

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

**DECEMBER 20, 2022  
MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regularly scheduled remote 'Zoom' meeting was called to order by Attorney Melanie Appleby 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 and Hopewell Valley News, 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 Robert DiFalco, Ryan Fraser, Robert Ingram and Brian Hofacker.

Also present: Attorney Appleby, Auditor Carducci.

**MOTION TO ACCEPT RESIGNATION OF COMMISSIONER BLACKWELL**

It was stated that a letter was received from Commissioner Blackwell, which was read aloud and reaffirmed Commissioner Blackwell's desire to resign from the Board effective November 15, 2022. This letter was dated November 16, 2022.

- Motion to accept Commissioner Blackwell's resignation made by Commissioner DiFalco, seconded and all in favor - with a thank you to Commissioner Blackwell and his family for his service to the PBBFC and the Borough of Pennington.

Attorney Appleby appointment of new Chairman and requested nominations for same. Commissioner Brian Hofacker was nominated to serve remainder of the year as Chairman. Motion to appoint Commissioner Hofacker, seconded, and all voted in favor.

Attorney Appleby indicated that Commissioner Hofacker would serve as Chairman until the end of the year.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Attorney Appleby announced to the audience a request for public comments. With no public comments made, Attorney Appleby closed the request for public comments.

### **CHIEF'S REPORT**

52 calls for the month. 5 in the Borough. 33 in the Township. 3 in the Hopewell Borough. Eight (8) calls out of district -other with mutual aid to Lawrenceville.

Approximately 110,000 gallons of water was used. Most of this resource was used at the fire on Friday after Thanksgiving. Good turnout and fortunately no injuries.

Operation Santa Claus took place and was a success.

Chief not running for reelection, stepping down this year. Roger will be taking over the position of Chief. Everyone thanked Chief for service.

Note regarding water usage. Water was utilized during that fire from the Borough. Hydrant reports are made monthly. All hydrants are marked, numbered and tagged. New regulation was referenced. Ricky would like a report monthly.

Approaching storm and upcoming severe cold weather was discussed.

Statement made that the homeowner at 61 Lexington made accusation of damage to her door. Oven fire (mostly smoke). A police report was made after alleged damage to door. Chief requested that police be present should crew need to return to that property and crew always remain with someone. Chief has not heard anything since this incident.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Attorney Appleby requested any edits or comments regarding regular session minutes from November 15, 2022. Motion made by Ingram to approve minutes from November 15, 2022 followed by second by DiFalco and all voted in favor.

Attorney Appleby requested any edits or comments regarding executive session minutes from November 15, 2022. Motion made by Ingram to approve minutes from November 15, 2022 followed by second by DiFalco. All voted in favor.

Minutes posted to website – it was stated that minutes have not been posted to the website in quite some time. Attorney Appleby to follow-up, as same had been sent with the request they be posted.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Commissioner Hofacker sent bills for the month which \$46,540.10 total. Commissioner Hofacker stated there were a couple more bills that apparently are sent directly to the Treasurer, PBBFC email address. Commissioner Hofacker indicated a total in the amount of \$47,841.81. Question arose regarding bill from Redline Fab and Machine bill for \$6000 that was budgeted in yearly budget. There will be two POs one for 2022 and one for 2023. Budgeted for this year.

Also budgeted: 3 sets of gear and radios. Anything received today will be added to next month. It was indicated that POs must be issued for all these items prior to the end of the year, December 31<sup>st</sup>.

All questions regarding POs were then referred to Joe.

Chief DeForte acknowledged he would receive question regarding POs. Question proposed to Joe and a brief discussion was held to clarify that all POs must be issued prior to the end of the year. Standard utility bills do not require PO. Budget items require POs, so POs must be issued ahead of time and go through the process for approval.

Two late additions requiring POs: \$3520.05 payable to Firehouse reimbursement for awards and \$1149.41 for the Knox Box. Attorney Appleby confirmed total of \$47,841.81 representing bills to be paid/disbursements.

Correction to bill proposed and discussed.

Proposed new total \$47,494.81 for bills to be paid. Discussion held about total of disbursements versus invoices and items requiring POs.

Discussion held regarding remaining items are purchase requests, which needs POs prior to being ordered.

Other items were discussed. Bookkeeping procedures were discussed and all items included with disbursements and bills to be paid for November and December 2022 have been documented and will be reviewed. Audit for 2022 will be coming up.

Attorney Appleby stated **Resolution 2022-32 to pay the bills/disbursements** for November and December 2022 in the amount of \$13,447.65, which same was confirmed. Motion made to pay the bills by Fraser followed by second by DiFalco.

Attorney Appleby, Roll Call: Commissioners Fraser, Ingram, DiFalco and Hofacker. All voted yes.

## OLD BUSINESS

Budget Introduction January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023.

### First Reading

Changes need to be made regarding Fire District Budget 2023 regarding Blackwell and Hofacker. Website also needs to be updated for adjustment to chairmanship. Attorney Appleby requested changes to be provided for review and contact can be made to request changes to website. Discussions held regarding edits to documents.

- Question asked as to how this relates with the Township's supposed rejection of PBBFC proposed budget. Attorney Appleby advised as to contents of their Agreement for services with the Township and the Township does not decide the Fire District's budget. A prior discussion was held with Commissioner DiFalco.
- Proposed changes discussed regarding positions held on the Board and election held related to the Chief position. Discussion regarding current positions and positions for remainder of 2022. Auditor Carducci explained details of budget.

Motion made by Commissioner Fraser to approve **2022-033 Fire District Budget Resolution**. Seconded by Commissioner DiFalco.

Attorney Appleby, Roll Call: Commissioners Fraser, Ingram, DiFalco and Hofacker. All voted yes.

- Attorney Appleby: **Resolution 2022-34 Authorizing Public Hearing on 2023 Fire District Budget**. Required by statute. Motion to approve Resolution 2022-34 made by Commissioner Ingram. Seconded by Commissioner DiFalco.

Attorney Appleby, Roll Call: Commissioners Fraser, Ingram, DiFalco and Hofacker. All voted yes.

Attorney Appleby: There will be a public hearing on this budget at the next meeting, January 17, 2023. Attorney Appleby will publish the Notice for the public hearing. The Budget will need to be posted as well. Attorney Appleby discussed procedures.

- Fire Service Agreement with Hopewell Township. Attorney Appleby read Resolution 2022-35. Same included Hopewell's Resolution 2022-78 extending services to December 31, 2023. Discussion held. Motion made by Commissioner Fraser, seconded by Commissioner DiFalco, approving **Resolution 2022-35 extending services with Hopewell Township Fire District #1**.

Attorney Appleby, Roll Call: Commissioners Fraser, Ingram, DiFalco and Hofacker. All voted yes.

- Issue at last meeting with Dell Windows update. Discussion held. Services Contract extended with Dell.

- Discussion held at last meeting regarding inventory tracking and auditing District assets. Nothing new on this.
- Auto technician to service vehicles. Lt. Sutherland was providing quotes. Discussion held. Stated that follow up with Mike at Citi Connections will be made to add folder to website.
- Driver abstract updates status. Still work in progress.
- New email addresses. All should be set up (almost all are set up).
- SOGs from Fire Company. Attorney Appleby will review.
- Transfer of truck in Mark Blackwell's name. Still being addressed.
- Tanker Refurbishment with Hopewell Township. Nothing new.
- Appreciations given to DiFalco and Hofacker for work done.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- Commissioner Ingram elected Assistant Chief, which is considered a conflict (dual office holding). He will be resigning effective December 31, 2022.
- **Resolution 2022-36 to hire bookkeeper, Karen Swift,** for \$55.00 per hour, capped accordingly. Brief discussion held regarding qualifications. Motion made by DiFalco and seconded by Commissioner Hofacker on Resolution 2022-36.

Attorney Appleby, Roll Call: Commissioners Fraser, Ingram, DiFalco and Hofacker. All voted yes.

- **Resolution 2022-37 – Public Agency Compliance Officer.** Commissioner Hofacker was assigned last year for this position. Brief discussion held regarding position. Commissioner Hofacker will remain in this role for 2023. Motion made appointing Commissioner Hofacker as Public Agency Compliance Officer for Pennington Borough Fire District #1 for 2023 by Commissioner Fraser and seconded by Commissioner DiFalco.

Attorney Appleby, Roll Call: Commissioners Fraser, Ingram, DiFalco and Hofacker. All voted yes.

- Statutory Provision to fill vacancies – discussion was held about filling vacancies and election for open spots.
  1. Are there requirements? None other than residency of District.
  2. Is there a time requirement to fill vacancies? Attorney Appleby will review to confirm, but did not indicate a documented time limitation.
- Hybrid Meetings – Brief discussion held. In 2023 Hybrid meetings need to be set up. Plan should be in place by next meeting. Agreed area would be open to public with ability to interact in person, if needed. Desire expressed for a level of virtual remain.

Suggestions were requested to better streamline and help. Attorney Appleby indicated bookkeeper will be tremendous asset regarding documents and storage. It was suggested documents be well maintained and stored in the event an OPRA request is made. It was suggested that perhaps the bookkeeper could keep track of Notices, currently handled by Attorney Appleby.

## **BUDGET**

- Purchase Orders for approval –
  - I am Responding - \$660.00 for next year's contract.
  - MES 2023 maintenance \$2,523.00.
  - Sourland Woodwork for \$70.62 (forceable entry work).
  - Redline Fab Machine Skid Unit - \$6,000
  - NJ Fire Equip. for hose - \$5,080.00
  - Granger for epoxy - \$178.07
  - My Asset Vinyl Labels \$108.76
  - M&W Radio for a battery \$233.60
  - NJ Fire Equip. for accountability tags \$740.00
  - Storetronics for gas meter battery \$59.83
  - Turnout Gear (3 sets on State Contract) \$16,293.00
  - Thermal Image camera \$4,150.00
  - First Choice Safety for rescue struts \$2,450.28
  - Firehouse reimbursement for awards \$3520.05
  - Knox box \$1149.41
  - Portable Radio from Midstate \$8,132.31 – discussion whether or not this item was budgeted for and spending remainder of budget. Discussion of possible use of Township's old radios to avoid purchasing new ones.

Excess Funding – if money not moved around, do we lose ability to utilize excess funds? Funds budgeted for will be spent per category in Budget per Auditor Carducci. Auditor Carducci explained contingency funds.

Motion made by Commissioner Fraser and seconded by Commissioner DiFalco to pay POs just issued, totaling \$51,348.65. All voted in favor.

Enrique transfer and responsibility to Rob – agreed to assist with new software. Budget and PO responsibility to Rob.

## **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Fraser and seconded and Commissioner DiFalco. All voted in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.