

**MOUNT LAUREL FIRE DISTRICT #1
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING / WORK SESSION**

August 1, 2011
Fire Department Headquarters Station
Meeting Minutes #14

IN ATTENDANCE:

1. Commissioner Cornue
2. Commissioner Nash
3. Commissioner Roura
4. Administrator Jones
5. Interim Chief of Department Colucci
6. Deputy Chief Burnett

NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

1. Commissioner Shestack
2. Commissioner Shapiro (arrived at 9:28 PM)

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Cornue at 8:01 PM.

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

The public announcements were read by Commissioner Roura.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

- None.

RESOLUTIONS:

- Resolution #2011-41 “Establishment of the Part-Time Position of Mechanic Fire Apparatus for the Mount Laurel Fire District #1 (2nd Reading)”. Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the resolution, which was seconded by Commissioner Nash. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

- Resolution #2011-42 “Establishment of the Part-Time Position of Coordinator of Volunteers for the Mount Laurel Fire District #1 (2nd Reading)”. Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the resolution, which was seconded by Commissioner Nash. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

FINANCIAL MATTERS:

Administrator Jones reported that monthly bills totaling \$727,532.64 were up for payment approval tonight. Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the payment of the monthly bills, which was seconded by Commissioner Nash. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

Commissioner Nash noted that according to the Administrators' monthly report, year-to-date expenses are at 52% of our total budget and year-to-date revenue is at 48.7% which means that we have spent more than we have brought in so far this year. He asked Administrator Jones if this would pose any difficulties for us through the rest of the year. Administrator Jones replied that although we have spent more than we have taken in so far, the revenue total will exceed the expense total next month when we receive our 3rd quarter tax payment from the Township. The additional expenses are currently being covered through the use of cash in our bank account that was left over from 2010. He added that unfortunately the Township tax bills have still not gone out, which could delay our 3rd quarter tax payment by a few days unless the delay becomes more significant. The tax assessor informed him that the tax bills are late because the County was very late in setting their rate, but she believes that the tax bills will hit the mail in the next few days and that an additional grace period is likely to be provided into September.

MONTHLY REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATOR:

Administrator Jones stated that because Commissioner Shestack was unavailable tonight, he would update the Board on the status of the ladder truck and the 3 recent accidents that it was involved in. We have 2 insurance claims filed so far but did not have enough

information to file a 3rd, which was the incident at the County Fire Training Grounds. The repair estimates for damage in 2 of the accidents is anticipated to be \$6,800 for the fire hydrant collision at the Village 2 Shopping Center and approximately \$40,000 for the Hartford & Union Mill Road collision. The insurance company cannot pay for the anticipated \$6,300 to repair the fire hydrant because after researching the hydrants' ownership with the MUA, it turns out that it is privately owned, which means that our insurance will not pay to repair it. We can be "good neighbors" and choose to pay for it out-of-pocket to keep the shopping center owner happy or we can choose not to and put the responsibility for the repairs on the shopping center insurance company with our insurance company reimbursing the owner for his deductible. He added that there very well may also be some hidden damage additional costs with the ladder truck once they finish tearing it apart. Repairs are being done by Hainesport Truck on Route 38, which is a full-service truck repair and body shop. We will be responsible for \$2,000 in deductible out-of-pocket costs (2 separate accidents @ \$1,000 each). Commissioner Nash asked him why our insurance would not pay for the hydrant damage since we caused it. Administrator Jones replied that apparently this is the way it works with public entity insurance. Commissioner Nash assumed that the longer this goes, the longer the shopping center loses a level of fire protection because the hydrant is unavailable. Administrator Jones stated that this was correct, although there were other hydrants in the area that we would use if a fire occurred. Interim Chief of Department Colucci asked him if our insurance could increase next year as a result of these accidents and he replied that it was highly likely. Commissioner Roura added that the driver involved in the Hartford & Union Mill Road accident was an uninsured motorist and that we will probably be assuming full liability for it. Administrator Jones added that the other driver did receive 2 citations indicating that he was fully at fault for the accident.

Commissioner Roura felt that if we legally do not have an obligation to pay for the repair of the hydrant, although he would like to be a "good neighbor", we could set a costly precedent for future incidents when we damage private property and will be expected to pick up the cost to repair or replace it out-of-pocket. Fire Official Kownatsky added that because the hydrant was privately owned, he would have to enforce the fire code and push them to repair it as soon as possible, even though we caused them the problem. It has now been out-of-service over 3 weeks and he'll have to start penalizing them if they don't get it repaired soon. He stated that he has not done anything at this point because he wanted to see how it played out, but he cannot wait too much longer to enforce the fire code on this. Commissioner Nash felt differently than Commissioner Roura, but he understood his point. He suggested that we contact Solicitor Braslow for his opinion on the matter before we make a final decision, but in the meantime we should take a straw poll on how Board members feel about it. Commissioner Roura asked Administrator Jones if the Board was under any time constraints to make a decision tonight or could it wait until the regular meeting. Administrator Jones replied that a decision could wait, but any delay will make it more difficult for Fire Official Kownatsky and enforcement of the fire code. He added that we have never paid for damage done to private property by Department members or vehicles, whether it was because of forced entry through a broken window or doors or other property. It has always been the responsibility of the homeowner or business owner to file a claim with their insurance and let the insurance companies work it out. Commissioner Cornue asked Administrator Jones to contact Solicitor Braslow tomorrow and get his opinion on what we should do.

Administrator Jones provided the Board with a briefing on the new Chapter 78 health benefits/pension legislation and things that we have to do to be in compliance. Under this new legislation, we are now required to implement an IRS Section 125 "Cafeteria" plan as well as a Flexible Savings Account (FSA) to our employees. There will be a cost for initial implementation and recurring monthly costs to manage these programs. Working with Commissioner Shestack due to his expertise in this area, he has already received several proposals for evaluation and is awaiting a proposal from our payroll service provider. He estimated that the cost would be approximately \$2,000 to implement and maintain this new requirement. Commissioner Shestack anticipates being able to provide the Board with a formal report on this at the next meeting.

MONTHLY REPORT OF THE FIRE OFFICIAL:

Fire Official Kownatsky reported that he is working on preparations for the October Open House and has all of the school programs set up and is coordinating dates for the daycare visits. He reported that the use of credit cards to pay for smoke detector certifications and permits has picked up and several businesses have inquired about being able to use them to pay other fees. He needed to set up the appropriate fee structure for the use of credit cards to pay those fees because he doesn't want to take a loss on each transaction.

He asked the Board to consider providing some additional assistance for the Bureau in the 2012 Budget. In 2010, there were 3 inspectors in the Bureau to handle all of the inspections, witnesses, complaints and smoke detector certifications. The Bureau lost an inspector in early 2011 in order to staff the new 12 hour schedule at Station 363. He asked the Board to consider budgeting for part-time or "per diem" help on Wednesdays to take over smoke detector certifications so that he can keep 2 inspectors in the field all week. Commissioner Nash felt that this might be helpful in other ways because it can provide additional manpower as needed and targeted to a specific task. Commissioner Cornue stated that we would need to do some research to determine the best way to handle it. Union President Pine provided the Board with his thoughts on how the Union felt about this request and other ways that it might be approached and assured the Board that the Union would work with them to come up with suitable solution. Commissioner Nash suggested that the Board have further discussion on this topic in Closed Session. Interim Chief of Department Colucci asked the Board to allow the Fire Official to forward a proposal to the Deputy Chief for review before the Board gets too involved.

MONTHLY REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT:

Interim Chief of Department Colucci reported that Deputy Chief Burnett did a nice job while he was away and that he was definitely tested during those 2 weeks. He added that several pages of his report pertaining to the revised MXT policy that the Labor/Management Committee worked on were missing from the packet and he had provided them to the Board tonight. He would like to get approval from the Board to change the policy at the next meeting so that it can be implemented.

He reported that the Department has participated in or attended several funerals this month and asked the Board and the audience to keep the Sharp family, Anderson and Hall families in their prayers.

He reported that the Mount Laurel PTO's are working on a fundraising event for September to assist with the completion of the World Trade Center Memorial. They will be asking each member of their staff and each child's family to make a \$9.11 donation to help pay for the Memorial. School District Communications Director Marie Reynolds has been very instrumental in this and was working with Captain Evans on the flyer that will be going out the 1st week of September. Commissioner Roura asked what the donations would actually be paying for and whether the general public can participate in it. Interim Chief of Department Colucci believed that Captain Evans is the person to contact and that the Union already has a Memorial Fund account set up to accept donations, but he would look into it further for the Board. Administrator Jones added that he had been approached by Captain Evans about this and informed him that the easiest way to do this and eliminate middlemen is to give the School District the information about the Memorial Fund and let them decide on the details.

Interim Chief of Department Colucci reported that Administrator Jones has already covered the ladder truck insurance claims and that the new apparatus bid specifications have been submitted to him for final preparation of the bid proposal package.

He reported that we have experienced some leak problems with the new SCBA cylinders, which our vendor is working on resolving with the manufacturer. They replaced all of the air pressure gauges on the cylinders and we are hoping that it resolves the issue. Lieutenant Jones did a good job coordinating the retrofit and staying on top of it.

He requested permission to move forward with the lawn maintenance equipment purchase for each station and the storage sheds for Stations 362 and 363. Administrator Jones added that the Board had approved the equipment purchase last month and that he has already placed an order with local dealer Macro Equipment. Interim Chief of Department Colucci asked the Board for approval to move ahead with the shed proposals and any zoning permits that are needed to put them in.

He reported that we have received formal notification that we were denied the 2010 SAFER grant but they did not provide any reason for the denial.

He reported that with Battalion Chief Kirvan getting involved with facilities maintenance, he is stepping down from the public relations committee and his administrative assignment of overseeing the administrative responsibility assignments.

He reported that Deputy Chief Burnett worked with our on-line training vendor Target Safety to bring the annual cost of our contract with them down from \$9,000 to \$3,900, which he hoped to put towards the cost of new scheduling program. Commissioner Nash asked him about the scheduling program and he explained that we have been using a very involved and cumbersome Excel spreadsheet for the last 12 years and that we have outgrown it as the staff has gotten bigger and we need to keep track of more information. Unfortunately, mistakes have occasionally been made by users, causing shifts to be short-staffed or overstaffed. We combine the spreadsheet with Outlook calendars to schedule fire prevention, training and other events and hope that we are where we need to be. It is all very time consuming and sometimes difficult to figure out when dealing with overtime, call outs and other issues. He was researching programs that other Departments are using to improve our scheduling abilities and save everyone a lot of time and effort by automating a lot of the functions.

He reported on the progress being made in implementing the "Blue Card" officer development system. Commissioner Nash asked him to explain what this training system involved. Interim Chief of Department Colucci explained that this training system is an incident command training program designed for fire officers and comes with a credential system. Phoenix Fire Chief Alan Brunacini created this program to provide a certified standard incident command training program for fire officers that consists of initial on-line training, "hands on" skills labs and a 3 year recertification program to maintain the certification. He added that we are hoping to work closely with Cherry Hill Fire Department because their incident command training center is one of only a few that has been certified for the "hands on" training. We would provide them with certified instructors once our fire officers complete their training in return for the use of their facility.

He reported that new white uniform shirts for the Chief Officers have started to come in and are being distributed. He was still trying to find a polo shirt that is presentable and professional in appearance for evaluation before he can determine whether or not it will be cost

effective to transition into them. Commissioner Nash asked him what a "Class B" uniform was and he replied that it is the normal everyday work uniform that he and Fire Official Kownatsky were wearing tonight. This would be replaced with a polo shirt at much less cost if he can find something that he likes. If a switch is made, staff in the stations would wear them instead of T-shirts when they leave the station for EMS runs, public relation events, go on a fuel run or when shopping for their meals. Commissioner Nash asked him if he had issued the new uniform hardware that was discussed at the last Board meeting and Interim Chief of Department Colucci reported that it had been issued. He stated that the goal was to reduce the amount of "Class B" uniform shirts that we have to issue along with reducing the number of T-shirts that are needed. He felt that the switch would give the staff more comfortable shirts that are more professional in appearance and save money by reducing the number of fire resistive "Class B" shirts that each employee needs. Commissioner Nash asked him if the switchover to polo shirts that are not as fire resistive as our current "Class B" uniform shirt would be reducing our overall safety level. Interim Chief of Department Colucci replied that the polo shirts would be NFPA approved and rated and either be 100% cotton or fire resistive. He added that there are a limited number of NFPA approved polo shirts that are available, so our choices may be limited to 100% cotton.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

BUILDING & GROUNDS: Administrator Jones stated that the Station 362 meeting/day room HVAC unit compressor is nearing failure and has been having problems keeping up with the summer heat. Our service company has advised that we make a decision on either replacing the compressor for \$7,000+ or the entire 10 ton unit for \$16,000+. He will have to call around to some other commercial HVAC service companies to get additional proposals before a decision can be made. Although it is a bigger amount to spend, it might be more cost-effective to replace the entire unit now and not wait for the passage of bond issue that we are working on so that we don't spend \$7,000 now for a new compressor and then replace the whole unit next year. He has been in contact with a company called Hutchinson that participates in a State program that pays for an initial energy audit of a facility and then picks up 60% of the cost of any energy saving upgrades that are recommended. He would like permission to pursue the energy audit and see if we can afford our share of the energy improvement costs that they identify with the State picking up 60% of the costs. In the meantime, he would pursue pricing for a new compressor and replacement of the entire unit in the event that we just want to do that. Commissioner Cornue felt that this was a good approach and the Board authorized him to proceed and report back.

Interim Chief of Department Colucci reported that Firefighter Vanselous had submitted a solar energy proposal for all 3 stations that Deputy Chief Burnett and Administrator Jones are reviewing. Once they have completed their review, they will meet with Commissioner Nash to review it.

Commissioner Nash asked Interim Chief of Department Colucci and Fire Official Kownatsky if they were aware of the solar energy field that was planned for Marne Highway. They acknowledged that they were aware of it because it has been discussed at Planning and Zoning Board meetings over the last 8 months and was located at the old Vita-Green farm. Fire Official Kownatsky reported that he had made some recommendations on the site plan application regarding several issues that were of concern to us and that there are currently at least 8 new commercial properties (20,000 SF or greater) before those bodies, which hopefully meant that things are starting to pick up again.

OTHER MATTERS:

- None.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

- None.

Resolution #2011-43 "Closing of Meeting Pursuant to Open Public Meetings Act". Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the resolution, which was seconded by Commissioner Nash. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**THE OPEN SESSION ADJOURNED AT 9:01 PM.
A CLOSED SESSION BEGAN AT 9:10 PM.
THE CLOSED SESSION ADJOURNED AT 10:39 PM.**

Commissioner Cornue asked Commissioner Shapiro if she will be at the next regular meeting on 8/15 and she indicated that she believed she would be. Commissioner Cornue stated that this was good because without her we would not have a quorum because both he and Commissioner Shestack would not be in attendance.

Commissioner Cornue wanted to repeat what Interim Chief of Department Colucci said regarding Deputy Chief Burnett doing a nice job during his 2 week absence. He was personally aware that Deputy Chief Burnett and Administrator Jones spent a lot of time on the phone with the State trying to work out a health benefits issue for a new employee and they were able to get it resolved.

Commissioner Shapiro asked if the Volunteer Labor/Management Relations Committee wanted to change the night of their meeting. Interim Chief of Department Colucci added that they wanted to meet on 7/25, but that it was his 1st day back from vacation and he felt that we wasn't going to be ready.

Commissioner Nash made a motion to adjourn the meeting that was seconded by Commissioner Roura. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 10:45 PM