

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
Pennington Borough Fire District No. 1
P.O. Box 387
Pennington, NJ 08534

MINUTES April 16, 2019

Robert DiFalco and Brian Hofacker were sworn in as Commissioners prior to the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

The regularly scheduled meeting was called to order by Commissioner Blackwell at 7:30 p.m. at the Pennington Firehouse, following adequate notice under the Open Public Meetings Law (annual notice published in the Times of Trenton and the Hopewell Valley News, filed with the municipal clerk, posted at the Pennington Borough Municipal Building and Board offices, posted on the fire district's web site and provided to any person requesting same in advance of the meeting).

ROLL CALL

Present by roll call were Commissioners Mark Blackwell, Bill Meytrott, Bob DiFalco, Brian Hofacker and Wayne Blauth. Absent: None. Also present were Chief Gaudio, and Attorney Griswold.

Elections and Appointments-

A. Nominations: On a Motion by Cmsr. Hofacker and seconded by Cmsr's Blackwell, Blauth, Meytrott and DiFalco, and passed, the same individuals were nominated to fill of offices they held during 2018.

The following commissioners were elected to hold office until the next annual election:

Chairman – Mark Blackwell
Vice-Chairman – William Meytrott
Secretary – Wayne Blauth
Treasurer – Robert DiFalco

B. Appointments: The following appointments were made by Chairman Blackwell:

Chief Financial Officer – Robert DiFalco
LOSAP Administrator – Peter Hallock
Public Agency Compliance Officer – Brian Hofacker (previously appointed)
Public Records Custodian – Wayne Blauth

PUBLIC COMMENT – Nina Galletto, a resident of Pennington Borough, addressed the board regarding the possibility of reducing the hours during which the audible emergency siren is used. She mentioned other towns where sirens are silenced during the overnight hours and inquired why electronic notification of emergency responders would not be a viable alternative during these hours. Her family, including young children, relocated to Pennington while the siren was inactive due to damage sustained during Hurricane Sandy and she was unaware that there ever was or would be an audible emergency siren in the borough. The board recognized the issue, which has been intermittently raised over the years, and explained that until a better and more reliable

dispatch and communication system is adopted at the county level (Mercer County controls all emergency service dispatch and communication for the fire services) board members do not feel they would be doing their duty to the population they serve, nor are they comfortable with silencing the audible siren. By contract the Board is responsible for providing fire protection to a significant portion of Hopewell Township in addition to Pennington Borough. During the time the siren was out of service there was a noticeable decline in the number of responders. With the siren providing supplemental audible notification to firefighters response has increased. Further, whether due to volume, or to dispatch procedures, or for some other reason (topography, for example), texts and pages sent to firefighters by County Dispatch are sometimes delayed, and at times some firefighters don't receive them at all. In these instances it is only the audible siren that first alerts those responders (fire company and 2nd call EMS) that their services are needed. Public feedback over the years shows that the siren also provides an inestimable sense of relief to those who have made an emergency call to 9-1-1 as a signal that help will be coming, and as a warning to those in the community that emergency vehicles will soon be on the streets. Until a fail-safe system of emergency dispatch and communication exists board members do not want to be the ones to silence the siren, an effective tool in their arsenal, with the result that something falls through the cracks and results in disaster.

Elizabeth Haines, a borough resident for the past 20 years, spoke briefly in support of those who have moved to the borough and didn't know the siren existed. She also inquired as to whether feasible alternatives to the nighttime audible siren exist.

CHIEF'S REPORT

There were 32 calls in March, 2019: 7 of them in Pennington Borough, 16 in the Township, 2 in Hopewell Borough and 7 other. Calls included an auto/machinery fire, a motor vehicle rescue, a residential fire, a HazMat situation and a CO incident. 3 scheduled drills were held, including an extrication drill at which Cmsr. DiFalco stopped by.

- Engine 51 – Tire was repaired during the month.
- Fuel Pump Key – Located.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion by Cmsr. Hofacker, seconded by Cmsr. Meytrott and passed, the minutes of the December 18, 2019 meeting were approved as presented.

On a motion by Cmsr. Blauth, seconded by Cmsr. Blackwell and passed, the minutes of the March 19, 2019 meeting were approved with a notation to be made to the Treasurer's report – payment approved to AmTrust North America in the amount of \$15,043.00 was not delivered (check voided) because prior to the renewal of the AmTrust policy the board secured workers' compensation coverage through a new carrier (Benchmark Insurance) at a significantly lower cost.

TREASURER'S REPORT

A copy of the treasurer's report was made available to each Commissioner with a list and description of the bills to be paid. After certification that there are sufficient encumbered and unencumbered funds in the 2019 budget to pay the bills as presented and supplemented, on a Motion by Cmsr. Hofacker, seconded by Cmsr. Meytrott and passed, **Resolution 2019-18** - Paying bills in the amount of \$32,835.70 (which includes payment for bookkeeping services held over from last month), and amending **Resolution 2019-17** to remove payment to AmTrust North America (\$15,043.00) from the March 19, 2019 list of bills approved for payment, was passed on roll call vote.

OLD BUSINESS

- 2018 Audit – Underway.
- Sale of Old Aerial – No update.
- Lease with Fire Company – Discussion between the parties underway.
- SOG's –No update.
- Outstanding Pagers – No update.
- Rescue bumper lights – The chief will pick up and install.
- Insurance – After fire company officials have reviewed current policies a joint discussion with the board and its insurance broker will be scheduled if necessary.

- Truck Committee - Continues to meet and expects to finalize specs in the near future. The township board will be given the opportunity to review the truck specs prior to this board awarding a contract.
- Holmatro Extrication Tool – Dpt'y. Chief DeForte will contact the company representative regarding billing for the first year service fee.

NEW BUSINESS

- 1st Responder Network – 1st Net (division of AT&T), in connection with a federal government program, markets a GPS network for vehicles that will enable the chiefs to track the location of apparatus in the course of responding to calls. The system is currently in use and recommended by the Hopewell Township and Borough fire departments. There is a monthly charge for the wireless cards but no contract required. The modems are free; the cost of ancillary set-up equipment (antennas, wiring, etc.) is a total \$1,620.00 for the district's 6 emergency response vehicles.

- Surplus Gear - The chief presented an inventory of out-of-date, unserviceable surplus gear (ripped, fire damaged, etc.) the value of which, if any, is less than 15% of the district's bid threshold. After discussion, on a Motion by Cmsr. Meytrott, seconded by Cmsr. DiFalco and passed, **Resolution 2019-19** - Authorizing the disposal of unsaleable surplus property no longer needed for public purposes was passed.

- Insurance - Cmsr. Hofacker will prepare a draft policy addressing criteria for off-duty insurance benefits.

-Requisitions: On a motion by Cmsr. Blackwell, seconded by Cmsr. Meytrott and passed, the following requisitions were ratified/approved; purchase orders were/will be issued.

2019-21	Service Tire Truck Center	Tire repair – Engine	\$765.50	Truck Repair (05)
2019-22	Hopewell Twp.	Fuel	\$ 617.19	Gas and Oil
2019-23	NAPA	A/C compressor parts	\$ 300.64	Truck Repair (05)
2019-24	Al's Sunoco	Headlight repair – Durango	\$237.08	Truck Repair (05)
2019-25	Al's Sunoco	Service - Durango	\$ 43.50	Truck Repair (05)
2019-26	Middlesex Cty Training Academy	FF1 Classes (2 people)	\$682.00	Training & Educ. (06)
2019-27	Fail Safe, Inc.	Annual Testing (hose, ladder, nozzles, hard sleeve, pumps)	\$7,237.00	Equip. Repair (03)
2019-28	Associates Wireless	1 st Net	\$1,620.00	Training & Educ. (06)
2019-29	EDIAFC	Chief's Conference	\$ 150.00	Training & Educ. (06)

CLOSED SESSION (9:40 p.m.)

On a motion by Cmsr. Blackwell, seconded by Cmsr. Hofacker and passed, **Resolution 2019 - 20** - Authorizing a closed session of the board was approved by roll call vote. The board may reconvene at the conclusion of its closed session.

Return to open session at 11:00 pm.

- Engine Room Floor Resurfacing - Due to budgetary and logistical constraints the board decided it isn't feasible nor advisable at this time to proceed any further with plans or discussions to resurface the floor. There was no determination as to when, or in what manner the project may be revisited.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board the meeting adjourned at 11:09 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Board will be held at 7:30 p.m. on May 21, 2019.