

Special Meeting of the
Board of TFD Fire Commissioners

DRAFT -- Meeting Minutes – January 27, 2016
Thompsonville Fire Station, 35 N. Main Street, Enfield, CT

1. Call to Order: by Sec/Treasurer Commissioner Gaskell at 6:05 pm.

2. Roll Call: present was Chairperson Comm. Reidy, Comm. Stone, Comm. Magistri, Comm. Brouillette, and Comm. Gaskell.

3. Public Communications Q & A:

A member of the public asked about the loan. Comm. Reidy explained the \$200,000 loan request by the Enfield Community Development Corporation, ECDC, from the Town of Enfield. The ECDC owns the property of the proposed train station.

4. Discussion of The Mall and Non-Taxable Properties including the ECDC (Enfield Community Development Corporation and 74 & 84 Main Street:

The Commission discussed the non-taxable properties owned by the ECDC and the Enfield Housing Authority. Comm. Stone suggested contacting an attorney before moving forward.

The Commission discussed the 74 & 84 Main Street properties and the proposed park in that area. The Commission agreed to make an offer to sell the properties to the Town of Enfield.

The Commission discussed their concerns regarding Macy's leaving the Enfield Mall and the reassessment of the mall.

5. Public Communications Q & A:

Steve Cogtella, 2 S. River St., asked the Commission to elaborate on the motor vehicle taxes and its effect on the district. Comm. Magistri said we are going to lose about a quarter of a million dollars from the motor vehicle taxes.

Lori Longhi, 1427 Enfield St., said the district can sell its Main St. properties to neighboring property owners instead of the Town of Enfield. You should send a letter to those property owners as well to make the Town act faster. You can sell your half interest. Regarding the mall, it is more likely that the mall will fight its assessment. Comm. Reidy asked Ms. Longhi about the possible sale of the mall. Ms. Longhi replied

no but I heard they had filed for Chapter 11 reorganization. Personally I think the casino option should have been explored a little bit.

Captain David Hayes, Union Vice President, said maybe the Town and the district could get together to sell the whole parcel of land on Main St. Then it would become taxable by the Town and the district. I thought the train station was supposed to be built already. Has the district been given an update on a time frame? Ms. Longhi said she spoke with David Alexander regarding the train station. He said the money will be going to the DOT. The DOT would make any decisions about a platform.

Comm. Reidy said I'm frustrated by the situations with the Town, the ECDC, the train station and the State because it's affecting our district. Comm. Stone said if the DOT purchases the train station it becomes a PILOT building. Comm. Reidy said but we'd have to get the PILOT money from the State. It's not right that the Town keeps all that money and that the State allows the Town to keep it all.

Jeff Cross, 1116 Enfield St., said there is \$100 million of assessed value that the State has. I believe that these are way undervalued. The Thompsonville district has \$20 million of State owned property at assessed value. Ms. Longhi said the state and town owned properties are typically not included in the re-evaluations. Those values could have been carried for the past 20 years. We don't know the last time they were updated. Mr. Cross said based on looking at the properties I believe they are way under assessed.

Ms. Longhi asked since the fire district is a separate taxing agency, can it tax the Town owned properties. Comm. Stone said we have been advised that we can't charge the Town for property taxes. But we can charge them Fire Marshal ordinances. Mr. Cross said we can't charge them but they are getting a service for free. Comm. Stone said we aren't charged property taxes on our building but we are charged service fees. We created our Fire Marshal ordinances to counteract some of those fees. We have the Fire Marshal working on an occupancy ordinance. We are pursuing other revenue sources.

Jeff Cross, 1116 Enfield St., said we are no longer going to receive about \$350,000 from motor vehicle taxes. How is that shortfall going to be made up? Comm. Reidy replied by property owners. Comm. Stone said those who don't pay taxes will pay fewer taxes and those who pay taxes will have to pay more. Mr. Cross said so that money will be going to the Town. Comm. Stone said we don't know. We won't know what the Town's mil rate will be until their budget is passed.

Steve Cogtella, 2 S. River St., asked if the Board was going to contact Atty. Landolina in regards to taxing non-profits. Comm. Stone said since the Enfield Housing Authority has rent rolls we have to right to pursue PILOT funds. We have the right to 10 percent or the equivalent in our mil rate whichever is lower. Mr. Cross said that is at the bogus values that they have. The assessments of the non-taxable properties aren't worth the

value of the paper they are printed on. Comm. Stone said we have pursued our attorneys to collect revenue from any way we can. We are going after any money that we are entitled to. People that use the services of this fire district should be paying for this fire district. We have reached out to the Union to pursue some the options that the Board doesn't have access to. We would like a percentage of PILOT money based on departmental use. It would have a positive impact across the town and other municipalities. Capt. Hayes said there are about 238 tax entities that may be affected by this. Comm. Reidy said it has to start with the union because they have to power to reach these entities. Capt. Hayes said everybody has to be on the same page. We need to do something about the issue of the car taxes as well.

Mr. Cross asked about using another tax collector. Comm. Stone said I have a desire to look into that. Comm. Reidy said last year we receive only 50% of the money and we had to wait longer for the other 50%. But at least we got our money. If we collected the taxes we wouldn't get all of the money. Comm. Stone disagreed. We wouldn't have to wait until August and we would have money flowing in. Mr. Cross said especially the real estate and the property in escrow. There may be collection issues with the business properties. You don't have to worry about cars anymore. It may be in the district's financial interest to look into this. We paid \$140,000 in collection fees. I am sure there is a collection agency that is cheaper than that. Comm. Magistri said we would need staff to record adjustments and such things. You have to take into account all the costs associated with collecting our own taxes. Mr. Cross said there are organizations that would handle that process. The Board should look at other options. Capt. Hayes said I'm sure it wouldn't cost anything to at least meet with some of these companies. Comm. Stone said I've been interested in this but I just haven't had the time to explore it.

Ms. Longhi asked is the old fire station up for sale. Comm. Stone said yes. Ms. Longhi asked about mortgaging the station. You would receive interest, a monthly payment and a down payment for the property. Comm. Reidy said we are open to anything. Mr. Cogtella asked if there have been any interested parties. Comm. Stone said there has been some initial stuff. Capt. Hayes asked about re-evaluating or appraising the building. Comm. Reidy said finding someone to do that is near to impossible. Capt. Hayes asked can the Town be petitioned to re-evaluate it. Comm. Stone said when it becomes something else. Ms. Longhi said people may be more interested in the building if you sell it for less than the assessed value. Comm. Reidy said the only way to lower the assessment is to downgrade the building to poor quality. Once it goes down to poor quality it is very hard to bring it up to good quality. That building is not in poor quality. Capt. Hayes said the Union has always been in favor of rehabilitating that building. Mr. Cogtella said when I toured that station some of the firefighters were promoting some the problems with the building. I was frustrated because I didn't agree with the said cost to rehab the building. Comm. Reidy said if certain things were done to the building some of the issues would have been handled. That building doesn't need \$4 million worth of rehabilitation.

6. Discussion and possible action of The Mall and Non-Taxable Properties including the ECDC (Enfield Community Development Corporation and 74 & 84 Main Street: :

Comm. Reidy said I need to contact the Assessor's Office about the last time these properties were re-evaluated. I need to find out about the taxes on 33 N. River St. I need to talk to Tom Tyler from the Appeals Board about the like for like idea. Comm. Magistri asked why we would want to drop the assessment value of the old station. Comm. Reidy said nobody is going to want to pay that amount for the building. Comm. Magistri said it won't get re-evaluated until it's changed to another business. It is better to have a higher assessment and sell the building at a lower price.

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Comm. Reidy asked about approaching the Town about buying 74 & 84 Main Street.

MOTION to offer the Town and the adjoining property owners an opportunity to purchase our interest in the property made by Comm. Stone, seconded by Comm. Gaskell. Discussion: Comm. Reidy said I will send a letter to everyone. Roll Call-Motion passes 5-0.

7. Discussion and Approval of Invoices/Bills:

Commissioners reviewed, discussed and approved checks for invoices/bills.

8. Adjourn:

MOTION to adjourn made by Comm. Reidy, seconded by Comm. Gaskell. All in favor by ayes at 7:31 pm.

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