

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
Pennington Borough Fire District No. 1
P.O. Box 387
Pennington, NJ 08534
November 21, 2023

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.

ROLL CALL

Present by roll call were Chairman Hofacker, Commissioner Robert DiFalco, Commissioner Sandra Radice and Commissioner Schaub. Commissioner O'Connor 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.

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 56

Pennington Borough 14
Hopewell Township - 51
Hopewell Borough 0

Hopewell Township - 52
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Out-of-District - Ewing 9
Out-of-District - Lawrence 1
Out-of-District - Trenton 0
Out-of-District - Other 0
Hopewell Township - Total 32
TOTAL SERVICE-HOURS AT FIRES 73
TOTAL MAN-HOURS AT FIRES 475

Brush/Grass/Vegetation 2
Combustible/Flammable Gas/Chemical Spill 1
False Alarm 2
Unintentional Alarm 16
Mutual Aid - Out of Town 10

Chief Demarski discussed the Hopewell recruitment event. Chief's appreciation dinner on December 9th. Santa drive on the truck. Chief applied for a grant as to 6 wheeler and trailer from defunct First Aid. Chairman asked to breakdown the Borough calls by day and by night. Questions about whether need paid during the day.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Attorney Appleby requested any edits or comments regarding regular open session minutes from October 17, 2023. Motion made by Commissioner Schaub to approve minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Radice. **All voted in favor.**

Attorney Appleby requested any edits or comments regarding executive session minutes from October 17, 2023. Motion made by Commissioner DiFalco to approve minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Schaub. **All voted in favor.**

TREASURER'S REPORT

Commissioner Radice stated that total expenditures for month were \$29,402.09.

Resolution 2023-25 Resolution for payment of monthly bills (October 2023)

Motion to approve payment of bills in the amount of \$29,402.09 made by Commissioner Radice and seconded by Commissioner DiFalco.

Roll Call:

Chairman Hofacker	yes
Commissioner DiFalco	yes

Commissioner O'Connor	absent
Commissioner Radice	yes
Commissioner Schaub	yes

No abstentions.

Assistant Chief discussed cancelling a PO 2023-72 for restriping ambulances. Vendor cannot do it. Also discussed PO 2023-76 and Home Depot vendor. Want to increase to \$3500 for engineer (Gary Sutherland) to get a set of tools. Will save money as able to do things in house and money is available in line item. Chief discussed moving money in line item for training so can get airbags replaced. Will use a State Contract. Need to move funds from line item. Auditor stated that time for a transfer resolution. Hopewell was questioning the difference between restricted and unrestricted funds why did PBBFC need an emergency appropriation. Discussion on capital reserves by Auditor Weiss. State limits what can be done as to restricted funds and surplus, and use of cap bank. Cap bank exists where could have raised taxes but did not. Can bank for 3 years and then lose it. \$26,000 will lapse at end of 2023. Discussion as to current assets and budget interpretation for audit.

Chairman asked Auditor if could use "restricted" funds for repairs. Auditor Weiss indicated that those expenses are operating expenses. Restricted funds could be used for downpayment on a truck. Spend down by using surplus, but need to regenerate surplus. The emergency appropriation for last year has to be accounted for in 2024 budget. Can surplus be used in next budget year? Could be used, but a policy decision of Board.

Discussion as to effect upon Pennington and Hopewell budgets.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Budget 2024** : Auditor Weiss discussed appropriations are approximately \$848k. Pennington goes up to \$274,035. Hopewell goes up to \$423,755. Expect promissory notes \$77,152 for one vehicle, and \$73,785 for other vehicle. Totals \$848,727 which coordinates with appropriations. Chairman asked about rescue repairs and if included. Overage account is \$111,062. Discussion as to purchase of tanker and having voter approval. Rescue tools are \$85,000 – can surplus be used.
- Resolution 2023-24. Review of language before published on website. Attorney was advised that it was acceptable.
- Witmer math error. Chief stated that they acknowledged math error. Next step is to finalize how to recoup.
- Old First Aid Building. No update indicated. Chief wants to advance conversation as seems stalled. A dorm for duty crew would be beneficial to fire company volunteers.

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- No update on title transfer as to tower truck and MVC.
- Tanker. Looking at two vendors and preparing specs.
- Shared Services Agreement. Probably not done by end of year. Will probably do one year again. Chief discussed RFP on Fire and EMS study.
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- Commercial properties. Information from Township Hopewell Fire Mashall. Meeting was productive to get information. Refuse access to software.

NEW BUSINESS:

Election results discussed. Congratulations offered to Commissioner Radice, Commissioner Staub and Commissioner O’Connor.

Damage to personal property resolution. Attorney asked if any modifications were required. Modified to include required training and to reduce time to two (2) years, capped at \$500. Discussion as to notifying Chief as to event. Attorney Appleby will prepare a certification form for use.

Resolution 2023-26 APPROVING A POLICY AS TO REIMBURSEMENT FOR DAMAGE TO PERSONAL PROPERTY OF FIREFIGHTERS

Motion by Commissioner Schaub, seconded by Commissioner Radice.

Roll Call:

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

December meeting will be reorganization and swearing in of newly-elected Commissioners.

SAGE grant: Assistant Chief asked for a resolution to approve application for SAGE grant through DCA under American Rescue.

RESOLUTION NO. 2023 –27

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION TO THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS (DCA), LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES (DLGS) FOR A FY2024 AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FIREFIGHTER GRANT THROUGH THE DCA SAGE PORTAL

Motion made by Commissioner Schaub, seconded by Commissioner DiFalco.

Roll Call:

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

Auditor to investigate how to include a grant in budget that is reimbursement only.

Other Business: none.

Resolution 2023-28 Resolution authorizing the convening of an executive session in accordance with the Open Public meetings act to discuss personnel issues.

Motion to go into executive session made by Commissioner DiFalco and seconded by Commissioner Radice. All in favor. Went into Executive session at 8:50 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (separate minutes).

Motion to go back to open made by Commissioner DiFalco and seconded by Commissioner Schaub. All in favor.

OPEN SESSION:

RESOLUTION 2023-24 Resolution that the District shall adopt a policy that if any firefighter is injured or has an accident/incident or appears to be not to be unfit for duty, whether on or off duty, the Chief of the Fire Company shall bring the issue to the Board for a determination as to whether that person needs further testing and evaluation prior being allowed to resume firefighting activities for the Company.

Motion made by Commissioner Schaub and seconded by Commissioner Radice to approve Resolution 2023-24.

Roll Call:

Yes: Hofacker, Schaub, Radice, DiFalco, O'Connor

Additional discussions regarding damage to personal phones on fire call and policy to reimburse for damage to personal property of firefighters damaged in course of active duty. Attorney Appleby to prepare resolution for consideration at next meeting.

Motion to close made by Commissioner DiFalco and seconded by Commissioner Schaub. All in favor.

Adjournment

Meeting ended at 9:33 p.m.