

May 28, 2024 Special 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 May 28, 2024 in accordance with the Public Meeting Act of 1975, Chapter 231. The Board observed a moment of silence for all those who have given their lives in service of their communities and nation.

ATTENDANCE: Commissioners Steven Cornine, Mary Lou DeSimone, Michael Dugan Jr., Michael Dugan Sr., and Gary Keyser were present.

Administrator Schultz, Deputy Administrator Hark Jr., Lt. Sulpy, FF Martin, EMT Waldron, and members of the public were also in attendance.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF THE SPECIAL MEETING: This meeting is being held for the purposes of discussing operational and personnel matters.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None.

Commissioner Cornine reported that District 3 received an invite to a meeting on May 21 that was spearheaded by District 2. Commissioner Cornine reported that he and Commissioner Keyser attended along with Administrator Schultz and Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. Commissioner Cornine reported that the meeting was specific to privatizing EMS in Hanover Township. Commissioner Cornine reported that District 3 was not aware that the private EMS provider associated with a large regional hospital would be at the meeting. Commissioner Cornine reported that there was a lot of good conversation that District 3 did the best with but this would have a lot of impact on personnel, negotiations, and a few other things so it was decided to bring the full District 3 Board together to discuss it prior to the June 6 Joint Board meeting. Commissioner Cornine felt that it was District 2's intent to have the meeting and then try to get proposals and quotes for this privatized service for the Joint Board meeting. Commissioner Cornine reported that with the nature of the conversations and the impact on personnel and negotiations, the Board will have this conversation in Executive Session and then revisit it in public session afterwards. Commissioner Keyser noted that the May 21 meeting was attended by 2 representatives from Hanover Township Committee and the Township Administrator in addition to the District 2 representatives and private EMS provider representatives. Commissioner Cornine noted that this was not brought on by district 3 but was solely a District 2

endeavor. Commissioner Cornine reported that the District 3 Board will draft a response and act accordingly after the Executive Session discussion.

EMT Waldron asked why the discussion was being held in closed session. Commissioner Cornine reported that this impacts personnel along with negotiations which the District is in the middle of with career staff. Commissioner Cornine reported that the board needs to be able to speak candidly about concerns regarding those issues. Commissioner Cornine reiterated that the Board will have more public discussion after the Executive Session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-05-28-70 to enter into executive session. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Jr. All were in favor.

The Board went into closed session at 7:07 p.m.

Personnel matters were discussed, and action will be taken.

The Board came out of closed session at 8:00 p.m.

Commissioner Cornine reported that as stated before the reason for the meeting was to brief the Board on an EMS matter that came before us. Commissioner Cornine reported that District 3 representatives sat in the May 21 meeting, discussed it and are adamantly opposed to anything that is going on with it. Commissioner Cornine reported that even though District 3 said at the May 21 meeting that the District would cordially participate and provide stuff, since then and having the time to reflect on it he has drafted a letter that after tonight is going to the Town Council members in whole expressing his and the District 3 Board's strong opposition to the privatization of EMS in Hanover Township. Commissioner Cornine reported that the letter goes through a little bit of District 3's history. Commissioner Cornine reported that he is going to sign the letter and it will be sent to the Town council tomorrow after which it will be made available to the public. Commissioner Cornine felt he owes it to the District 3 Township liaison to provide all of them with the letter first. Commissioner Cornine reported that the letter basically states that District 3 does a fantastic job, District 3 supports our staff, District 3 is not aware of any problems and none have been brought to our attention, and the District 3 residents approved the purchase of an ambulance so they must support District 3 EMS. Commissioner Cornine reported that the residents did not pass other things which proves that the voters are aware and support the job that District 3 is doing with EMS. Commissioner

Cornine reported that District 3 is going to thank the attendees of the May 21 meeting for having the conversation with us but let them know District 3 does not want anything to do with it and it is at the township's discretion. Commissioner Cornine reported that District 3 was approved via resolution which was unanimously adopted by the Township Committee in 2010 to provide EMS. Commissioner Cornine reported that District 3 operates under that and District 2 has zero standing in it. Commissioner Cornine reported that District 2's reasons for wanting privatization of EMS are theirs alone. Commissioner Cornine reported that District 3 will send a letter letting them know that we will respectively not participate in anything further and if the Township wants to take on the endeavor of finding a private EMS agency to replace District 3 we wish they would talk to us about what we are doing wrong and go from there. Commissioner Cornine reported that this is the general gist of the letter – District 2 wants privatized EMS, then the conversation expanded to why not provide it to the entire municipality and as the latter states District 3 wants nothing to do with it. Commissioner Cornine reported that anyone present can read the letter after the meeting but no copies will be provided until tomorrow. Commissioner Cornine asked if anyone had questions. EMT Waldron asked that if the other District wants to privatize the whole Town would District 3 be able to bid on the contract for the whole Town. Commissioner Cornine reported that it is his understanding that District 3 would be able to bid if an RFP went out. Commissioner Cornine noted that District 3 is currently the EMS provider for the whole Township based on the 2010 resolution but pointed out that another resolution can change that. Commissioner Cornine felt that this is a Town Council conversation because District 3 provides a fantastic service and has fantastic staff. Commissioner Cornine reported that District 3 provides services above and beyond that of most ambulance services, namely medications and other devices that District 3 carries that most places do not. Commissioner Cornine felt it would be a disservice to the community for minimal tax savings to not provide the level of service that District 3 does now. Ms. Atkinson asked what Commissioner Cornine's understanding of why District 2 wants to go that route. Commissioner Cornine reported that it is his opinion that District 2 is having trouble with negotiations and are looking to cut services so they do not have to pay more. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that when an EMS call goes out in District 2 they send 2 of their FF/EMTs and apparently the firemen are using this to get more money in negotiations. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District 2 Board feels that if the EMS response is cut from the job then District 2 firefighters will lose

their reason for asking for more money. Commissioner Cornine reminded everyone that these are opinions because nothing has been admitted to. Commissioner Cornine reported that in the May 21 meeting one of the concerns that were presented as a reason for privatization were response time with one ridiculous example of a 30-minute response. Commissioner Cornine noted that if anyone had suffered a 30-minute District 3 response time it would be analyzed by the District to find a way to correct it. Commissioner Cornine noted that the 30-minute response time was referenced but to details were provided.

Commissioner Cornine reported that another reason District 2 gave for privatization were that Whippany residents are balance billed for EMS services that District 3 provides while District 3 residents are not balance billed. Commissioner Cornine reported that this is due to District 3 residents tax revenue supporting District 3 EMS services while District 2 residents do not pay taxes to District 3 but noted that there are other ways to remedy this other than privatization. Commissioner Cornine reported that instead of District 2 paying for a private agency for EMS, they could pay District 3 for EMS and then District 2 residents would not be balance billed either. Commissioner Cornine reported that concerning response time, a District 3 lieutenant spearheaded the power truck theory which is the same theory that Atlantic Health works off of where they move their ambulance to where the issues are based on history and data. Commissioner Cornine reported that the concerns that were raised were response time and amount, but level of service and care were not discussed and the private agency was not asked if they could maintain the level of care.

Commissioner Keyser asked Administrator Schultz if he had District 3 response times. Administrator Schultz reported that the average response time over the last 3 years in Cedar Knolls is about 5 ½ minutes and in Whippany is just over 6 minutes. Administrator Schultz noted that this is well below the national average of 7 minutes. Commissioner Cornine noted that these are response times of the ambulance coming out of the District 3 firehouse and District 2 is looking at decreasing Whippany response times by having a private agency respond from their firehouse. Commissioner Cornine noted that this would increase response times in Cedar Knolls which would be balanced by having an ambulance centrally located which is a whole different subject. Commissioner Cornine felt there was not any thought put into it and that shaving response times is not viable.

Commissioner Cornine reported that having 2 apparatus available is something that District 3 has always endeavored to do and equipment is one of our issues preventing it. Commissioner Cornine noted that he has not seen a single

Facebook post stating that District 3 took longer to get there and people complain about everything there but not once about District 3 EMS. Commissioner Cornine reported that apparently during the election process in District 2 there was a large conversation about EMS. Commissioner Keyser reported that apparently one of the District 2 commissioners that ran unsuccessfully for the Board was pushing for the EMS over there. EMT Waldron thanked the District 3 Board for hiring the type of staff that monitor the police channel so they can potentially be ready to go out on a call prior to being dispatched. Commissioner Cornine appreciated EMT Waldron's commentary and felt that there is not a staff member in this agency that has to justify anything. Commissioner Cornine reported that this is not coming from District 3 and he will adamantly oppose it. Commissioner Cornine reported that the Administrators and some of the officers of the Department have put together data that supports everything and paints even a better picture than the one EMT Waldron just did. Commissioner Cornine reported that the gist of the letter states that the District 3 Board supports our staff and the District will not be participating in this because we think we are doing a fantastic job and plan to continue doing so. Commissioner Cornine reported that if the Town Council wants to take this on, there is nothing that District 3 can do about that because District 3 is authorized to do EMS through resolution by the Town Council. Commissioner Cornine reported that if the Town Council wants to split the Town and offer private EMS to District 2, there is nothing District 3 can do about it except be available for their calls when they are busy. Commissioner Cornine reported that District 3 will provide data and fight to prove that we are the right ones to provide EMS to Hanover Township. EMT Waldron thanked the Board for backing up the staff and seeing that what is done here is professional. Ms. Atkinson reported that she is glad that the Board decided to not participate in the privatization endeavor. Commissioner Cornine reported that he is glad that District 3 went to the meeting to hear what everyone had to say and now it is time for the Town Council to decide if they want to support privatization. Ms. Atkinson asked if a private agency would respond from another location or would they be sitting in one of the District firehouses. Commissioner Cornine reported that his understanding is that it would be determined by however the contract is written. Commissioner Cornine reported that there are many things that can be written into a contract; where are they stationed, what happens when there is an additional call, who dispatches them, etc. Ms. Atkinson noted that the residents will pay taxes for them to sit there and then pay when they come to your house. Commissioner Cornine confirmed that

the private agency could be sitting in a District building that tax dollars are paying to heat, air condition, electricity, etc. Ms. Atkinson asked for confirmation that the agency would then bill the resident if they came to their house.

Commissioner Dugan Sr. confirmed that they would bill residents and then would be able to balance bill and go to collections. Commissioner Cornine clarified that billing procedures would be detailed in the contract and if the District compensated the agency for the balance then the agency would not balance bill residents. Commissioner Cornine reported that the agency would get paid, period, the question is who would be paying. Commissioner Cornine reported that residents would still pay tax money towards EMS to allow the District to compensate the agency for any balance bill and associated costs. EMT Waldron asked if residents should watch the Township website they would see it come up on one of the Committee agendas and if not, how is the Township going to decide this without going to the public. Commissioner Cornine felt that the entire Township does not know anything about this and noted that the District 3 liaison did not know anything about it until email chains about it started. Commissioner Cornine reported that it is his intention to let the entire Township council know about it and District 3's disapproval of it. Commissioner Cornine reported that this conversation will also be had on June 6 with the Joint Fire Prevention Board with the District 2 representatives. Commissioner Dugan Sr. asked if the letter would be made public on the District website. Commissioner Cornine reported that he did not care how the public was informed as long as it is after the Town Council receives the letter.

RESOLUTIONS:

Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-05-28-71 appointing a Special Investigator. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolutions, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Jr. All were in favor.

Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-05-28-72 donating surplus equipment. Commissioner DeSimone made a motion to introduce the resolutions, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Sr. All were in favor.

ADJOURN: A motion was made by Commissioner Keyser, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Jr., to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Mary Lou DeSimone, Secretary