

**March 16, 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 7:10 p.m. on March 16, 2017 in accordance with the Public Meeting Act of 1975, Chapter 231.

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

Chief DiGiorgio, Hanover Township Committeeman George Cappolla, Asst. Chief O'Hare, Lieutenant DeSimone, Fire Co. Member Craig Vagell and Fire Co. Member Vince Donofrio were also in attendance.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** Hanover Township Committeeman George Cappolla thanked Chief DiGiorgio for his presentation to the Township Committee on March 9, 2017.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:**

The minutes from the March 2, 2017 Regular Meeting were reviewed. Commissioner DeNigris made a motion to accept the minutes from the March 2, 2017 Regular Meeting. Commissioner Florio seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**REPORT OF THE TREASURER:** Commissioner DeNigris reported that Inspection Night will be May 26, 2017. The date was agreed upon with the Fire Department. Commissioner DeNigris will communicate with the caterer to get a firm commitment.

**SWEARING IN:** Chief DiGiorgio, assisted by Commissioner Florio, administered the oath of office to the following Volunteer Members:  
Fire Captain Vincent Barisciano  
Junior EMT Jordan Trigger  
Junior EMT Andrew Kuzemczak

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

**CHIEF'S REPORT:** Chief DiGiorgio distributed his Bi-Monthly report to the Board prior to the meeting. Chief DiGiorgio reminded the Board to sign up for the Hanover Township Eblast if they have not already. DiGiorgio reported that he approved an Eblast article for posting in the April newsletter prepared by Firefighter Schwarz on the donation of turnout gear.

Chief DiGiorgio reported that a file collection and destruction project is once again underway. Chief DiGiorgio asked the Board to appoint Craig Vagell to this project with the same terms and conditions as last year.

Chief DiGiorgio reported that the Engine 35 Replacement Work Group met with representatives of Pierce and EOne. The vendors are in the process of putting together a quote. The Work Group met with Seagrave this afternoon.

Commissioner Dugan reported that Seagrave will need 2 ½ months to get a quote together. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the Day Room Restoration Work Group has met for a second time and plans to meet again on March 22. After this meeting, Chief DiGiorgio felt they would have some cost estimates for the project. Commissioner Dugan indicated that the Board should expect the estimate to be a substantial amount. Chief DiGiorgio reported that the Recruitment / Retention Work Group has their first meeting set for March 22 at 7:30pm.

Chief DiGiorgio asked the Board to review an email that he sent out regarding the exempt vs nonexempt employees. After everyone had had a chance to review the email, the Board can make a determination on how to move forward. Commissioner Florio asked if the Board needed a sample Rice Notice. Chief DiGiorgio asked her to send him a copy and he would ask Mr. Trimboli if we could use it as a template.

**EMS:** Nothing to report.

**BUDGET:** Commissioner DeNigris reported that the financial reports for YTD February 2017 were distributed to the Board. He noted that the annual lease payment for our one fire engine was made in January. This is why the actual vs budget comparison indicates that 100% of the budget has been spent. Commissioner Quirk made a motion to accept the Budget Report. Commissioner Callas seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**LABOR RELATIONS:** Commissioner Quirk reported that since this is a contract year, the Board should discuss what their goals are regarding contract negotiations. Commissioner Quirk asked Commissioner Dugan if the committees were the same. Commissioner Dugan said that the bylaws state that the Liaison to the Career Staff is the Chairman, otherwise the committees remain the same. Commissioner Florio pointed out that one of the proposed changes to the bylaws would allow the Chairman to appoint a committee to serve as Liaison to the Career Staff. Commissioner Quirk reported that he and Commissioner Callas would meet to review the contract and bring any proposed changes to the Board prior to the FMBA presenting their requests.

**LIAISON TO THE VOLUNTEERS:** Commissioner Florio reported that the Fire Dept. was appreciative of the Board's willingness to purchase an add-on policy to cover the handcart. Commissioner Florio stated that there is still a need to determine a value for the handcart.

Commissioner Florio reported that she attended a Fire Dept. meeting during which the Building Use Agreement was discussed. Commissioner Florio was extremely disappointed with the conduct of the meeting. It was adversarial in nature. Commissioner Florio said that as a liaison to the committee, she felt that she was considered a go between for the Board and the Fire Dept. and should be accepted by both the Board and the Fire Dept. Commissioner Florio said that she was not welcomed at the Fire Dept. meeting. She stated that she had no problem bringing the Fire Dept.'s concerns back to the Board but she did not appreciate the hostile atmosphere at the meeting. Commissioner Florio felt that we are all here in this house to work together and that some of the Fire Dept. membership wanted to work together. Commissioner Florio reported that the Fire Dept. was concerned that the personal liability coverage amounts required by the Agreement were too high. She said that one member reported that he had contacted his insurance company and the insurance company indicated that they would not be able to get that insurance. Commissioner Florio reported that a suggestion was made that the Fire District should be paying for these policies. Some of the Fire Dept. members felt that the district was trying to take something away from them. Commissioner Florio reported that she and Administrator Schultz reached out to the Fire Districts' insurance company, VFIS, to discuss these concerns. Commissioner Florio sent Administrator Schultz a copy of a

Certificate of Liability Insurance, which is the form required when you are having/sponsoring/hosting something outside your home. The homeowner would need to name that outside entity as the beneficiary on their policy for the day. This shifts the risk to the individual who is hosting and takes it away from the tax district. Commissioner Florio has put a call into the representative of another insurance company to ask if this is a standard request or if this is something that will be difficult or impossible for the average homeowner to obtain. She has not yet received a call back. Commissioner Florio noted that the VFIS indicated that this is something that anyone with general liability insurance could obtain. She acknowledged that the liability coverage limits that the Board is requiring may need to be revisited. The Fire Dept. asked if they would be allowed to purchase a rider through the Fire District's insurance company for an event being held at the fire station. VFIS indicated that neither a rider nor a one day policy would be available to individuals. Commissioner Florio reported that VFIS indicated that most individual would carry \$100,000 to \$300,000 in general liability insurance on their homeowners' policy.

Commissioner Quirk commented that the Fire Dept. has been telling him for a long time that the Board is not volunteer friendly. Commissioner Florio stated that the issue is not about being volunteer friendly, but the issue is protecting the taxpayers of the tax district for the building. Commissioner Quirk reiterated that the longstanding perception is that the Board is not volunteer friendly.

Commissioner Dugan asked if any Fire Dept. members have indicated what specifically the Board has done to make Fire Dept. members feel this way and what they would like to see the Board do. Commissioner Quirk stated that he has asked Fire Dept. members to come to the Board themselves to make requests as opposed to funneling the request through him. Commissioner DeNigris wanted to make it clear that the insurance stipulation in the Building Use Agreement was being required by the Board because VFIS requires it. The Board is not attempting to take away the Fire Dept. members' right to use the room, but to conform to the requirement put forth by VFIS. Commissioner Florio recommended the Board send the Building Use Agreement to Richard Braslow indicating that the issues are the liability limits and the need for a third party insurance certificate being required. Richard Braslow can then advise the Board as to whether the insurance certificate is required and if so what the thresholds should be.

Commissioner Dugan opened the floor for public comment on this matter. Fire Co. Member Vince Donofrio reported that his insurance company indicated that they would not be able to provide him with the required insurance certificate and therefore he would not be able to use the room. Commissioner Florio asked if the issue was that his insurance would not issue a certificate or that the liability thresholds exceeded what he was covered for. Mr. Donofrio stated that he would not be able to get coverage for more than his house was worth but also that his company would not write for a third party.

Commissioner Dugan made a motion to send the Building Use Agreement to Richard Braslow for review with regards to the questions on need for a third party insurance certificate and the appropriate liability limits. Commissioner DeNigris seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Commissioner Quirk suggested that the Board look into other insurance company. Commissioner Dugan explained that if the Board found an insurance company that would not require the third party insurance certificate, the liability would be put back on the District and indirectly, the taxpayer. Commissioner DeNigris said that he would look into getting some quotes from other insurance companies. Commissioner Dugan asked if Commissioner Florio or Administrator Schultz to ask VFIS if there is any way to insure the room for a certain number of events each policy year. Commissioner Florio reminded him that the District would then assume the liability as opposed to the host of the function.

Commissioner Florio stated that if the Fire Dept. was not open to working with anyone who is not a member, than perhaps she should not be a liaison to them.

#### **BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS:**

**Roof Project:** Commissioner Dugan reported that we will meet on March 23 with the bond company and the architect to try to figure out how we are going to get this closed out.

**Apron Project:** Commissioner Dugan reported that most of the remaining items are on hold until warmer weather. Commissioner Dugan will meet with Bowman to discuss the cement projects that we would like to do this year.

**2017 Building Improvements:** Commissioner Dugan reported that Crotty Electric will provide the Board with estimates to replace the lights in the parking lot and to put lights outside the bays. Crotty was also in to take a look at what work needs to be done in the Dayroom.

Commissioner Dugan reported that the Board has been provided with a design and quote sheet for the new sign. He pointed out that if the sign is ordered by the end of the month, there is a \$1,000 rebate. Commissioner DeNigris commented that the sign should be able to be dimmed at night so it will not be a distraction. Commissioner Dugan reported that the Board has received a quote to install the pillars for the sign.

Commissioner Dugan reported that we are getting prices to replace the bay floors. Commissioner DeNigris stated that this will be an approved capital project. Commissioner Quirk recommended that we look into whether the drains need to be replaced. Lieutenant DeSimone reported that the drains are cleaned on a regular basis and should be in good condition.

**Day Room Rehabilitation:** Commissioner Dugan reported that there has been two meetings and there is another meeting scheduled for next Wednesday.

**Masonry Work:** Commissioner Dugan reported that we are looking to do everything as an option. There is no main project. Commissioner Dugan said that we will get quotes to for the following projects: the back apron for Engine 33, the small section outside the engine bay, underneath the fire escape, the manhole on the side, and a walkway from the ladder bay to the parking lot. Commissioner Quirk questioned where the Fire Dept. asked for the walkway. Commissioner Dugan said that he would get a quote for both walkways.

**APPARATUS/EQUIPMENT AND MAINTENANCE:** Nothing to report

**INSURANCE:** Commissioner DeNigris will look into getting some quotes from other insurance companies.

**COMMUNICATIONS:** Nothing to report.

**BY-LAWS:** Commissioner Florio reported that each Board member has a draft to review so that it can be discussed in detail at the next meeting. Commissioner Callas questioned whether the closed session was going to be moved to before

the meeting. Commissioner Florio said that this is something that needs to be discussed.

**WEBSITE:** Commissioner Dugan reported that everything is up to date. Administrator Schultz left a note saying that the volunteer info on the first page is updated however the Fire Dept. has not signed up with the Volunteer Fire Council and anyone searching the MakeMeAVolunteer.org site will not find the Cedar Knolls Fire Dept. Administrator Schultz spoke with James Hark about taking care of this. The note from Administrator Schultz wanted the Board's opinion on putting this link on the District website if the Fire Dept. website is not updated by next week. Fire Co. member Craig Vagell said that he would address this under new business

**INSPECTION NIGHT:** Commissioner Dugan reiterated that Inspection Night has been set for May 26, 2017.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Fire Co. Member Craig Vagell addressed his response to an email that he responded to about posting a disclaimer on the Fire Dept. social media platforms. Mr. Vagell pointed out that his response may have come across harsher than he intended. His response indicated that while he would be willing to do that, he hopes that the Board is aware that Fire Dept. social media always portrayed the Board in the most professional, positive light. Mr. Vagell stated that he would hold off putting any District related communications onto those media platforms unless instructed by the Board's Public Information Officer in writing. Mr. Vagell said that the reason why that email came out was because it brought to light where Mr. Vagell personally stands with regard to the Fire Dept. social media. Mr. Vagell reported that the Cedar Knolls Fire Dept. Facebook Page is personally linked to Mr. Vagell's personal Facebook profile. The Fire Dept. page is a sub-page of Mr. Vagell's page because separate government pages were not allowed when the Fire Dept. created their page. Mr. Vagell has been working to separate the two pages because he wants to protect himself from personal liability. In addition, Mr. Vagell recommended that the Board create a Facebook page that would help educate the public on operational use. Mr. Vagell cited the recent storm as an example of why the Board and the Fire Dept. need to work together. During the latest storm, Mr. Vagell reported that he was keeping the

public updated via social media. When a situational awareness came out from Chief DiGiorgio as to where we were in the phases, there was a social media paragraph included that stated that any storm related information needs to be cleared through Chief DiGiorgio or Commissioner Dugan. Mr. Vagell reported that he does not have a problem with this but stated that he unknowingly was violating this policy the entire day. Mr. Vagell stated that while the Board has a social media agreement, the Fire Dept. does not. Mr. Vagell said that he will work with the Board to make sure that the Board and Fire Dept. are jointly protecting themselves on this front. In regards to the MakeMeaFirefighter.org request, Mr. Vagell suggests creating a committee to review each entities websites and other social media to ensure that the content does not confuse the public and highlights the distinction between the Board and the Fire Dept. Commissioner DeNigris questioned why the Board needs a Facebook page if they already have a website. Mr. Vagell responded that while websites are still popular, the public utilizes many different social media platforms and it is important that the Board be active on these platforms if they want to reach the most people. He stated that a Communications committee with liaisons from the District and the Fire Dept. Perhaps the District and Board should have a combined Facebook page as this would allow the page to fall under the Board Social Media Agreement. Commissioner Florio pointed out that the agreement covers the person and the platform so there is already an umbrella over both entities. Commissioner Florio also pointed out that if the Board started utilizing various social media platforms, it would require a significant amount of time to monitor these platforms in order to guarantee that inquiries were responded to on a timely basis. The monitor would also have to be given a certain amount of autonomy to respond to inquiries. Chief DiGiorgio asked if there was a way to take away the ability to post on a Facebook page. Mr. Vagell responded that you could set the parameters so that certain things such as profanity are filtered but that the purpose of social media is to socialize. In conclusion, Mr. Vagell reiterated his recommendation that a committee be formed to look into these matters.

Asst. Chief O'Hare reported that the Fire Dept. is rekindling its Big Loser Contest and asked the Board if they would be willing to match the \$10 registration fee paid by each contestant. This money would be paid to the contestant who loses the most weight on a percentage basis. The Board agreed to support the effort.

- The next regular meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners will be held on Thursday, April 6, 2017 at 7:00 P.M.

**RESOLUTIONS:**

Commissioner Callas read **Resolution 17-03-16-31** authorizing the sale of certain surplus equipment. **Commissioner Dugan made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner DeNigris. All were in favor.**

Commissioner Callas read **Resolution 17-03-16-32** accepting the resignation of Per Diem EMT Keith Makar and read his letter of resignation. **Commissioner Dugan made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Callas. All were in favor.**

**ADJOURN: A motion was made by Commissioner Callas, seconded by Commissioner Florio, to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor.** The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

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Robert Callas, Secretary