

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
Pennington Borough Fire District No. 1
P.O. Box 387
Pennington, NJ 08534
February 20, 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.

ROLL CALL

Present by roll call were Chairman Hofacker, Commissioner Robert DiFalco, Commissioner Sandra Radice, Commissioner O’Connor and Commissioner Schaub. 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 7:31 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.

TOTAL FIRE CALLS	39
Pennington Borough	7
Hopewell Township - 51	23
Hopewell Borough	1
Hopewell Township - 52	3
Hopewell Township - 53	1
Out-of-District - Ewing	0
Out-of-District - Lawrence	2
Out-of-District - Trenton	1
Out-of-District - Other	1
Hopewell Township - Total	
TOTAL SERVICE-HOURS AT FIRES	63
TOTAL MAN-HOURS AT FIRES	381
WATER USED AT FIRES (gals)	200
Two building fire calls, 1 Assist EMS, 2 MVA/Extrication, 11 unintentional. Total 39 calls, 4 Mutual Aid	

Chief Demarski stated relatively quiet January. A small building fire occurred. A fatal accident on Super Bowl night. Counseling available for first responders. Refer to Princeton House First Responder Program. The Chief discussed the Hopewell Valley recruitment efforts and use of QR code scan. New six-wheeler coming in a few weeks. Funded through the squad. Met with vendor on high water truck. Met with owner, Princeton West (Lincoln Equity Group) at BMS site. Been responding about 30 times since ownership change. Fire in NICU.

Radio system in Capital Health not working and no ability to communicate. VIOLATION ISSUED. Fire Marshall is working on a solution.

Chief met with two tanker manufacturers. A third to come in. Prices are through the roof. Tanker between \$875k and \$1 million for a custom cab. Upon over 30% from fall '23 numbers.

Commissioner DiFalco noted that Mobil Oil was at BMS site as previous owner.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Attorney Appleby requested any edits or comments regarding regular open session minutes and executive session minutes from January 16, 2023. Motion made by Commissioner Schaub to approve minutes. Seconded by Commissioner DiFalco. **All voted in favor. No abstentions.**

TREASURER’S REPORT

Resolution 2024-3 Resolution for payment of monthly bills (January/February 2024) in amount of \$22,195.28.

Roll Call:

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

Assistant Chief Ingram advised that PO’s were circulated previously. Some PO’s added and bookkeeper is working on cleaning it up.

FY 2024 BUDGET:

2024 BUDGET --PUBLIC HEARING and ADOPTION (and any amendments)

- **RESOLUTION 2024-4**
Authorizing 2024 Fire District Budget be read by Title

Motion	O’Connor	Second	Schaub	Roll Call
	<input type="radio"/>			yes
	<input type="radio"/>			yes
	<input type="radio"/>			yes
	<input type="radio"/>			yes
	<input type="radio"/>			yes

PUBLIC HEARING on 2024 Budget

Open public hearing. No comments.
Close public hearing

ADOPTION of 2024 Budget

Auditor Weiss discussed increase in budget by \$91,731. Surplus of \$50k used to offset. Increase to Pennington Borough tax. Operating appropriations to increase by \$95k, due in large part to major repair to one of the trucks and retention program. No change in debt service. LOSAP budget down by about \$20k. Emergency appropriation from 2023 needs to be expended in 2024.

Chief asked if gear could be capitalized. Chairman discussed and believed that some gear was to be purchased in one year and the rest in the next year. Auditor noted that it is not a capital repair to truck. \$20,500 reduction for turnout gear.

- **RESOLUTION 2024-5**

Adopting the Budget for FY 2024

Motion Schaub	Second Radice	Roll Call
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Chairman Hofacker○ Commissioner DiFalco○ Commissioner O’Connor○ Commissioner Radice○ Commissioner Schaub	yes yes yes yes yes

Budget passed without amendments.

Nick Gaudioso discussed LOSAP figures with a total of \$90,826.34. Budget cv for FY 2024 is \$100,000. \$21,798 is Pennington portion.

- **RESOLUTION 2024-6**

Approving Final 2023 LOSAP Annual Certification List

Motion O’Connor	Second DiFalco	Roll Call
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Chairman Hofacker○ Commissioner DiFalco○ Commissioner O’Connor○ Commissioner Radice○ Commissioner Schaub	yes yes yes yes yes

OLD BUSINESS:

- Status of Audit
Auditor Weiss indicated that sometime next month, he will do LOSAP review and putting out a request list.
- Hopewell Township Shared Services Agreement
Chairman asked for resolution from Hopewell. Looking to get that approved and will send to Attorney Appleby for review.
Chief discussed shared services for training
- Old First Aid Building – any status updates? Does not look like this will happen. Chief will make another grant request for dorm rooms.
- District vehicle transfer of title to District – Mark Blackwell said bank was on this issue and has not heard anything else.
- Tanker replacement and communications from Hopewell Township. Any status update.
- Commercial properties and Township Fire Marshall. Chief said what was provided was not helpful and not user friendly. Why does Fire Marshall not have the information? Chief discussed ongoing difficulties.

Chief discussed career staff and issues which arise when volunteers are called on stand by. Assistant Chief discussed a dryer fire at Princeton University. Plainsboro had an active fire in apartment building and had to leave the Princeton fire. Pressure is on for career staff. Useful life of apparatus changed by new statute.

Budget approved by State.

NEW BUSINESS:

Attorney Appleby asked for subcommittee on development of Bylaws. Commissioner O'Connor and Chairman Hofacker to be subcommittee for Bylaws.

Chief discussed \$90k to buy new high water truck. Brush truck starting to age out. Too much rolling stock. Consider trading trucks in or put on GovDeals to reduce stock. Can use old trucks as downpayment. Cannot have private sale.

Can Fire Company donate money to the District? Attorney Appleby indicated that there is a process for the non-profit to give money to the District. Fire Company buy the equipment and deed it over.

Assistant Chief needs approval to apply for 2023 Assistance to Firefighter Grant. There is a 5% match. The grant would be for radios. To replace radios is \$750k. The District match would be about \$37,500.

Motion made by Commissioner Radice and Seconded by Commissioner DiFalco to authorize Assistant Chief to execute application to FEMA for grant and submit. All voted in favor.

Amend P.O. 2024-005 to \$317.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner O'Connor and seconded by Commissioner Radice. All voted in favor.

Meeting ended at 8:40 p.m.