

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS  
Pennington Borough Fire District No. 1  
P.O. Box 387  
Pennington, NJ 08534  
**September 19, 2023**

**MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regularly scheduled remote 'Zoom' meeting was called to order by Chairman Hofacker at 7:32 p.m. following adequate and electronic notice under the Open Public Meetings Law and N.J.A.C. 5:39. The meeting was also opened at Pennington Fire House for a Hybrid meeting. 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 Chairman Hofacker, Commissioner Robert DiFalco, Commissioner O'Connor and Commissioner Sandra Radice. Commissioner Schaub was absent. Meeting is hybrid with remote access and in person at the Fire House. Quorum established.

Also present: Attorney Appleby via Zoom, Auditor Weiss and Bookkeeper Swift.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chairman Hofacker opened the meeting up for public comments.

With no one in the public asking to speak on Zoom or at the Fire House, public comments were closed.

**CHIEF'S REPORT**

Chief Demarski gave the Chief's report. 45 calls for the month. 7 in the Borough. 30 for Hopewell Township-51. 2 calls for Hopewell Township-52. 2 calls for Hopewell Township-53. 2 calls for Out of District (Ewing), 0 for Out of District (Trenton), 0 for Out of District (other), and 0 for Hopewell

Borough. 78 total service hours, 414 total man hours at fires. 1 vehicle fire, 3 electrical/power line issue, 6 unintentional alarms.

Chief Demarski stated that month was pretty straightforward. Valley picnic on September 30, 2023. Pancake breakfast on October 8, 2023. HazMat on Route 31 – compressed natural gas leak. Kitchen fire occurred during day. A lot of mutual aid calls. Majority of calls are during the day. Issue as to extending life of gear. If more than 10 years old, it will be rejected. Budget proposal up to \$6000. Wanted to make Board aware that this is a challenge as to turn out gear. Issue as to Station 50 day career staff taking Titusville truck out. Chief of Station 53 disfavors this. Chiefs issue to resolve, not a Commissioners issue. Chief Demarski submitted another funding request for \$100,000 to dissolved First Aid Squad next door. Requested monies for replacement of 2004 6-wheeler(\$30k) that is used in woods and high water truck (\$70k). Approved for 6 wheeler and was asked to come back in November as to high water truck. Chief hopes this will be successful. Hopewell EMS is asking for significant funds to build duty-crew rooms for their squad.

Chairman Hofacker noted a lot of out of district calls. Assistant Chief Ingram stated that year-to-date, end of August, 295 calls. 237 have been Pennington Borough or Hopewell Township. 58 calls to outside.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Attorney Appleby requested any edits or comments regarding regular session minutes from August 15, 2023. Commissioner DiFalco requested amendments. Motion made by Commissioner DiFalco to approve minutes as modified. Seconded by Commissioner Radice. All voted in favor.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Commissioner Radice stated that total expenditures for month were \$26,206.16. Bookkeeper Karen Swift present as well as Auditor Weiss.

### **Resolution 2023-20** Resolution for payment of monthly bills (August/September 2023)

Motion to approve payment of bills in the amount of \$26,206.16 made by Commissioner O'Connor and seconded by Commissioner DiFalco.

#### **Roll Call:**

|                       |        |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Chairman Hofacker     | yes    |
| Commissioner DiFalco  | yes    |
| Commissioner O'Connor | yes    |
| Commissioner Radice   | yes    |
| Commissioner Schaub   | ABSENT |

No abstentions.

Auditor Weiss spoke to Board. Group Affidavit for Audit was completed. Bookkeeper Swift had questions as to net capital assets and to explain as to equipment. Chief's proposed budget has expenditure for categorizing fixed assets. Auditor spoke as to capital reserve. Chairman noted that wanted to spend everything that was budgeted for this year. Bookkeeper stated that Quickbooks was inaccurate and waited for audit so system could be brought up to date. Need to make sure actually have these items. Will reconcile and get back to bookkeeper by end of the month. Commissioner DiFalco asked about tagging assets and identifying each piece of equipment going forward. Assistant Chief Ingram questioned as to what would be an asset regarding turn out gear. Catalog anything over \$5,000. Auditor noted that District is financially sound.

Commissioner DiFalco asked a question regarding fire tax rate. Questioned how to prepare budget. Auditor Weiss noted that tax levy is a set number. Assessed values come out around late December. Final equalization table come out in Spring. Amount to be raised by taxation divided by assessed value equals tax rate. Emergency appropriation will need to be accounted for in 2024. Auditor Weiss explained Cap Bank. There should not be a 2% cap issue. Cap bank expires after 3 years. New development will be coming on the tax rolls this year. Commissioner DiFalco stated that some professional expenses are so District does a better job.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Audit. Group Affidavit is in the mail to Attorney.

- Old First Aid Building. Chief Demarski stated that they could store things in building if insurance was provided by JIF. Certificate of Insurance sent to Chief.
- No update on title transfer as to truck and MVC.
- Tanker. Chief spoke as to tanker. If get truck to fit under Titusville bridge, it affects amount of water in tanker.
- Elections. All items addressed.
- Shared Services Agreement. Meeting with Hopewell Township to discuss.
- Audit. Everything in good shape. No corrective action.
- Capital budget: Rescue truck, Hydraulic tools, radios, high water truck, lithium batteries. Discussion as to suppression of eBike fires and difficulties. FDNY is leading agency on these type of fires and has a specific unit that uses thermal blankets. Very difficult fires to contain.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Commissioner DiFalco discussed the substantial increase of Workers' Compensation premium and difficulties in communicating with insurance carrier. If cannot resolve, will ask Attorney to contact carrier. Commissioner DiFalco stated that bill was sent to Mark Blackwell also. Cannot find out why \$8000 increase in premium. They do not understand there is not a \$91k payroll.

### **Other Business**

Purchase Orders delineated by Assistant Chief Ingram. M&W out of business. Discussion regarding how to deal with a 2022 P.O. and unresponsive vendor. Needs to be liquidated by end of the year.

### **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner DiFalco and seconded by Commissioner O'Connor. All voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.