

September 19, 2024 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 September 19, 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., Asst. Chief Costello, Lt. Belott, FF Colin, FF DiGiacomo, FF Ujfalussy, EMT Bergman, EMT Harrington, EMT Villane, EMT Waldron, Hanover Township Committeeman Cahill, and Mr. DeSimone were also in attendance.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None.

CORRESPONDENCE: Commissioner Cornine reported that he received correspondence from the District 2 Board which he will discuss during the Planning Committee report or Old Business.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:

The minutes from the September 5, 2024 Regular Meeting were reviewed.

Amendments to the Previous Minutes: None.

Commissioner Keyser made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 5, 2024 Regular Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Sr. All were in favor.

The minutes from the August 8, 2024 Executive Session were reviewed.

Amendments to the Previous Minutes: None.

Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 8, 2024 Executive Session, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Jr. All were in favor.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER: Commissioner Dugan Sr. distributed the interim September 2024 financials and reported that the District is operating just at budget.

Report of Fire Commissioner Board Committees and Chief of Department:

MONTHLY REPORTS: Asst. Chief Costello distributed his Bi-Monthly report and highlighted the following items.

Asst. Chief Costello commended the members who responded to the reported fire on Hanover Ave. last week.

Asst. Chief Costello distributed a Volunteer Roster to the Board and noted that there are 3 compensated EMTs who are also volunteer firefighters. Asst. Chief Costello reported that the report also breaks down the number of interior firefighters, EMTs and drivers among the volunteers. Asst. Chief Costello reported that the volunteer members have been increasing particularly in the Junior and EMS Trainees. Asst. Chief Costello reported that he is looking to get the volunteer operations meetings going again.

Asst. Chief Costello reported that the clarification that the Board asked that he issue about responding to the issue at hand will be going out soon. Asst. Chief Costello reported that uniforms order will be going out shortly as well.

Commissioner Cornine reported that the Board also received the monthly lieutenant's reports and asked if anyone had any questions on them or the Asst. Chief's report.

Commissioner Keyser reported that the gas meter on Asst. Chief Costello's vehicle and asked what the issue was. Asst. Chief Costello reported that the O2 sensor is not working but it is not critical since there are meters on the other apparatus.

EMS: Nothing to report.

BUDGET: Commissioner Cornine reported that the first 2025 budget meeting took place last week and that a second meeting is scheduled for Tuesday at 3 P.M.

PERSONNEL: Commissioner DeSimone reported that the Board would need an Executive Session tonight.

NEGOTIATIONS: Commissioner Keyser reported that the contract is ready to be signed tonight if the Board passes the resolution approving it.

LIAISON TO THE VOLUNTEERS: Commissioner Dugan Jr. asked Commissioner Cornine to go over the Communication sheet for the Volunteers.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS: Commissioner Keyser commended Lt. Belott, his crew, and EMT Waldron for the great job they did weeding the grounds.

APPARATUS/EQUIPMENT AND MAINTENANCE: Commissioner Dugan Jr. reported that Engine 34 needs to have its air compressor replaced, Engine 35 needs the cab tilt switch replaced, and Ambulance 39 needs some minor repairs. Commissioner Keyser reported that the monthly maintenance reports indicate that the front end of Engine 35 is loose and it will cost \$2488 to repair. Commissioner Keyser reported that Lt. Belott should meet with the Treasurer to see if money can be found in the budget for the repair. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that he asked Lt. Belott to get a quote to repair the flaking paint and surface rust on the front end of Engine 34.

INSURANCE: Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that Liberty Mutual has completed the 2023 audit and has leveled an additional \$12,500 in premiums. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District will pay the additional charge but is appealing the increase.

BY-LAWS: Nothing to report.

WEBSITE: Up to date.

PLANNING COMMITTEE: Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the Planning Committee met today and discussed the need for an updated quote on the cost to stabilize the building and add an elevator. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that he hopes to have an idea by November if the District will be receiving a grant next year to help with the building renovation. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the Committee hopes to come up with a few different scenarios/concepts before presenting them to the Board. Administrator Schultz reported that legal counsel has advised the District to have a plan to put before the voters in February to approve the District raising its required contribution fund share, just over \$1,000,000, contingent on receiving the \$3,800,000 in grant money. Administrator Schultz noted that the District should consider spending some money to ensure that the residents are informed of the plans prior to voting.

LIASON TO EXEMPTS: Nothing to report.

RECORDS RETENTION: Nothing to report.

LIAISON TO HANOVER TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE: Nothing to report.

OLD BUSINESS: Commissioner Keyser asked about the status of the drinking water line. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the District has received 3 quotes and hopes to proceed with Webster Plumbing to run the water line for \$1480. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. noted that the District would pay a \$30 -

\$40 monthly maintenance fee on the line. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to proceed with Webster Plumbing to run a water line, seconded by Commissioner DeSimone. All were in favor.

Commissioner Cornine reported that everyone should be aware of the consolidation talks and that District 3 has approved a resolution to that effect. Commissioner Cornine reported that he received a letter from District 2 stating they would like to pass a resolution to engage in discussions concerning the consolidation. Commissioner Cornine reported that District 3 is well beyond this. Commissioner Cornine acknowledged that the District 3 resolution has some strong wording in it and he would entertain modifying it slightly but felt that the District 2 proposed resolution is useless. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the proposed resolution is exactly what was already passed to no avail.

Commissioner Keyser agreed and noted that District 2 counsel was present at their meeting last night to answer any questions that the District 2 Board had. Commissioner Keyser felt that the Township Committee needs to step in and ask what is going on. Committeeman Cahill reported that he was at the meeting last night and his interpretation of what the attorney was telling District 2 was to hold off. Committeeman Cahill felt that the attorney toned his conversation to the audience. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that the attorney told District 2 that if they do not have buy in from the volunteers, a plan that shows they would continue to be able to provide fire protection, and a chain of command in place than maybe they are better holding off. Commissioner Dugan Sr. felt that when District 2 heard this they ran with it. Commissioner Cornine felt that the Boards have a pretty good idea of what the plan is to continue to provide fire service and can say with the upmost confidence that the career staff will benefit, the volunteer staff will benefit, and ultimately the residents will benefit.

Commissioner Cornine felt that if both Districts adopt the proposed District 2 resolution it will lead to nothing but talks as it has in past. EMT Waldron reported that last night the attorney started off talking about the consolidation of Jackson NJ fire districts and how it was achieved by one of the districts merging into the other district. EMT Waldron reported that the attorney highlighted how differences in career staff contracts could be cause for districts not to merge. EMT Waldron reported that the attorney also offered contradictory message on the ability to turn back from approving the dissolution resolution. EMT Waldron felt that some of the District 2 Board was getting hung up on the word dissolve and did not understand that a whole list of conditions that would have to be met before the dissolution of the individual fire districts according to the resolution.

Commissioner Cornine reiterated that the resolution states that the 2 Districts would come up with a plan for a single district, then they each dissolve and allow the newly elected single district Board run with the plan. Commissioner Keyser asked if having one attorney represent both Districts is a problem. Commissioner Dugan Sr. felt that it obviously is because the attorney was representing District 2 last night and this was highlighted by the different messages that he gave each District on the same plan. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that he brought up the fact that a resolution to continue having consolidation talks would be redundant because both Districts have already passed this resolution numerous times. Deputy Administrator Hark Jr. reported that he also mentioned that over the past year the Joint Board has only met half the time because of lack of a quorum and this is not conducive to continuing any consolidation discussions. Commissioner Dugan Sr. reported that he brought up the fact that if both Boards pass the resolution, it will go to the Township whom he felt would ensure that the Joint Board conduct enough meetings to ensure that any consolidation plan is moving forward. Committeeman Cahill felt that there is also some apprehension about the amount of work it will take to consolidate the Districts and what period of time it can be accomplished in. Committeeman Cahill reported that the Township Committee has no authority over the fire Districts other than should the Committee decide to municipalize the whole fire department so the Committee will not make consolidation meeting requirements. Commissioner Dugan Sr. felt that knowing the Township Committee has a part in the consolidation process would encourage both Districts to attend consolidation plan meetings which in turn would help keep the process moving along. Committeeman Cahill felt that if both Districts are truly ready to go down the consolidation road again that it would require an outside project manager to hold people's feet to the fire and keep the process moving. Committeeman Cahill felt that the previous work presented by former Chief DiGiorgio and Chief Perrello is a good foundation to start with and there would not be a need to start from scratch with the consolidation plan. Committeeman Cahill emphasized the need for an outside project manager and that hiring a project manager may be an avenue that the Township would get involved in. Commissioner Cornine asked Committeeman Cahill if the Township has gotten legal advice saying that the Township does not have legal authority because it is his understanding that once the fire Districts adopt parallel resolutions it goes to the Township for consideration and it is statutorily the Township's obligation to bring a plan to the DCA. Commissioner Cornine felt that ultimately it would be the Township would

adopt the resolution that makes one fire district permanent and in effect. Committeeman Cahill reported that this is his understanding except that he does not feel that the Township will come up with a plan without input from the Fire Districts and stakeholders. Commissioner Cornine asked if he and/or anyone at his disposal would be willing to draft a flow chart of how the consolidation process should go after the Districts adopt the parallel resolution to help relieve the apprehension about the process. Commissioner Cornine felt that if people knew that the Township would be creating committees to ensure participation from the stakeholders and knew the process for creating a consolidation plan it might help ease apprehension. Committeeman Cahill felt that based on the results of last night's meeting this will be a topic of discussion amongst the Committeemen, Mr. Giorgio, and the Township attorney to consider how to approach this and he will definitely bring up the flowchart idea for consideration. Commissioner Cornine reported that District 3 is ready to move forward and the flowchart idea is his last-ditch effort to get District 2 on board before trying to get 5% of the residents to certify a consolidation. Commissioner Cornine felt that a grass roots campaign would work to get 5% of residents to sign a certification. Commissioner Keyser felt that the District 2 Board Chairman thought that the consolidation was the best way forward. Committeeman Cahill reported that the District 2 voted against not voting on the parallel resolution and putting forth a different resolution at the meeting last night. Committeeman Cahill felt that no one from District 2 would run for Fire Commissioner on a platform against consolidation because the public while they do not understand all the intricacies of consolidating do logically question why there are 2 fire districts. Administrator Schultz reported that the counsel for both Districts spoke at a Joint Board Meeting a couple years ago which addressed a number of the issues raised by the consolidation report presented by former Chief DiGiorgio and Chief Perrello including the issue of breaking contracts between a District and their Volunteer Company. Administrator Schultz reported that there was also a meeting with Consolidation Committee members and the DCA during which Leap Grants were discussed which are grants from the DCA that help cover some of the consolidation costs, like new uniforms and letterhead, excluding legal costs. Administrator Schultz felt that if the consolidation gets kicked down the road again it will be a great disservice to the residents of both Districts because while a consolidated District might not run more efficiently it will be more effective. Administrator Schultz reported that he would call for monthly Joint Board meetings until this has been hammered out. Administrator Schultz felt that a

consolidation plan that builds on the previously presented plan and addresses the issues brought up by that plan would not be as difficult to put together as some people are thinking. Administrator Schultz felt that Township needs reliable response 24/7 and this can be done efficiently by a single District. Administrator Schultz reported that the resolution that District 2 is proposing will set the consolidation process back to where we were 2 years ago. Commissioner Cornine reported that the issue is not going to be solved tonight so the Board will move on with the agenda and continue to work with District 2 to move forward with the process.

NEW BUSINESS: Commissioner Keyser reported that he attended the Firemen's Convention in Wildwood and noted that he sat in on a NJ Fire District Assn. meeting on Budgets which included representatives from the DCA and some of the people we have been working with have retired and he heard from some of the new representatives. Commissioner Keyser gave their contact information to the Administrators.

REMINDERS:

The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners will be held on Thursday, October 3, 2024 at 7:00 P.M.

The next Joint Fire Prevention Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, December 5, 2024 at 6:30 P.M. at the District 3 Firehouse. Commissioner Cornine reported that he will contact District 2 about setting up a Special Joint Board Meeting early in October.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None.

RESOLUTIONS:

Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-09-19-106 accepting the resignation of EMT Makar. Commissioner Keyser made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Jr. All were in favor. The Board thanked EMT Makar for his service and wished him the best in his new endeavor as a career fireman.

Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-09-19-107 appointing Junior Volunteer FF Addeo. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Jr. All were in favor.

Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-09-19-108 offering Opt-Out Healthcare Coverage to FMBA Local 109. Commissioner Keyser made a motion

to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Jr. All were in favor.

Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-09-19-109 authorizing approval of successor CBA. Commissioner Keyser made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Jr. All were in favor.

Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-09-19-110 appointing Probationary FF/EMT Shay. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Dugan Jr. All were in favor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Commissioner DeSimone read Resolution 24-09-19-111 to enter into executive session. Commissioner Dugan Sr. made a motion to introduce the resolution, seconded by Commissioner DeSimone. All were in favor.

The Board went into closed session at 8:00 p.m.

Personnel matters were discussed, and action will not be taken.

The Board came out of closed session at 9:17 p.m.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Mary Lou DeSimone, Secretary