

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

July 20, 2010

Fire Department Headquarters Station  
Meeting Minutes #15

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

1. Commissioner Cornue
2. Commissioner Nash
3. Commissioner Shapiro
4. Chief of Department Gallos
5. Administrator Jones
6. Deputy Chief Colucci
7. Solicitor Braslow

**NOT IN ATTENDANCE:**

1. Commissioner Shestack
2. Commissioner Roura

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Cornue at 7:33 PM.

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

The public announcements were read by Commissioner Shapiro.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

4/6/10 Special Meeting, 4/20/10 Regular Meeting, 5/4/10 Special Meeting, 5/18/10 Regular Meeting, 6/2/10 Special Meeting and 6/15/10 Regular Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Nash made a motion to approve the minutes of these meetings, which was seconded by Commissioner Shapiro. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS:**

Resolution #2010-52 "Authorization for the Sale of Surplus Vehicle Assets". Commissioner Nash made a motion to approve the resolution, which was seconded by Commissioner Shapiro. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

Resolution #2010-53 "Appointment of Kevin M. Riera as an 'Explorer' Member of the Mount Laurel Fire Department. Commissioner Shapiro made a motion to approve the resolution, which was seconded by Commissioner Nash. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**FINANCIAL MATTERS:**

- Commissioner Shapiro made a motion to approve the July monthly bills totaling \$446,182.34, which was seconded by Commissioner Nash. Commissioner Nash noted that the new Station 363 barbecue grill has been purchased and is in service. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

#### **MONTHLY REPORT BY FIRE OFFICIAL:**

- Fire Official Kownatsky reported that he met with Commissioner Shapiro last week to discuss the issue of fuel credit cards, acceptance of credit cards by the Bureau and implementing on-line smoke detector certification appointments for customers that wish to pay using these methods. He added that he had noted these items in his monthly report. He reported that he has identified a conflict in the Fire Prevention ordinance regarding smoke detector certification fees and after-hour inspections that needed to be addressed in the next update. He had discussed the matter with Solicitor Braslow to determine if it could be corrected by a Board resolution, along with the possibility of changing the smoke detector certification fee schedule. Solicitor Braslow advised that the only way to change the fee schedule is to amend the ordinance, which has to be done by Township Council. He offered to review the proposed amendments to see if there is a way to implement them outside of the existing ordinance.

Commissioner Nash asked Fire Official Kownatsky to provide Solicitor Braslow and the Board with a marked-up copy of the existing ordinance with the changes that he felt were needed. He suggested that the Chief of Department brief the Township Manager and determine if she would be willing to present it to Township Council this fall for approval. Commissioner Cornue agreed with his suggestion and asked Fire Official Kownatsky to get the information to Solicitor Braslow and the Board as soon as possible so that it can be discussed at the 8/3/10 Special Meeting.

Commissioner Nash congratulated Fire Official Kownatsky on the new Bureau vehicles and stated that they looked great.

#### **MONTHLY REPORT BY ADMINISTRATOR:**

- The Administrator had submitted his monthly report to the Board for their review prior to the meeting. He added that he had included a spreadsheet that compared the old and new bond issue payment schedules, which indicates that the net savings after issuance expenses over the next 10 years will be \$294,011.
- He had not had an opportunity to review the Fire Official's report until yesterday and that he needed to sit down with him to review the credit card acceptance proposal because he didn't receive any of the attachments that the Board received. He added that the Board will have to do some administrative work to allow this to happen and that he wanted to make sure that the fees charged will cover the costs of the proposal. There are upfront and recurring transaction costs that have to be reviewed in order to formulate an appropriate fee and it is possible that authorization may have to be included in the revised ordinance.

#### **MONTHLY REPORT BY DEPUTY CHIEF:**

- Deputy Chief Colucci had submitted his monthly report to the Board for their review prior to the meeting. There were no comments from the Board on his report.

#### **MONTHLY REPORT BY THE CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT:**

- Chief of Department Gallos had submitted his monthly report to the Board for their review prior to the meeting. Commissioner Cornue asked him if Mechanic Skeenes was making progress on the Quint ladder repairs and Chief of Department Gallos indicated that he was.
- He reported that along with Deputy Chief Colucci and Mechanic Skeenes, he had met with the KME representatives when they brought their demonstration unit over today. He indicated that Mechanic Skeenes had a lot of good questions that were answered by the KME representatives. Mechanic Skeenes liked their answers and the way the unit was designed and constructed because it was done with maintenance and mechanics in mind. Mechanic Skeenes has been in contact with other Departments as far away as California to discuss their KME units and their satisfaction levels. He has also visited Cherry Hill to see their mechanics and examine their Pierce units. He has asked Emergency One if they have or are planning to make any changes to their units that will improve reliability and maintainability. Chief of Department Gallos and Mechanic Skeenes were both concerned about the new 2010 diesel engines being produced and the fact that they require the use of a diesel fuel additive to bring down emission levels. Although the additive appears to be effective in cleaning up the emissions, it is a hazardous material, has a shelf life and can be a problem in cold weather, which will change the way we have always fueled our vehicles. He said Mechanic Skeenes will soon get a chance to see a new Mercedes/Detroit Diesel engine at Johnson & Towers on Briggs Road, but it won't be the size that will be specified in our fire apparatus.

## **STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### ***TRAINING:***

- Commissioner Nash had nothing to report.

### ***LONG RANGE PLANNING:***

- Commissioner Nash had nothing to report.

### ***EQUIPMENT:***

- Commissioner Roura was not present and had not left a report.

### ***BUILDING & GROUNDS:***

- Commissioner Roura was not present and had not left a report.

### ***FIRE PREVENTION:***

- Commissioner Shapiro brought up the issue of payroll services that Deputy Chief Colucci had mentioned some time ago and would like to further investigate whether it would be beneficial for us. Fire Official Kownatsky added that the company he has been working with for on-line credit card processing also provides payroll software and indicated that their representative would be more than happy to come in and do a presentation to the Board. Commissioner Shapiro thought that this was a good idea, possibly for the August special meeting. Commissioner Cornue asked him to arrange a brief overview for the Board to consider at the 8/3/10 Special Meeting. Administrator Jones agreed that we should have more information so that he can see how it compares with our present payroll service provider. Administrator Jones stated that this was the first he was hearing about this and asked if it was the product that Deputy Chief Colucci had proposed last year at budget time. Commissioner Cornue stated that this was the first time he was hearing about it and was willing to look at it to see if it was worth pursuing. Administrator Jones agreed, but cautioned that while electronically collecting payroll information from employees sounded like a good, time-saving idea, there are many times that he has relied upon the current paper system we use to answer payroll questions and resolve conflicts. He was not opposed to eliminating the paper system and making things easier but it has to be able to allow him and Secretary Richardson to figure out human-error problems, which happen almost every payroll cycle.

### ***COMMUNITY RELATIONS:***

- Commissioner Shapiro had nothing to report.

### ***INSURANCE:***

- Commissioner Shestack was not present and had not left a report.

### ***INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:***

- Commissioner Shestack was not present and had not left a report.

### ***FINANCE:***

- Commissioner Shestack was not present and had not left a report.

### ***PERSONNEL:***

- Commissioner Cornue had nothing to report in Open Session.

### ***LABOR / MANAGEMENT RELATIONS (combined):***

- Commissioner Cornue had nothing to report in Open Session.

## OTHER MATTERS:

- Lieutenant Einstein requested Board approval for the Juniors and Explorers to attend the Baltimore Firehouse Expo on 7/24/10. He estimated that 12 members would be attending, which required using the Training Division van and a command vehicle for transportation. For gas, tolls and food, he figured that \$330 should cover their expenses. He added that Battalion Chief Collier had gotten them free registrations to the Expo, which saved the \$15 entry fee. Commissioner Shapiro made a motion to approve \$330 for the Expo expenses, which was seconded by Commissioner Nash. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.
- Commissioner Cornue reported that, after much consultation and discussion between members of the Board, future special and regular meetings of the Board will switch from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays. There was a possibility that the meeting start times will be changed to 7:00 PM instead of 7:30 PM, but this needed to be confirmed with the Board members that were absent tonight. The date change would be effective with the 9/20/10 Regular Meeting so that everyone has time to adjust their calendars. Commissioner Shapiro made a motion to change the meetings to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays each month, which was seconded by Commissioner Nash. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

## COMMENTS OF FIRE DISTRICT PROFESSIONALS:

- Solicitor Braslow reported that the Levy CAP is now set at 2% with essentially the same exemptions that the Board has been able to enjoy in the past. The only substantial difference is that CAP Waivers are no longer an option and that referendums to exceed the Levy CAP now only need to pass by a simple majority vote instead of the 60% that was previously required.

He reported that he had attended a meeting with DCA, Attorney General's office and Division of Election representatives regarding the proposed changing of our election date to November, which is one of the bills in the Governors' proposed 33 bill 'tool kit'. This bill would eliminate our February election date and the School Boards' April election date. He noted that the School Boards unsuccessfully tried to cut a deal last year with Governor Corzine that included pension system changes that are no longer relevant but which mainly eliminated the voters' ability to vote on their budget if they agreed to support a November date. After discussing numerous potential election dates, they appeared to focus on 3 potential options that they felt would spur greater voter participation and more accountability in the election results. They also were willing to entertain eliminating voter participation in our annual budget approval as long as the budget did not exceed the new 2% Levy CAP (no referendum on the ballot) if we agreed not to fight the move to the November General Election date. Solicitor Braslow asked them how this fosters greater participation and involvement with the public when they would now lose the ability to approve the only 2 local government budgets that they have the ability to vote on? He felt that at the end of the day, our election and the School Board election would almost certainly be moved to November and that there is not a lot that we can do about it.

He added that, in his opinion, the Attorney General's office was hung up on the way our election is held – they don't like the fact that we don't mass mail our ballot to the voters like the County does in the Primary and General elections or that some Fire Districts still use paper ballots. He took that opportunity to remind them that a year ago we were forced at the last minute to use paper ballots because the State denied us the use of the electronic voting machines. He suggested that if they don't like the way we run our election, that we don't spend the money it takes to print and mass mail our ballot to all of the voters or that some Fire Districts use paper ballots instead of machines, then they should change the state statute. He said that NJ State Association of Fire Districts Past President Roger Potts spent a day at the Division of Local Government Services earlier this year reviewing every Fire District budget they had on file for last year and found that a typical Fire District election expense is less than \$3,500, which would increase at least ten-fold if we have to mass mail the ballot, which will be harder than ever to afford under the new 2% restriction.

He stated that they also were considering consolidating the Fire District (February), School Board (April) and non-partisan municipal election (May) and municipal CAP Waiver election dates to a new date in May. He suggested to them that this would likely result in budgets and CAP waivers being rejected by voters en masse because it would be the only election involving government spending that they could have their say in.

Lastly it seems that the real stumbling block still comes down to the problem with the 42 municipalities with multiple Fire Districts that have boundaries that are different from the voting district boundaries. He recommended that instead of having Fire Districts move their boundaries to conform to voting district boundaries, make the voting districts conform to the Fire District boundaries. Remarkably, he felt that the DCA was actually in agreement with many of our concerns.

Commissioner Cornue asked him what he thought the timing on any potential change would be. Solicitor Braslow felt that we will have at least 1 more election cycle in February because there was almost no possible way that they could make a change to November at this point in the year. He added that many of the bills in the "tool kit" are beneficial to us as a Fire District, but we have been excluded from some of them and we should not have been. This has happened in the past, most recently in a pension bill that would transfer career firefighters that exceeded the PFRS enrollment age when they became career firefighters (and as a result had to be enrolled in the PERS pension system). The bill stated "municipal" firefighters were eligible, which we believed included Fire Districts. Unfortunately the Attorney General's office interpreted it differently and Fire Districts were prevented from enrolling affected career firefighters in the PFRS pension system.

**COMMENTS OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS:**

- Commissioner Nash asked Chief of Department Gallos if the Township had gone to the Local Finance Board yet with their Levy CAP Waiver request. Chief of Department Gallos replied that it had been postponed until August and added that they are discussing estimated tax bills and whether it is worth the cost, confusion and potential legal problems that they might create. This means that we could potentially be in the same situation as we were last year when the tax bills went out almost a month late and they could not release our 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter tax payment, which significantly impacted our cash flow in early September. He has been told by the Township Manager and Township Clerk that if the Levy CAP Waiver is not approved by the State, the 2010 budget will be about \$3 million short. Every Administration and Public Works employee is losing a week's pay each month due to the Friday furlough days. The Police Department employee concessions helped but were not enough to fully close the gap – at this point they faced more layoffs if the Levy CAP Waiver is not granted by the State. Police dispatchers have already been eliminated and they are hoping voters will approve the merging of the Library with the County system in November, which would save them \$2.5 million dollars.

Chief of Department Gallos added that Cherry Hill was granted a Waiver for over \$1 million but also had to lay off a number of police officers and other staff to balance their budget. He had heard that Lumberton just laid off more police officers as well. He was anxious to see how our Township is treated when they have their hearing.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

- None.

Resolution #2010-54 "Closing of Meeting Pursuant to Open Public Meetings Act". A motion to approve the resolution was made by Commissioner Nash and seconded by Commissioner Shapiro. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**THE OPEN SESSION ENDED AT 8:57 PM.  
A CLOSED SESSION BEGAN AT 9:15 PM.  
THE CLOSED SESSION ENDED AT 9:36 PM.**

Commissioner Cornue announced that the Board has tabled a vote on the "Fee for Service" Program resolution that was on the agenda tonight so that all 5 Board members can participate in the debate. He hoped that this would occur at the 8/3/10 Special Meeting.

**THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:38 PM.**