

**MOUNT LAUREL FIRE DISTRICT #1
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

May 18, 2010

Fire Department Headquarters Station
Meeting Minutes #12

IN ATTENDANCE:

1. Commissioner Nash
2. Commissioner Shestack
3. Commissioner Cornue
4. Commissioner Shapiro
5. Deputy Chief Colucci
6. Solicitor Braslow

NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

1. Commissioner Roura
2. Chief of Department Gallos
3. Administrator Jones

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Cornue at 7:35 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence observed.

The public announcements were ready by Commissioner Shapiro.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- Special Meeting of January 5, 2010
Commissioner Nash made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Commissioner Shapiro. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

RESOLUTIONS:

- None.

FINANCIAL MATTERS:

- Commissioner Nash questioned a \$107 mileage reimbursement to Firefighter Rafer for a recertification class and Commissioner Shestack confirmed that the current federal mileage allowance is 50 cents per mile. Commissioner Shestack made a motion to approve the May bills totaling \$146,865.66, which was seconded by Commissioner Shapiro. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

COMMENTS FROM DIVISION #1 FIRE COMPANY PRESIDENT (or his designee):

- None.

COMMENTS FROM DIVISION #2 FIRE COMPANY PRESIDENT (or his designee):

- Fellowship President Sylvan Einstein reported that the Burlington County Junior Firefighter Competition is this Saturday at the Burlington County Fire Academy. He encouraged everyone to come out and support the 2 teams that we have entered.

COMMENTS OF IAFF LOCAL 4408 PRESIDENT (or is designee):

- None.

MONTHLY REPORT BY FIRE OFFICIAL:

The Fire Official had submitted his monthly report to the Board for their review prior to the meeting. Commissioner Shapiro commented that the number of registered businesses in Mount Laurel has increased significantly since 1999 but that the number of inspectors assigned to the Fire Prevention Bureau has remained the same. She asked Deputy Chief Colucci how challenging it was for the Bureau staff to keep up with this. Deputy Chief Colucci stated that he doesn't have any statistics to reference, but agreed that the total number of tasks assigned to inspectors in the Bureau has increased significantly while the staffing has stayed the same or decreased temporarily. He stated that we currently have the highest level of staffing ever with 3 inspectors assigned to the Bureau even though one is currently out with a workers compensation injury. Commissioner Shapiro asked him if this staffing level will be maintained so that they can actually gain some momentum and be more proactive. Deputy Chief Colucci felt that we do need more staff assigned to the Bureau for it to run the way it should. We are relying heavily on the station platoons to get block inspections done, but it remains a challenge every year. Commissioner Shapiro asked him if another inspector would generate more revenue and Deputy Chief Colucci replied that it would not but it would help them get the job done and meet our year end deadlines. Commissioner Nash stated that it appears that each month Fire Official Kownatsky repeats his request for additional personnel to be assigned to the Bureau so he can accomplish more and spread out the work load so it is not as demanding and to adapt to staffing fluctuations. Although he would be in favor of increasing the staffing level of the Bureau, the current economic situation directly affects our ability to do so along with adding a 2nd shop mechanic and a recruitment and retention coordinator. Deputy Chief Colucci added that for some time we have been assigning the 5th man from station platoons to help out with inspections when the 5th man is available. He and the Chief of Department have discussed detailing a 3rd inspector to the Bureau permanently, which would be a huge benefit to them because they would learn more about the township, fire protection systems and the buildings themselves. Commissioner Shapiro asked him how probable this is and he stated that it isn't currently possible because we are still recovering from a number of staff being out with injuries or on military leave. Commissioner Shapiro asked him to let Fire Official Kownatsky know that we discussed the staffing situation and that we understand his needs and the ambitious goals that he has set for the Bureau.

MONTHLY REPORT BY ADMINISTRATOR:

The Administrator had submitted his monthly report to the Board for their review prior to the meeting. He was unable to attend tonights' meeting because he had gone home early on sick leave.

MONTHLY REPORT BY DEPUTY CHIEF:

Deputy Chief Colucci had submitted his monthly report to the Board for their review prior to the meeting. He reported that the Chief of Department Gallos was currently working on an AFG grant proposal for a replacement rescue truck. He added that the Chief of Department had been out sick this week and last week with a respiratory illness. Commissioner Cornue asked him what the grant submission deadline was and Deputy Chief Colucci replied that it was either the 28th or the 31st of May.

Commissioner Nash asked him why the 2 quints were being housed at Station 361. Deputy Chief Colucci replied that this relocation of apparatus was something that he and the Chief of Department have discussed for over a year and a half and we finally decided to do it. He explained that both quints are now at Station 361 and both engines are now at Station 362 and each station is rotating use of these apparatus each month to allow more PM service time and to prolong their life.

MONTHLY REPORT BY THE CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT:

The Chief of Department had not submitted his monthly report to the Board for their review prior to the meeting. He was unable to attend tonights' meeting because he had was on sick leave.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

TRAINING:

- Commissioner Nash had nothing to report.

LONG RANGE PLANNING:

- Commissioner Nash had nothing to report.

EQUIPMENT:

- Commissioner Roura was absent.

BUILDING & GROUNDS:

- Although Commissioner Roura was absent, Commissioner Nash wanted to report on a building and grounds problem that he was investigating. He has inspected the parking lot storm drains in the rear parking lots of Stations 361 and 363 and shown pictures of what he found to Administrator Jones. He has also discussed it with a member of our Long Range Planning Committee, John Bergman, who was a neighbor and civil engineer, to get any ideas that he may have on the cause of these problems. He hoped to have a short PowerPoint presentation ready for the Board at their next meeting. He felt that the problems could be significant but they did not appear to be an emergency at the moment. He felt that it might be smart to have a civil engineer take a look at them and give us an opinion on the severity of the problem and our repair options. He was concerned that the cause of the Station 363 storm drain grate sinking on 1 side could be due to poorly packed soil. There was a lot of remedial soils work done in this area when the new station was built and this problem could be related to it. Another possible cause could be that the storm drain is being undermined because of a broken underground roof drain or sewer pipe. He felt that the MUA might be able to camera scope these pipes for us to see if there is any evidence of that.

At Station 361, he observed that the bricks and mortar in the storm drain sidewalls were actually falling apart, which is causing washout of the soil and gravel around and below it. He was also surprised to find that there is a pipe leading into a headwall at the rear of the parking lot that appears to bring storm water from the development behind the station into our storm drainage system. He did not know why this situation existed or whether our storm drainage system was designed to handle that flow. Mr. Bergman's rough estimate of the worst case numbers for replacement of the storm drains at \$15,000 each. Commissioner Shestack remembered the excavation of the soil under Station 363 by the contractor and the conditions that they were up against at the time. There was a tropical storm forecast and they had to get the excavation filled in so that it didn't become a lake.

FIRE PREVENTION:

- Commissioner Shapiro had nothing to report.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS:

- Commissioner Shapiro had nothing to report.

INSURANCE:

- Commissioner Shestack reported that the 2009 Audit of our First Responder JIF indicated that after the 1st year, there was a 10% surplus that will be used to build up our reserves. After our reserves are sufficiently funded, and if this trend continues for the next 3 years or so, we will see our annual premiums start to drop as some of this is returned to organizations that are participating. He has read our 2009 Audit report and he is going to work with Administrator Jones to update some of the slides in the financial analysis that he had presented to the Board in the spring. He hoped to have this ready for presentation to the Board in June.

He also reported that there is a bill working through the State legislature to make it a criminal offense for first responders to take pictures of victims at an accident or fire scene and do anything other than official business with them. The JIF is working on a policy that member organizations will have to adopt regarding this issue.

Commissioner Nash reported that he believes that we are going to be okay financially in 2010, but that our cash flow in late August may be a problem again this year. He agreed with Commissioner Shestack that the 2009 Audit has revealed that we should have enough surplus available to cover payroll costs and critical expenses during the January / February 2011 period. Commissioner Shestack added that with the possible building and grounds problems being reported by Commissioner Nash tonight, it may make the 2010 budget even tighter and consume any potential surplus that we were expecting.

Commissioner Nash referred to last meetings' discussion about the replacement of the Station 362 showers and the unknown costs involved, which we may have to find funds for. Commissioners Nash and Shestack both agreed that we may have to prioritize the storm drain repairs, the Station 362 showers and any other big ticket maintenance items that comes up in the next few months.

The Board discussed how some of Governor Christie's proposals will impact us, particularly the proposal to move our election to November. Commissioner Nash stated that he had spoken with Administrator Jones about how this would affect us and he said that there may be major changes in our budgeting process and calendar if this new election date becomes law. Commissioner Shestack added that proposals to change our elections have been circulating almost every year for the last decade or so, with the rationale being that it will save money and improve voter participation. He doesn't understand why everybody thinks Fire District elections cost tens of thousands of dollars to conduct and that by combining them with school district elections at the November general election, huge amounts of money are going to be saved. Our elections cost around \$2,000 each year and with 200 Fire Districts in the state, you can do the math and see that we are not spending that much. He said that if they are successful in moving our election to November, you will probably have many more Fire District budgets fail, which could be what the Governor wants and which could potentially politicize Fire District Boards. With the election in February, these things won't happen because when people turn out they know that they are only voting on the Fire District budget. He felt that we are one of the Fire Districts that do things legitimately, thanks to our management staff, but there are some Fire Districts that do things that give the rest of us a bad name.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:

- Commissioner Shestack had nothing to report.

FINANCE:

- Commissioner Shestack had nothing to report.

PERSONNEL:

- Commissioner Cornue had nothing to report except in Closed Session.

LABOR / MANAGEMENT RELATIONS (combined):

- Commissioner Cornue had nothing to report.

OTHER MATTERS:

Station 363 Grill Repair/Replacement: Commissioner Nash reported that the Board has received information and cost proposals from Deputy Chief Colucci for repair or replacement of the Station 363 gas grill. He felt that after reviewing all of the e-mails that were passed around about the best way to go, it appears that it is more cost effective to replace it. Lieutenant Einstein stated that he researched repair parts on-line for the current grill and stopped when the cost reached \$380. He went to Home Depot to get advice on what grill would be a good replacement and they advised him to purchase a Weber. They had a Weber all stainless steel natural gas grill with a 5 year parts warranty for \$819, which with the 20% discount they provided, brought the price down to \$665. If the Board agrees to make the purchase, he will personally write up a maintenance plan for the duty crew to adhere to and make sure that it is properly cleaned at least once a month. He stated that the Station 363 grill gets used almost every night because we can't grill in the kitchen. Commissioner Nash questioned what account that we should charge the new grill to because he has received many opinions on it. He thanked Lieutenant Einstein for his efforts and added that he wanted an assurance from him and Lieutenant Munoz that it was their responsibility to make sure the grill was maintained properly. He was disappointed that when the current grill started to show signs that maintenance and new parts were needed, nobody took responsibility or the initiative to do anything about it. At a minimum, he felt that somebody should have contacted the Administrator and asked him to acquire the necessary parts to keep it operating. He said it was up to the Board to decide whether they would replace the grill and where to charge the expense. He has heard that there has been a lot of discussion about using recruitment and retention funds for this purchase, but he felt that those funds were to be used to recruit and retain volunteers and that funds for a new grill should come from building maintenance funds. Lieutenant Einstein stated that he had discussed the grill with Lieutenant Santone and that they both agreed that there has been a problem in the past maintaining the grill and that the career staff was willing to help purchase parts and/or help keep the grill clean. Lieutenant Einstein thanked Lieutenant Santone for his offer and was glad that the career staff were willing to help. He offered to have the Fire Company make the purchase and submit the bill to the Board for reimbursement if the Board agreed to make the purchase.

Commissioner Shestack fully supported Commissioner Nash and his comments. He added that he gets the impression that there seems to be an expectation by some of the membership that if the Administration and Board don't act on a request or issue immediately, we are not giving it proper attention. He felt that members feeling this way need to understand how things work in the world of government and that there are certain things that the Board has to do that they may not see or understand. He cautioned that if somebody with a concern or request doesn't hear back in a week or so, they think that Administration or the Board isn't doing anything about it. He stated that members need to realize that the Board only meets every 14 to 30 days and that Administration does their best to get things to the Board for a decision based on that time cycle.

Commissioner Shapiro stated that it's not whether we need a grill or not because everyone agrees that a grill is an important part of our operation – the question is more along the line of "do we have the money for the grill" and if so where does this unexpected expense get charged.

Commissioner Nash agreed with her summary of the issue, but he mentioned that he is struggling with how to fund the Station 362 shower replacement, how do we fund the need to replace the Station 363 grill and can we do both with the funds that are currently available. He did not want to act on the shower issue tonight because Commissioner Roura was not here and he has some important comments that he wanted to make. He asked the Board whether they wanted to move ahead with the grill replacement tonight or table it for the next meeting.

Commissioner Cornue commented that he believes Administrator Jones has suggested purchasing the grill using building maintenance funds, but he didn't know whether there were sufficient funds to do so. Commissioner Shapiro added that she discussed it with him and he suggested we might want to consider buying a \$200 grill every spring if none of the users were going to be responsible for cleaning and maintaining it.

Deputy Chief Colucci suggested a compromise with the Fire District contributing \$200, Fellowship Fire Company putting in \$200 and the Station 363 career staff putting in \$200 - everyone has a joint interest in it and the responsibility for keeping it clean. He felt that getting a better grill will allow it to last longer as opposed to replacing it with a cheap one each year. Commissioner Shestack agreed that funding should come from building maintenance funds and that we should buy a quality grill instead of spending \$200 every year. He added that if the Board is going to make the purchase, everyone should realize that they need to take better care of it and not to come back in 2 or 3 years asking for another new one because it isn't going to happen. Commissioner Shestack asked Deputy Chief Colucci if the other stations have grills and Deputy Chief Colucci replied that they do but that they were purchased out of the career staff house funds, not by the Fire District. He felt that if the Board agrees to make this purchase, it was possible that the staff in the other stations might ask the Board to buy them new grills when they wear out. Lieutenant Jones stated that Station 361 is looking into spending \$400 to \$500 to replace their grill, which will come from their house funds. He added that they have already purchased their own coffee machine and microwave.

Commissioner Cornue asked the rest of the Board if they felt that Deputy Chief Colucci's proposal was the fairest way to resolve the situation and if there are future requests for equipment like this, we can handle it on a situation by situation basis. Commissioner Shestack agreed with Commissioner Shapiro that we don't have to wait 2 weeks to make this decision. Commissioner Shapiro felt that it was the Board's responsibility to replace this grill because it is used to cook meals for the duty crews, which are made up of members coming straight from work to volunteer their time.

Commissioner Shestack made a motion to reimburse the Fire Company \$665 for a new grill for Station 363, which was seconded by Commissioner Shapiro. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board. Lieutenant Einstein thanked the Board and promised that this grill will be cleaned and taken care of.

Commissioner Cornue tabled any discussions on the Station 362 showers until the next meeting.

COMMENTS OF FIRE DISTRICT PROFESSIONALS:

- Solicitor Braslow was not present.

COMMENTS OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS:

- Commissioner Shestack clarified his earlier comments about the certification class mileage reimbursement claimed by Firefighter Rafer, which was because he had to travel a significant distance to the course and had to use his personal vehicle.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

- Fellowship President Einstein thanked the Board again for their purchase of the Station 363 grill. He invited the Board to come by on a Friday night to see all of the activity that goes on, not only with the Duty Crew but with the Juniors and the Explorers. He added that they are planning another BBQ / recruitment drive sometime in August so that new members can get enrolled in the Firefighter 1 class next spring.
- Lieutenant Munoz stated that he asked Captain Evans about quotes for the replacement of the showers and was told that the since the cost of the work was going to be more than \$2,000, the Fire District didn't want them to do the work themselves and wanted a contractor to do it.

Resolution #2010-45

"Closing of Meeting Pursuant to Open Public Meetings Act". Commissioner Shestack made a motion to approve the resolution, which was seconded by Commissioner Nash. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

THE OPEN SESSION ENDED AT 9:57 PM.
A CLOSED SESSION BEGAN AT 8:55 PM.
THE CLOSED SESSION ENDED AT 9:57 PM.
THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:58 PM.