New District Attorney, d) Employee Covid Policy, e) Commissioners' Terms Ending Dates List:

Liaison Report – Smoke Detectors:

Comm. Pliszka said the chief has purchased smoke detectors. The department is going to purchase carbon monoxide detectors as well. Firefighter DeMur volunteered to be in charge of this. Chief Deskis said we have ordered doorknob brochures.

Comm. Crowley asked is the department going to hand them out. Chief Deskis said our members will go and install one if somebody calls and asks for one. Comm. Pliszka said the department will install the detectors. They will only be for Thompsonville Fire residential homes. This is part of the community development line item.

Firefighter Falletti asked about liability protection for installing the detectors. What happens if there is a fire and the detectors don't work? Comm. Crowley said we will check with our attorney but you would not be personally responsible. It would be the department itself. Comm. Perry said we will check. Comm. Pliszka said the department has installed detectors before with the We Care program.

Comm. Gillespie said the code for smoke detectors has changed over the last ten years. There has to be a smoke detector in every bedroom and hallway on every floor. An electrician has to install them. The District needs to look into this. Comm. Crowley said maybe the department can provide but not install them. Chief Deskis said that code pertains to smoke detectors that have battery powered backup. Comm. Gillespie said no. And the detectors are supposed to be interconnected. Comm. Pliszka said we will look into it.

Knox Box Policy:

Comm. Pliszka said the department has been getting away from putting Knox boxes on buildings. We need to get back to it with a new fire marshal coming in. Chief Deskis said it is required on every pre-plan or plan review. We won't issue a CO unless one is there.

New District Attorney:

Comm. Perry said Atty. Carl Landolina is taking a step back from fire departments. We use him for all of our municipal work. He was excellent. He worked with the charter and charter revision committees. We got the name of an attorney from the Enfield Fire Department. Comm. Pliszka, Chief Deskis, and I met with him last week. His firm does all kinds of work but I like keeping different firms for different matters. I would like to consider hiring this person.

Comm. Crowley said he is in favor of keeping it separate also. It is best not to put all of our eggs in the same basket. Comm. Perry agreed.

Comm. Pliszka said his rate is only two hundred dollars an hour. A paralegal is only ninety-five dollars. Comm. Perry said he is very knowledgeable and personable. Comm. Pliszka said he was unavailable to attend tonight's meeting.

MOTION to hire *Richard Roberts of the Halloran Sage firm for municipal affairs* made by Comm. Pliszka, seconded by Comm. Crowley. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 5-0.

Employee Covid Policy:

Chief Deskis said he will sit with Captain Provencher to talk about it. There are no big changes. It just needs to be updated.

Commissioners' Terms Ending Dates List:

Comm. Perry said the commissioners' terms list was included in the packets.

Comm. Pliszka asked that the terms be posted to the website.

10. Approval of Minutes from August 16 Regular Meeting:

MOTION for the approval of the minutes from August 16th regular meeting, made by Comm. Perry, seconded by Comm. Bouthiette. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 4-0 with Comm. Crowley abstaining.

11. Executive Session: a) Heart and Hypertension, b) Personnel: Pay Rate Increase for Chief Deskis:

MOTION to enter into Executive Session made by Comm. Perry, seconded by Comm. Crowley. Discussion: Comm. Perry said Chief Deskis is going to be called in to discuss the fire marshal position. Roll Call- Motion passed 5-0. Comms. Gillespie, Crowley, Perry, and Bouthiette entered into Executive Session at 8:00 pm.

Comm. Pliszka entered into Executive Session after the heart and hypertension discussion.

Chief Deskis entered into Executive Session after the pay rate increase discussion.

Out of Executive Session at 8:36 pm.

12. Possible Action regarding Executive Session:

Heart and Hypertension:

MOTION *to move forward with the lawyer*, made by Comm. Bouthiette, seconded by Comm. Crowley. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 4-0 with Comm. Pliszka abstaining.

Personnel: Pay Rate Increase for Chief Deskis:

MOTION *to make a pay rate increase for the chief at three percent*, made by Comm. Perry, seconded by Comm. Crowley. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 4-1 with Comms. Perry, Bouthiette, Crowley, and Pliszka voting for and Comm. Gillespie voting against.

Fire Marshal Position:

MOTION *for applicant on file to hire for fire marshal position*, made by Comm. Bouthiette, seconded by Comm. Crowley. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 4-1 with Comms. Perry, Bouthiette, Crowley, and Pliszka voting for and Comm. Gillespie voting against.

13. Adjourn:

MOTION *to adjourn* made by Comm. Crowley, seconded by Comm. Perry. All in favor by ayes at 8:40 pm.