

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

MINUTES May 17, 2022

CALL TO ORDER

The regularly scheduled remote 'Zoom' meeting was called to order by Chairman Blackwell at 7:37 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 (12/29/21) and Hopewell Valley News (1/07/22), provided to the Hopewell Express, sent to the Borough Clerk for filing and public 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, Robert DiFalco, Ryan Fraser, Brian Hofacker, Robert Ingram. Absent: None. Also present were Chief DeForte (arrived late), E. Rodriguez, Fire Co. Trustee Gaudio, Training Officer Sutherland, Joe Carducci and Attorney Griswold.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Training Officer Sutherland would like to discuss swift water rescue training with the board. Trustee Gaudio is inquiring into an insurance check received by the board for damage to the fire house during Hurricane Ida. Both gentlemen agreed to postpone their questions and comment until the board returned from closed session.

CLOSED SESSION: (7:44 p.m.)

Motioned by Fraser and seconded by Hofacker, **Resolution 2022-21** Authorizing the board to go into closed session was adopted by roll call vote. The board will reconvene at the conclusion of its closed session.

Return to Open Session (8:00 p.m.)

During its closed session the board discussed and agreed upon a law firm to represent the fire district for the remainder of this year. Motioned by Hofacker and seconded by Ingram, **Resolution 2022-22** Authorizing the Chairman and Commissioner Fraser to negotiate the terms and execute a professional services contract with Melanie Appleby, Esq. of the law firm Rothstein, Mandell, Strohm, Halm & Cipriani, P.A., of Toms River, NJ, for the provision of legal services as general counsel to the fire district for the period June 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022, and keeping Attorney Griswold on until June 30, 2022 to aid in the transition, was adopted by roll call vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT, Con't.

The Chief and Training Officer spoke while the board was in closed session and the swiftwater training discussion will be tabled at this time to allow further research into options. Trustee Gaudioso inquired into the process required for the board to provide the fire company with the insurance payment for damage to the firehouse incurred during Hurricane Ida. The board will address as New Business. Trustee Gaudioso also informed the board that the fire company is moving ahead with installing epoxy flooring in the engine room. He inquired whether the board could help out with costs. There was no further discussion on this topic.

CHIEF'S REPORT

There were 34 calls in April, 2022: 4 in Pennington Borough, 15 in the Township, 2 in Hopewell Borough and 13 other. Calls included 3 residential, 1 trash/dumpster, and 4 CO alarms. There were 15 accidental alarms and 9 false alarms. 3 scheduled drills and 1 special drill/work session were held.

- Rescue : Hydraulic hose reel; no update. Door switches; repairs underway. Rotator motor on the light tower repaired.
- Training: Taking place at the 1 Pennington-Washington Crossing Road structures prior to their demolition next month. Other valley departments are also participating.
- Annual Testing: The township is not interested in a joint purchasing agreement for annual testing (hose, ladder, pump, etc.). The company the township uses limits its testing to pumps, hose and ladders but does not test nozzles, hard sleeve or appurtenances, etc. Fail Safe provides all-inclusive testing at the firehouse over 3 days. They can schedule for the end of July. The board will revisit at the next meeting.
- SCBA Cylinder Testing: Due this year; PO to be issued.
- Upcoming events (May): Pennington Day, Memorial Day parades, Operation Head-On at the high school.
- Swiftwater Awareness and Operations: A valley-wide committee established after Hurricane Ida is developing a program to enhance awareness and provide operational training opportunities and providing Stations #51, 52, 53 and career staff the opportunity to participate at a reduced cost.

Chief DeForte left meeting

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/or funds in the 2022 budget to pay the bills as presented.

Motioned by DiFalco and seconded by Hofacker, **Resolution 2022-20** – Approving payment of the bills as presented in the amount of \$16,904.48 was adopted by roll call vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion by Hofacker, seconded by Fraser and passed, the minutes from the April 19, 2022 regular meeting were approved as presented.

On a motion by Hofacker, seconded by Fraser and passed, the closed session minutes from the April 16, 2019, May 21, 2019, August 20, 2019, November 19, 2019, January 21, 2020, July 20, 2021 and October 19, 2021 meetings were approved as presented.

OLD BUSINESS

- SOG's –Under review.
- Outstanding Pagers – No update.
- Fixed Asset Inventory and Appraisal – No update.
- Obsolete or Surplus Equipment – Work in progress.
- LOSAP (inactive invested member accounts) – Clarification of procedure to return funds to district will be addressed at a future meeting.
- Township Fire Protection Agreement renewal – No update.
- Insurance Beneficiary Cards – Attorney Griswold informed the board and Lt. Rodriguez that it is the fire company's responsibility to obtain and secure its members' beneficiary cards. The insurance company does not maintain beneficiary files.
- Audit – Underway. Request for supplemental information from the auditor will be addressed.
- DMV Driver Abstracts – Periodic review process underway. Commissioner Hofacker believes he will have all abstracts by the end of June.

NEW BUSINESS

Hurricane Ida Insurance Claim: The board received a check for water damages to the firehouse. On a motion by Hofacker and seconded by DiFalco, **Resolution 2022-23** Authorizing payment of the insurance reimbursement to the Pennington Fire Company for the cost of repairing hurricane damage to the firehouse was approved by roll call vote.

Meetings – Attorney Griswold suggested the board may want to consider holding hybrid, instead of totally virtual meetings for the remainder of the year. Discussion tabled.

Joint Meeting – The three valley boards may hold a joint meeting sometime in June to discuss call response allocation and responsibility among the Valley fire stations.

Electronic Storage – Commissioner Ingram suggested the board research secure electronic storage options for its records. Members agreed that the current website provider should be contacted to inquire into options it may offer.

SCBA Cylinder testing - The following PO was issued to obtain required SCBA cylinder testing: **#2022-27** – Witmer Public Safety for \$1,572.00, not including parts or repairs if needed, chargeable to the FF Equipment and Repair appropriation. The vendor will provide the fire company with spare cylinders while its bottles are out for testing.

Recission of Resolution 2021- 44 - Motioned by Fraser and seconded by DiFalco, **Resolution 2022-24**, Rescinding Resolution 2021-44, adopted December 21, 2021, authorizing a return of surplus funds to the Hopewell Township Board of Fire Commissioners, was passed by roll call vote.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the board, motioned by DiFalco, seconded by Hofacker and passed, the meeting adjourned at 9:44 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Board will be held remotely, via 'Zoom', at 7:30 p.m. on June 21, 2022. Instructions for joining the meeting can be found on the board's website at www.pbbfc.org