

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

MINUTES August 17, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

The regularly scheduled remote 'Zoom' meeting was called to order by Chairman Blackwell at 7:30 p.m. following adequate and electronic notice under the Open Public Meetings Law and N.J.A.C. 5:39 (annual meeting notice including information on how the public could access and participate in the remote meeting, make public comment and where relevant documents, if any, would be made available published in the Times of Trenton (1/27/21) and Hopewell Valley News (1/29/21), provided to Packet Publications and Hopewell Express, sent to the Borough Clerk for filing and posting and posted on the board's website, at the firehouse entrances and at board offices, as well as provided to any person requesting same in advance of the meeting.

ROLL CALL

Present by roll call were Commissioners Mark Blackwell, Bob DiFalco, Ryan Fraser, Brian Hofacker and Rob Ingram. Absent: None. Also present were Chief DeForte, Deputy Chief Demareski, Ass't. Chief Baldorossi, Lt. Rodriguez, Joe Carducci and Attorney Griswold.

CHIEF'S REPORT

There were 59 calls in July, 2021: 11 in Pennington Borough, 37 in the Township, 4 in Hopewell Borough and 7 other. Calls included 4 residential, 1 non-residential, 5 motor vehicle/rescue, 5 wires/transformer, 1 trash/dumpster, 1 gas leak and 4 CO alarms. There were 17 accidental alarms and 10 mutual aid calls. 3 scheduled drills were held.

- Chief's Vehicle – SCBA mounts completed.

- Aerial – Leak in foam tank; no update. During response to residential fire in the township low hanging branches along long narrow drive caused damage to body, lights, ladder rack and couplings. Repairs completed.

- 1991 Engine (pumper) – Township waived its right to purchase vehicle; will be listed for auction on Municibid.

- Rescue – During response to residential fire in the township low hanging branches along long narrow drive caused damage to lights and ladder rack. Repairs completed.

- New Engine (pumper) – Radio noise; no update. Sustained minor damage to lights and couplings at same residential fire as the rescue did. Being repaired at no cost.

- Annual Testing – Hose, pump, ladder and aerial testing completed.

Attorney Griswold suggested a memo to residents be included in the annual fund raising communication and/or on the fire company's website requesting property owners' help in keeping driveways clear of low branches and vines, etc. that impede emergency service vehicle access.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motioned by DiFalco and seconded by Hofacker, the minutes of the June 15, 2021 and July 20, 2021 meetings were approved.

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. The Chief Financial Officer certified there were sufficient encumbered funds from a prior year's budget and funds in the 2021 budget to pay the bills as presented. Motioned by Hofacker and seconded by DiFalco, **Resolution 2021-33** – Approving payment of bills as presented in the amount of \$43,666.10 was approved by roll call vote.

The purchase order approved in June to Grainger for a hose reel and regulator for the air compressor in the amount of \$423.14 was not issued.

The purchase order approved in June to ESI for hydraulic rescue tool mounts (4) for Special Services vehicle at a cost not to exceed \$395.00 was not issued.

PUBLIC COMMENT - none

OLD BUSINESS

- **Banking** - Cmsr. DiFalco has researched services, account options and interest rates at local banks. Further discussion tabled until a future meeting.

- **SOG's** – Draft revised and under review.

- **Outstanding Pagers** – No update.

- **Insurance** – The insurance broker's presentation to the board and to fire company members will be arranged.

- **Trailer Striping** – Completed.

- **Rescue Truck** - "Open Door" warning light repaired.

- **Moving Election Date** – Confirmation from the state received. The annual elections will no longer be held in February; beginning in 2022 will coincide with the November general elections.

- **Fixed Asset Inventory and Appraisal** – No update.

- **Tablets** – Partial order has shipped; awaiting receipt of completed order.

- **Electronic Funds Transfer Policy** – Mr. Weiss explained it is a new section on the fire district audit questionnaire and even though the board now makes few, if any transactions that may be considered electronic transfers, they may become unavoidable in the future.

- **Obsolete or Surplus Equipment** – Work in progress. Commissioner Hofacker will assist in Ass't. Chief Baldorossi in organizing items for auction or other disposition. Discussion of a policy and process for retiring old or outdated equipment will continue.

- Purchasing Process - Commissioner Fraser is leading the development of a process to streamline and improve the purchasing process.

NEW BUSINESS

2022 Budget – The chiefs intend to have their proposals ready for discussion next month.

LEAP (Local Efficiency Achievement Program) - Shared services grant program is not applicable to existing shared services agreements. The district cannot benefit from the program.

Fire Protection Agreement – Commissioner Blackwell will contact the township board regarding status and timeline for renewal.

Qualified Purchasing Agent (QPA)– Commissioners Blackwell and DiFalco introduced William Newberry, who has years of experience in the fire services, is a Qualified Purchasing Agent licensed by the state, has a Registered Public Purchasing Specialist certification from Rutgers University and a Masters’ Degree in public administration. He is the administrator of Wall Township Fire District #1 and is the QPA for 7 fire districts in Monmouth, Ocean and Somerset counties. Bill consults with districts on the organization and streamlining of their purchasing process and assists in the purchasing function by working with the officers to prepare requisitions for board consideration, and seeing the purchase through to delivery. His goal is to increase the transparency and legitimacy of the fire district’s procurement process, to ensure compliance with the Local Public Contract Law and to maximize the district’s budget by purchasing the best products at the most advantageous prices. He fielded questions from the board and agreed to forward his resume and proposal details for consideration and/or to meet with others involved in the purchasing process should the board decide to create the position of Purchasing Agent for the district.

A suggestion was made to see if Mr. Newberry would come on temporarily as a consultant to help educate personnel and refine the purchasing process so it could be performed in house.

Commissioner Blackwell voiced concern over the board’s ability to take on the expense and stay within budget constraints. The board will consider the matter further and consult with the officers and professionals.

Attorney Search – Commissioner Blackwell has been researching prospects to replace Attorney Griswold, who is retiring at the end of the year. She will prepare an overview of her position and provide it to the board.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioners Blackwell and Ingram stepped out of the room. There being no further business to come before the board, motioned by Fraser, seconded by Hofacker and passed, the meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Board will be held remotely, via ‘Zoom’, at 7:30 p.m. on September 21, 2021.