

Regular Meeting of the
Board of TFD Fire Commissioners

DRAFT -- Meeting Minutes – May 20, 2020

Thompsonville Fire Station, 35 N. Main Street, Enfield, CT

1. Call to Order: by Comm. DuFour at 7:00 pm.

2. Roll Call: present (via conference call) were Comm. DuFour, Comm. Dodd, Comm. Pliszka, Comm. Bouthiette, and Comm. Perry. Also present (via conference call) were Chief Deskis, and Dept. Secretary Steneri.

3. Chief's Report:

Chief Deskis said our insurance rates are going to decrease by about seven percent for next year. There have been no major injuries in the department.

Chief Deskis said Squad 21 had some more repairs done on it recently which will cost \$5,000. The apparatus is worn down and old. Engine 21 is having a battery charger issue repaired.

Chief Deskis said the dispatching fees has been an issue the past couple of years. Last year the fees were \$19,000. There was a large discrepancy because the Town was charging our district for EMS calls. The Town Manager has taken the average of the fees from the past few years and that will be the cost. The fees will be \$10,000. I think that is fair. But next year it could be more expensive because of new software and employees.

Chief Deskis said past Fire Chief Frank Alaimo contacted me regarding his pension payments. He thinks there is an error in his years of service calculation. I will have to contact Prudential to see if there was any miscalculation in his figures. He was also asking if any remaining money from the Government Trust is carried into the following year. I think the money goes back into the Trust account. I have contacted to the Trust to verify that.

Chief Deskis said he applied for a FEMA COVID-19 grant. The grant is for \$15,000 to purchase personal protective equipment.

Chief Deskis said he researched the Firefighter SAFER grant. After discussing the grant with Comm. Pliszka, I am not sure if that is a good idea. The grant would pay 65 percent for the first 2 years and then 45 percent for the third year. I spent a whole day writing for the grant. I do not want to spend another day writing if this is something the Board is not interested in pursuing. We could apply for 1 or 2 people. The grant also would pay for volunteers.

Chief Deskis said he would like to use the contingency fund for several things. The station's grease trap needs to be cleaned. That is something that has never been included in the building maintenance. It would cost between \$1,500 - \$2,000. The dishwasher is broken. It would cost around \$800 to replace. Lastly, I would like to build a monument for the bell. We would have to buy the stone, bricks, and a bronze plaque. I could do most of the labor. We would have to go through Planning and Zoning to make sure we can build it. The total cost for the whole project is \$5,000. I would like the Board's thoughts on these items. The grease trap and dishwasher are things that have to be done.

4. Treasurer's Report:

Comm. Dodd said as of April 30, the municipal investment account has \$2,013,630 but the operating account had a negative balance of \$37,000. That gives us a balance of \$1,975,765. There was \$36,489 in outstanding payables so the balance is \$1,939,275. There was \$182,000 in expenses for the month. If we spend an estimate of \$200,000 for May and June, then we will have \$1,539,275 in cash. Putting \$511,143 aside for next year's budget, our cash total will be \$1,028,132. We had estimated to have around \$980,000 so we are looking pretty good.

Comm. Dodd said on the year to date budget, we are over our revenues budget by \$8,767. There are still 2 more months left. The expenses are under budget by \$249,000. We are going to go over budget if the expenses are \$181,000. This is due to the increase in legal expenses due to the mall revaluation. But we knew that money was coming out. I am estimating that our cash at the end of the fiscal year is going to be exactly where we want it to be. This is exactly where our accountant said we should be. Moving forward, we will have to operate within a budget without any extra money that has been carried.

Comm. Dodd said in the month of April, the expenses are under budget by \$62,000. That is probably due to some things that will show up in May and be backed into April.

5. Public Communications:

None.

6. Commissioners' Communications:

Comm. Dodd said she likes the idea of having a monument for the bell. That bell has been hanging around for a long time. We just need to figure out how we are going to pay for that. Thank you Chief Deskis for offering to do the labor on it. Can't the contingency fund for this year's budget be used for the grease trap and dishwasher? Chief Deskis said he was not sure how much money is left in the budget but it will probably cost \$700 to pump out the grease trap. The oil water separator will cost more

to clean. This will not have to be done again for another 3 or 4 years. We will be able to budget for this in the future. Comm. Dodd said it should come out of the contingency fund because it is something that has to be done. Chief Deskis said absolutely. Comm. Bouthiette asked how much money is left in the maintenance budget. Dept. Secy. Steneri said the operating maintenance is actually over budget. Comm. Dodd said that is correct. The maintenance and repairs is under by \$13,000. Dept. Secy. Steneri said that is maintenance for the apparatus. Comm. Dodd said then it would have to come out of contingency. What does everyone else think about the bell. Comm. Bouthiette said that is fine. Comm. Pliszka said he is in favor of doing it. Comm. Perry said sure.

Comm. Bouthiette said he is in favor of the SAFER grant. Comm. Dodd said she is in favor of it but is it something Chief Deskis wants to go forward with. Chief Deskis said the district would have to fund some of it. The government will only pay 75% of a firefighter's salary. The district would be responsible for the remaining 25%. Comm. Perry asked how long does the grant last for. Chief Deskis said for 3 years. We could hire people but there is no guarantee we could keep them. Comm. Perry asked does that money cover everything. Their salaries? Their benefit? Chief Deskis said yes. Comm. Perry said I do not think we can do it. Comm. Dodd asked does it have to be for 4 people. Chief Deskis said we can do 1 or 2. Comm. Pliszka said some people could retire in the next 3 years and we could use those people as replacements. Comm. Dodd asked is there a time limit on this. Chief Deskis said May 27th. Comm. Dodd said even if we are awarded the grant, we do not have to take it. Chief Deskis said you can turn it down. Comm. Dodd said we should submit for it and take a look at numbers in the meantime. Comm. Perry asked how many people would you submit for. Chief Deskis said I will only request for the number of people we need. Comm. Dodd asked what would the figure be for one firefighter. Chief Deskis said around \$60,000. The grant would pay for 75% of that. The third year it goes to a lower percentage. Comm. Dodd said so the district would pay only \$15,000. Comm. Bouthiette said we can get 4 employees for the cost of one. Comm. Dodd said that would help the Chief out a lot. Comm. Perry asked do you think there would be a problem hiring someone knowing that they could be let go after 3 years. Chief Deskis said we would stipulate that to them. Comm. Bouthiette said this would reduce overtime because there will be 5 guys on a shift. Comm. Dodd said she thinks this is a great idea. Comm. DuFour said we have to be careful because that could be a Union issue. Chief Deskis said we would have to look into that.

Comm. DuFour said Attorney Carl Landolina just joined the meeting.

MOTION to move to agenda item New Business to allow Atty. Landolina to discuss the upcoming election procedures made by Comm. DuFour, seconded by Comm. Dodd. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 5-0.

8. New Business:

Atty. Landolina said under one of the recent executive orders issued by the Governor, all elections for taxing districts must be between June 27 -30. This would include the

election for Fire Commissioner. The Board can vote to pick a date and move the election to that date. The election can be in person but I would advise against doing that. You would have to convince the local health authority to allow that to happen. Some of the other fire districts are going to have a drive-thru vote. You will have to figure out how to set that up. Is there an ordinance that people must be nominated by a certain date? Comm. Perry said 30 days before the election. Atty. Landolina said does that mean it is 30 days from when the election was supposed to happen or the date when it actually happens. That 30 days has already passed. Comm. DuFour said that is a moot point because nobody applied. We opened it back up with a to be determined date. We have had one application since. Atty. Landolina asked how many seats are available. Comm. DuFour said two.

Atty. Landolina asked is there anything in your bi-laws that states if fewer people apply than needed then the District Clerk gets to cast a vote for the entire slate. Comm. DuFour said we do not have anything like. Atty. Landolina said it would seem silly to hold an election if only 1 person is running. If there is no other process then you are still going to have to hold the election. If it is an uncontested matter then the Board could spread out the voting hours. Comm. DuFour said our Charter says we must have all day voting. Atty. Landolina said since it is all day voting, it is up to the Board to decide whether to do it in person or drive-thru. Comm. DuFour said we would like to make it as simple as possible. Atty. Landolina said you announce the open positions on your website. Applications are due by June 9th because that is the day the Governor chose. Comm. DuFour said that works for us.

Comm. Pliszka said in Section 6.2 of the Charter says not later than 30 days prior to the annual meeting for candidacy. We already had our annual meeting so does the 30 days still apply? Atty. Landolina said the Governor's orders say irrespective of what your charter says, the nominating process remains open until June 9th. If you went by the Charter, you would have no candidates. I suggest the Board discuss and vote on a date and we can discuss what to do after the application deadline. Comm. DuFour thanked Atty. Landolina. Atty. Landolina left the meeting.

7. Old Business:

None.

9. Approval of Minutes from April 15 public hearing, April 15 regular meeting, May 6 annual meeting, and May 6 special meeting:

MOTION to accept all of the meeting minutes made by Comm. DuFour, seconded by Comm. Perry. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 5-0.

Comm. Pliszka said we need to back to New Business to discuss the contingency fund items. Comm. DuFour asked do we need to have a vote on that. Comm. Pliszka said yes because it is coming out of the contingency fund.

MOTION to return to New Business made by Comm. DuFour, seconded by Comm. Bouthiette. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 5-0.

8. New Business:

MOTION to have the grease trap and oil separator cleaning for \$2,000, dishwasher replacement for \$800, and \$5,000 to complete the bell monument in front of the station which would include the bronze plaque dedicated to the former and past firefighters and Commissioners of the Thompsonville Fire District made by Comm. Bouthiette, seconded by Comm. Perry. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 5-0.

Dept. Secy. Steneri asked if the Board is going to pick a date for the election. Comm. DuFour asked when do we want to have the election. We have from June 27th – 30th. Chief Deskis said the 30th. The rest of the Board agreed.

10. Executive Session: Labor Dispute:

MOTION to enter Executive Session made by Comm. DuFour, seconded by Comm. Dodd. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 4-0 with Comm. Pliszka abstaining. Comms. DuFour, Perry, Dodd, and Bouthiette, Chief Deskis, and Dept. Secy. Steneri entered Executive Session at 7:48 pm.

Returned from Executive Session at 8:24 pm.

11. Possible Action regarding Executive Session:

Comm. DuFour said the Board has 10 days to answer the grievance. It has been 7 days since we have heard the argument so we have 3 days left. We will send a written ruling to the Union in the next day or two.

12. Adjourn:

MOTION to adjourn made by Comm. DuFour, seconded by Comm. Dodd. All in favor by ayes at 8:25 pm.