

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

**MINUTES**  
**September 20, 2022**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regularly scheduled remote 'Zoom' meeting was called to order by Chairman Blackwell at 7:32 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, Robert Ingram. Absent: Brian Hofacker. (NOTE: Commissioner Hofacker joined the meeting by 7:45 p.m.) Also present were Chief DeForte, Enrique Rodriguez, Roger Demareski from Fire Company, Joseph Carducci, C.P.A. and Attorney Appleby.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Garrett Sutherland, Lieutenant at Fire Company discussed needing an auto technician to service vehicles. He will get a list of shops to recommend to the Board. Need services for Special Services, brush truck, utility and both chief vehicles. Attorney Appleby asked as to annual costs. Lt. Sutherland estimated between \$400-\$500 all together. Attorney Appleby asked as to total so as to know whether there was a need to solicit quotes. Commissioner Fraser asked as to bid threshold. Attorney Appleby advised that bid threshold was \$17,500 but if costs are above \$2625 (15% of bid threshold), quotes need to be solicited.

**CHIEF'S REPORT**

There were 49 calls in August 2022: 12 to Pennington Borough, 21 to Hopewell Township, 2 to Hopewell Borough, 16 out of district. Chief stated he appreciated the Company keeping up with everything while he was in Wildwood for conference. Calls included 2 CO Alarms, 1 Gas Leak, 2 MVA/Rescue, 1 Residential, and 1 trash/dumpster. There were 16 Mutual Aid calls, 16 accidental alarms and 0 false alarms. There were 3 scheduled drills and no special drill/work session were held.

Chief indicated that firehouse is back together. Need to hook up the water to gear washer and gear extractor, to be done Thursday night. Chief thanked Roger and Mike.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

On a motion by Commissioner Ingram, seconded by Commissioner Fraser, the minutes from the August 16, 2022 were approved as presented.

### **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. Chairman Blackwell discussed why there was two payments for (North American) Workers' Compensation premiums. Carrier was cancelling policy because of an alleged late payment that was delayed due to holiday. It was received 9 days after due and carrier was already cancelling, even though check was cashed on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. Chairman Blackwell called the carrier on this problem. In order to avoid problem in future, Chairman is asking to pay earlier to avoid this problem again with Workers' Comp. Regular payment is around \$4,200. Witmer Public Safety bill was received in mail for hose without purchase order as did bill for tightening battery pack. Chief asked if Enrique could get a block of P.O. numbers before signing up for training. Chairman said there is no money to do that. Chief said that he was talking about in the future, to work with Enrique. Commissioner Fraser asked about timing for signups for training. Chairman asked if the firefighters could take training on NJ Learn. To advance, need in person class, which is a State requirement, not a FEMA requirement. Commissioner DiFalco asked if before get on line, call Chairman for P.O. Chairman said issuing P.O.'s ahead of time creates three times the work in QuickBooks.

Motioned by Hofacker and seconded by DiFalco, approving payment of the bills as presented in the amount of \$22,122 was adopted by roll call vote (Resolution 2022-28). All votes "aye".

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- Driver Abstract updates - Still finishing up. Commissioner Hofacker indicated almost there.
- Official emails - Attorney Appleby asked as to whether Mike Murphy's information on set up was received. Chairman to reach out to CitiConnections to resend. Need to get away from using personal emails.
- Fire Services agreement with Hopewell Twp – Chairman Blackwell still in the works.
  
- Casters – installed on racks

- Knox Box – software paid for today.
- Software for Firehouse: Will come up on new business with Enrique. Commissioner Ingram questioned whether Hopewell P.D. would pay. Discussion between Chief and Commissioner Ingram as to whether the District needed to pay by September 23, 2022. Chief then indicated that he received word that payment changed, and was paid through police department.
- Policies and SOG's: Attorney Appleby stated that she got the proposed policies and are in review.
- License and Indemnity Agreement: changes will be forward to Woodmont and if accepted, then Company can train at site. Chairman was afraid were giving away too much with what was proposed.
- Audit: Auditor Carducci asked about representation letters, and stated still waiting for approval. Group Affidavit already submitted to State. Final piece is representation letters, which is needed to release a final report. Chairman will get signatures, scan and send to auditor

Due to finding out the Firehouse software was paid for by Hopewell Police Department, need to rescind the bill resolution and approve new total amount.

**Motion made by Commissioner Hofacker, seconded by Commissioner Fraser to rescind the bill resolution and approving amended Resolution 2022-28 with new amount of \$21,632.22.** All voted in favor to amend with Chairman Blackwell abstaining on payments to Joanne Blackwell and the bill for Metal Fab .

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Equipment – Discussion on new tanker truck or refurbishment of old tanker. Chairman Blackwell stated that \$100k-\$110k to refurbish to last about 7 years and spread out payments, or add a truck to payments now and figure out how pay it. Would be paying for 3 trucks. District pays the bulk of it and then money replenished over time, which strains District budget. Commissioner Hofacker indicated that Pennington Borough has no use for trucker and is 100% dedicated use to Township.

NFIRS - Quote and information sent out on new platform which is recommended to utilize to NFIRS, software firehouse uses (Firehouse Software), ends on 12/31/22, per Enrique Rodriguez. After discussing with different fire companies and vendors, best bet would be ESO. They already own Firehouse Software and now doing ESO. Transition of information to new platform will not cost any money and would save approximately \$2000. Quote attached to email sent out. The State website was reviewed. Platform we are able to use, only thing is it does not save much information so everything would need to be keyed back in for almost every call. Cannot guarantee use of that platform that NFIRS report would be kept up with the NFIRS report and getting them in by latest, 2nd of the month like done for the past year. Takes more time for input but free platform. Choice up to Commissioners on which way to go. Also, if use State

platform can give multiple people access to do reports, but no one can see all information added, so unable to tell if complete reports are being submitted. New software, administrator is the only one that can actually submit. Access can be given to others to add information and can then be reviewed by admin to review and submit to State. Information will be automatically added to NFIRS report and will save time.

Discussion with Keith Day (discussions over a month now). He has done prior work for us.

Continued discussion between new software and “free” software.

This would be an annual/recurring cost added to budget.

To get us online, including training, transfer of data to new platform, setup, etc. would cost \$3,680.00. As of now, recurring cost would be \$3,085.00. Breakdown reflects 1995 (data import) a credit is given for use of old platform, saving approx.. \$2000 – other companies would not give that to us. Continued discussion of need for decision for ongoing software use.

Recommendations were made that Enrique do what makes it easiest related to software use.

Question to counsel about annual/recurring cost from procurement standpoint, quotes or anything else. Attorney Appleby indicated that she hasn’t seen any paperwork. Can either be proprietary software exceptions that may apply, but needs to see exactly what it is. This should be ok. Sole Source can be difficult – if this proprietary can be an exception.

Various vendors with attempt at comparison “apples to apples”. Everyone has a different “flavor” on how to do it. Comparison difficult. This was one of the better prices. Phoenix quote started at \$13K.

Attorney Appleby questioned length of recurring charge (\$3680 and \$3085). What would be the length of the agreement?

Enrique – cannot recall, can go back to sales person for discussion.

Attorney Appleby – regarding length, 15% (\$2625) where you kick in solicitation for quotes. Should be ok taking this on the record as a quote.

Discussion that this is not currently mandatory, but within the next month or two, it will be. District will not be eligible for grants if this is not done. State mandated but not state funded. Firehouse software - we paid for 6 year subscription approx. \$5000-6000. That period has expired.

Support given to Enrique for this and the software that helps auto populate fields on the form with address and information. The free software does not store this data.

We are going to have to issue a P.O. as everyone in favor of this – need to move and pay for this. Concern that information is maintained and kept accurate as to not have any issues related to grants moving forward.

Motion made by Commissioner DiFalco to authorize P.O for ESO. Seconded by Commissioner Hofacker. All in favor.

Commissioner Ingram spoke as to 20 members needing accountability tags. Non-budgeted item. 3 quotes sent to Chief and Enrique with approximate cost of \$740. Quote requested to be reviewed prior to issuance of P.O.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the board, Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner DiFalco, seconded by Commissioner Fraser. All voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Board will be held remotely, via 'Zoom', at 7:30 p.m. on October 18, 2022. Instructions for joining the meeting can be found on the board's website at [www.pbbfc.org](http://www.pbbfc.org)