

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
Pennington Borough Fire District No. 1
P.O. Box 387
Pennington, NJ 08534
January 16, 2024

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The regularly scheduled hybrid in-person and remote ‘Zoom’ meeting was called to order by Chairman Hofacker at 7:30 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.

Salute to the Flag.

Swearing in of re-elected Commissioners:

Oath of office administered by Attorney Appleby to Scott Schaub for three (3) year term commencing December 12, 2023 and terminating at 12:00 noon on December 15, 2026.

ROLL CALL

Present by roll call were Chairman Hofacker, Commissioner Robert DiFalco, Commissioner Sandra Radice, Commissioner O’Connor and 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 via Zoom.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Hofacker opened the meeting up for public comments at 7:33 p.m.

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, along with Assistant Chief Ingram, provided the Chief’s report.

<u>TOTAL FIRE CALLS</u>	
Pennington Borough	11
Hopewell Township - 51	42
Hopewell Borough	0
Hopewell Township - 52	1
Hopewell Township - 53	3
Out-of-District - Ewing	1
Out-of-District - Lawrence	1
Out-of-District - Trenton	0
Out-of-District - Other	0
Hopewell Township - Total	
<u>TOTAL SERVICE-HOURS AT FIRES</u>	70
<u>TOTAL MAN-HOURS AT FIRES</u>	542
<u>WATER USED AT FIRES (gals)</u>	0

Chief Demarski stated that turn of new year relatively quiet. During last storm, some members stayed over and made fire service much better prepared.

Continuing to work on the tanker. Rosenbauer and Campbell consulted. All seeing “massive” price increases on trucks. Rosenbauer was around \$870k and Campbell was around \$1 million. Projecting to go out in November.

Chief has heard nothing from the Borough as to the building next door.

Officers line up will be the same.

A new development is being opened on 25 Pennington Road with 75 townhomes. Issues with narrow roads and access.

Chief had a question as to whether affordable housing could be prioritized for first responders. Attorney Appleby did not know of an legislation which authorized prioritization of first responders similar to veterans’ preference but would research.

There were 504 total incidents, which is one more than 2023.

February 10, 2024 is the installation dinner at Washington Crossing’s Inn.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Attorney Appleby requested any edits or comments regarding regular open session minutes and executive session minutes from December 19, 2023. Motion made by Commissioner DiFalco to approve minutes. Seconded by Commissioner O'Connor. **All voted in favor. No abstentions.**

TREASURER'S REPORT

Resolution 2024-1 Resolution for payment of monthly bills (Dec. 2023/January 2024) in amount of \$48,384.96.

Roll Call:

Chairman Hofacker	yes
Commissioner DiFalco	yes
Commissioner O'Connor	yes
Commissioner Radice	yes
Commissioner Schaub	yes

Assistant Chief Ingram advised that there were five more additional PO's that needed to be issued.

Discussion as to meeting with Hopewell Township District as to fire services and 2024 budget.

BUDGET:

Chief stated that the Rescue needs significant repairs - \$26,000. A small portion needs to be done right away.

Auditor and Board had extended discussion regarding budget for 2024. Need an offset for the tanker fees. Discussion on the manner of procedures of capital purchases and what constitutes a capital purchase. Assistant Chief is seeking grants for helmets. Auditor Weiss discussed use of unrestricted funds and use of surplus, and effect upon budget. Auditor Weiss clarified how certain revenue could be used.

Attorney Appleby discussed the 76% fee from Hopewell for fire service and no mention of procedure on repair costs and sharing cost in the currently effective agreement.

Discussion of use of "overage" account for portion for repair so does not fall all on Pennington tax payer. Need repair to provide fire service. Otherwise, have to get a new transmission.

Decision to include the cost of the repair in the budget and will have a discussion with Hopewell Township District to ask for side agreement to have percentage covered for the extraordinary expense.

Increase line item for repairs by \$30,000 from unrestricted funds. Will not affect Hopewell Township tax rate.

Budget as introduced is in compliance with the Property Tax Levy Cap Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.44 et seq.) and the Annual Budget as introduced reflects Total Revenues of \$862,346.00 which includes an amount to be raised by taxation of \$265,302.00 and Total Appropriations of \$862,346.00.

Resolution 2023-30

1ST reading/introduction/approval

2024 Fire District Budget Resolution..

- Motion/second Schaub/Radice
- **Roll Call:**
- Chairman Hofacker yes
- Commissioner DiFalco yes
- Commissioner O'Connor yes
- Commissioner Radice yes
- Commissioner Schaub yes

Resolution 2023-31

Public Hearing on 2024 Fire District Budget scheduled for February 20, 2024.

Motion/second DiFalco/Schaub

- **Roll Call:**
- Chairman Hofacker yes
- Commissioner DiFalco yes
- Commissioner O'Connor yes
- Commissioner Radice yes
- Commissioner Schaub yes

Attorney Appleby advised that notice needs to be published by February 10, 2024. Full budget needs to be posted by February 13, 2024. Adoption is scheduled for February 20, 2024 meeting.

Resolution 2024-2

Statement of reasons as to delay pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:4-15 as to 2024 Fire District Budget.

Reasons for delay include finalizing payment structure with Hopewell Township Fire district for fire services and issues with dealing with extraordinary repair costs for tanker.

Motion/second Schaub/O'Connor

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----|
| ○ | Roll Call: | |
| ○ | Chairman Hofacker | yes |
| ○ | Commissioner DiFalco | yes |
| ○ | Commissioner O'Connor | yes |
| ○ | Commissioner Radice | yes |
| ○ | Commissioner Schaub | yes |

OLD BUSINESS:

- Oaths of Office to be executed by re-elected Commissioners and returned to Attorney so she may file with County and Municipal Clerk's office. Attorney Appleby will sent to Scott Schaub as he was absent at the last meeting.
- Nothing new to report on a shared service agreement with Hopewell. Chairman Hofacker will check as to resolution from Hopewell.
- Former Commissioner Ingram had issue with DCA regarding resignation and financial disclosure form. Assistant Chief stated that the Borough Clerk needs to update the accurate names of Commissioners.
- Old First Aid Building – no status update.
- District vehicle transfer of title to District – Title was in the mail? No update
- Tanker replacement and communications from Hopewell Township. Update previously by Chief.
- Commercial properties not designed to advantage of fire service, according to Chief.

NEW BUSINESS:

Assistant Chief asked about grant submission. Grant application was timely filed for DCA grant. Chairman inquired as to asking County for fund assistance regarding tanker. Asset for airport. Dan Benson, County Executive, to be contacted.

Motion to close made by Commissioner Schaub and seconded by Commissioner O'Connor. All in favor.

Adjournment Meeting ended at 8:46 p.m.