

## **December 21, 2017 Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners**

### **District #3 in the Township of Hanover**

### **County of Morris, Cedar Knolls, New Jersey**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on December 21, 2017 in accordance with the Public Meeting Act of 1975, Chapter 231.

**ATTENDANCE:** Commissioners Robert Callas, Peter DeNigris, Michael Dugan and Maria Florio were present. Commissioner Tom Quirk was absent.

Chief DiGiorgio, Administrator Schultz, Asst. Chief O'Hare, Lieutenant Belott, FF Gilson, Chief's Aide James Hark, Fire Co. Member Gary Keyser, Fire Co. Member Tom Harrington and Fire Co. Member Craig Vagell were also in attendance.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** Fire Co. Member Gary Keyser reported that he understands that the Board is looking to hire additional career firefighters within the fire district. Fire Co. Member Keyser noted that the Township is about 12 square miles, with 8 square miles being Whippany and 4 square miles being Fire District 3. Whippany currently has 3 career firefighters and a chief while Fire District 3 has 5 career firefighters and a chief. Fire Co. Member Keyser asked why the Board was looking to hire more career staff when a majority of our calls are in Whippany. Fire Co. Member Keyser noted that Chief DiGiorgio gave a good presentation a couple of weeks ago at the Fire Department but that presentation did not give the Board the actual numbers of calls in Cedar Knolls Fire District 3. With a total of 500 some odd calls and 21 structure fires that were responded to, it was not broken down how many actual calls were in our fire district. Fire Co. Member Keyser stated that he was looking for that information. Fire Co. Member Keyser noted that District 3 has many good volunteers that do a lot and spend a lot of time in training. This is not a hobby for them and they are good firefighters. Fire Co. Member Keyser stated that he is also curious why between the hours of 6pm and 10 pm we have a career firefighter and an officer responding to District 2 when we get nothing in return from them. Fire Co. Member Keyser said he heard that District 2 is looking to hire one or more firefighters. Fire Co. Member Keyser asked if a majority of the calls are in District 2 what is the purpose of hiring more firefighters for our district. Commissioner Dugan reported that the Board has not made a final decision on any hiring. While the 2018 Budget was made

with the hiring provision in it, discussions have not been had as to the type of hiring or even whether to hire or not. Commissioner Dugan reported that since the 2018 Budget needed to be submitted, the Board put the hiring provision in the budget to allow the hiring should it be approved by the Board. Commissioner Florio commented that the hiring discussions came up because of EMT scheduling issues. Commissioner Florio noted that the lack of coverage on some EMT shifts, the scrambling on Friday nights, the use of the Per Diems and overtime issues on the EMT shifts all contributed to the discussion on new hiring to alleviate these problems. Commissioner Florio noted that discussion about hiring firefighters came about because of the benefit of having personnel with dual certification in the fire house. Commissioner Florio stated that the discussion acknowledged that the call ratio was 3:1 EMT vs Fire. Commissioner Florio stated that District 3 has asked District 2 what they plan to do about coverage in their district and was told that District 2 is thinking about hiring. Fire Co. Member Keyser asked if the district was still looking to hire Per Diems. Commissioner Florio stated that District 3 is looking to hire Per Diems and is also looking at their rate of pay and whether the District 3 rate is on par with what neighboring districts are offering. The district is also looking at the reliability of Per Diems vs career staff for shift coverage. Fire Co. Member Keyser mentioned that the Pay per Call rate has been increased but wondered if the Board considered doing some kind of incentives for the volunteers so that the same people don't have to keep running out on crew nights. Commissioner Dugan reported that Chief DiGiorgio has asked for input on an incentive program. Fire Co. Member Keyser noted that the District should look at the structure of what is dispatched to calls such as CO2 alarms with no injury. Commissioner Florio said that if Fire Co. Member Keyser has suggestions, the Board would be open to hearing them. Commissioner Callas noted that the Board has always said they are open to suggestions. Fire Co. Member Keyser asked for clarification that there is no final decision on any of this yet. Commissioner DeNigris said no decision has been made but that something must be done to ensure that the EMT shifts are covered. Fire Co. Member Keyser asked if the Board had considered doing away with EMS and have Atlantic or someone take it over. Commissioner DeNigris said that the Board has not looked at that specifically. Commissioner DeNigris noted that the district is looking into the rate of pay for a fulltime EMT vs a FF/EMT and the difference is very little. Commissioner Dugan asked if there was any other public participation. Fire Co.

Member Tom Harrington said he thought an EMT would be less than a FF/EMT. Commissioner DeNigris said that the starting salary for a full time EMT was not that much lower than a FF/EMT and both would receive raises and benefits. Fire Co. Member Tom Harrington said that the only other thing that could be done was to give the EMS to the town like Par Troy. Commissioner DeNigris said that the Township of Hanover is aware of the situation at both District 3 and District 2. Fire Co. Member Tom Harrington suggested surveying surrounding districts to ascertain if they were having difficulty getting and retaining volunteers and how the districts are attracting volunteers and what they are doing to retain them. Commissioner Dugan reported that many districts are going to pay their EMTs. Fire Co. Member Tom Harrington said he was talking mainly about the Fire volunteers. Commissioner Dugan reported that in 2017 there was a recruitment drive and next year they are going to concentrate on the retention part. The Board thanked Fire Co. Member Tom Harrington for his suggestion.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:**

**The minutes from the November 29, 2017 Special Meeting, the December 2, 2017 Special Meeting and the December 7, 2017 Regular Meeting were reviewed. Commissioner Florio noted that in the minutes from the November 29, 2017 Special Meeting there was one question about Morris Plains in the minutes and the answer referred to Morristown and should be changed to Morris Plains. Commissioner Florio made a motion to accept the minutes from the November 29, 2017 Special Meeting with the amendment and the minutes from the December 2, 2017 Special Meeting and the December 7, 2017 Regular Meeting. Commissioner DeNigris seconded the motion. All were in favor. Commissioner Quirk was absent.**

**REPORT OF THE TREASURER:** Commissioner DeNigris reported that 2018 Budget has been sent down to Trenton. Administrator Schultz reported that he anticipates receiving the 2018 Budget back soon so that it can be put out next week. Commissioner Callas made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Commissioner Florio. All were in favor. Commissioner Quirk was absent.

**Report of Fire Commissioner Board Committees and Chief of Department:**

**CHIEF'S REPORT:** Chief DiGiorgio reported that an Operations Meeting was held prior to the Fire Co. Meeting that outlined all of the District's accomplishments for 2017 and outlined some of our goals for 2018. Chief DiGiorgio reported the data from the recruitment drive where over 200 surveys were completed has been produced. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the work groups were encourage to bring any ideas for an incentive/retention program to the table for discussion. Chief DiGiorgio reported that a meeting was held about a new EMS Crew Chief program where 5 Crew Chiefs from the EMS division were identified. The Crew Chief will be the point of contact for each crew and will work through the chain of command with the EMS Officers. Chief DiGiorgio reported that he will have the yearend report outlining all the calls the District responded to, all the inspections that were completed and other accomplishments from 2017 for the next meeting.

**EMS:** Nothing to report.

**BUDGET:** Commissioner DeNigris distributed copies of the November 2017 financial reports that reflect the approved budget transfers. Commissioner DeNigris felt that the District is in good shape and should hit the year end targets.

**PERSONNEL:** Nothing to report.

**NEGOTIATIONS:** Commissioner Callas reported that the committee had a meeting with the FMBA and will need to discuss in closed session.

**LIAISON TO THE VOLUNTEERS:** Commissioner Dugan reported that the Fire Co. held their elections at the last meeting.

## **BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS:**

### **2017 Building Improvements**

**Parking Lot Lights:** Chief DiGiorgio reported that Crotty Electrical has the final quote for the parking lot lights. It has been slightly modified but is not much different than the original. Chief DiGiorgio reported that once Crotty Electrical is given the green light, the lights will be installed over the next two weeks.

**APPARATUS/EQUIPMENT AND MAINTENANCE:** Chief DiGiorgio reported that the new Ambulance 38 is back down at VCI having a punch list of items that were found since we took possession of the vehicle. One of the items is the installation of the OpSpots Tire Chains. Ambulance 39 was down at VCI for issues with the

heating. Thankfully we still have the loaner ambulance and have been able to utilize it a number of times for dual calls. Commissioner DeNigris asked if the old chassis was sold and picked up. Chief DiGiorgio said that it had been sold and removed from the premises.

Chief DiGiorgio reported the ladder truck was re-inspected for the 5 year nondestructive test. Chief DiGiorgio thanked Lieutenant Belott for his diligence with the numerous communications back and forth with UL and VFIS. The District now has a certificate stating that the ladder truck was tested and passed the 5 year nondestructive test.

**INSURANCE:** Commissioner DeNigris reported Revenue Guard, the vendor who bills and collects for our EMS services, is under review because the insurance committee believes that Revenue Guard is billing incorrectly and leaving money on the table. Administrator Schultz is looking into the matter. Commissioner DeNigris reported that the committee is also looking into the possibility of contracting with a different EMS Billing Service.

Commissioners DeNigris and Florio said that other issues would be addressed in closed session.

**COMMUNICATIONS:** Nothing to report.

**BY-LAWS:** Nothing to report.

**WEBSITE:** Commissioner Florio said the website is up to date and commended Administrator Schultz for his hard work.

**PLANNING COMMITTEE:** Nothing to report.

**LIASON TO EXEMPTS:** Nothing to report.

**RECORDS RETENTION:** Nothing to report.

**LIAISON TO HANOVER TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE:** Commissioner DeNigris reported that George Coppola will be leaving office at the end of the year and no replacement liaison has been announced to date.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

The next regular meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners will be held on Thursday, January 4, 2018 at 7:00 P.M.

The Budget Hearing for the District's 2018 Budget will be held on Thursday, January 4, 2018 at 6:30 P.M.

The Annual Election will be held on Saturday, February 17, 2018 from 2 p.m. until 9 p.m. Commissioner Florio asked if she should reach out to the two people who helped with the election last year and see if they are available on February 17<sup>th</sup>.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** Fire Co. Member Craig Vagell asked for clarification on the agreement between the Board and the Fire Co. regarding the sharing of expenses pertaining to the Tree Lighting Ceremony. Commissioner Dugan said that the Board agreed to split all the costs of the ceremony. Commissioner Dugan said to compile all the bills and send the Board a copy with the total amount. Commissioner Dugan reiterated that the Tree Lighting was a huge success. Commissioner Florio added that Facebook was lighting up with compliments on the recent Santa visits also and commended the Fire Co. for their efforts. Fire Co. Member Craig Vagell thanked Lieutenant Belott for all the time he donated to the help with the Tree Lighting and for Chief DiGiorgio's help the night of the ceremony.

**RESOLUTIONS: Commissioner Callas read Resolution 17-12-21-103 accepting the resignation of Per Diem EMT Buono.** Chief DiGiorgio commented that this individual checked with his current full time employer to make sure that there were no conflicts prior to accepting this position. The individual went through his orientation and when asked for his January availability realized he had conflicts with his current job and would not be able to meet the time requirements of this job, so he resigned. **Commissioner Florio made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner DeNigris. All were in favor. Commissioner Quirk was absent.**

**Commissioner Callas read Resolution 17-12-21-104 rescinding the conditional offer of employment to Connor Biden.** Chief DiGiorgio commented that this individual indicated that he would be able to meet the intent of the job during the interview process. After extending the conditional offer of employment, the individual received an out of state offer of employment and declined our offer.

**Commissioner Florio made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner DeNigris. All were in favor. Commissioner Quirk was absent.**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION: Commissioner Callas read Resolution 17-12-21-105 to enter into executive session. Commissioner Dugan made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Callas. All were in favor. Commissioner Quirk was absent.**

**The Board went into closed session at 7:35 p.m.**

Personnel matters were discussed. Action will be taken.

**The Board came out of closed session at 9:35 p.m.**

**ADJOURN: A motion was made by Commissioner Florio, seconded by Commissioner DeNigris, to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor. Commissioner Quirk was absent. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by

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Robert Callas, Secretary