

TOWN OF WOODBRIDGE
Board of Fire Commissioners
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Monday, February 22, 2018 – 5:00 pm
Woodbridge Fire Department

Present: *Chairman Elia Alexiades, Vice Chairman Michael Horton, Secretary Mike Soufrine (arrived 5:50 pm), Commissioner Karen Baldwin-Kravetz, Chief Sean Rowland, Assistant Chief Chris Bahner (left at 6:12 pm), Fire Marshal Joe Cappucci, Nate Case (Executive Board Liaison, arrived 5:59 pm), First Selectman Beth Heller (BOS Liaison, arrived 5:56 pm)*

Absent: *Commissioner Bruce Mandell, Susan Jacobs (BOF Liaison)*

Call to Order

Chairman Alexiades convened the meeting at 5:17 pm.

Public Comments

None

Review Current Financial Statements

Year-to-Date FC Operating Budget and Capital Budget

Chief Rowland distributed and reviewed the budget reports. He is keeping an eye on the medical, technical, and repair and maintenance lines. Epi pens are expiring and will need to be replaced. A request to fund an additional \$35,000 for repair and maintenance from contingency funds was approved by the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Finance is aware and will address it in June or July as we have done for the past 4-5 years. They will approve invoices as needed in the meantime. Some of that will be covered by insurance from the Inwood fire. The department sustained approximately \$20,000 in damage. An increase in calls (522 last year, over 100 motor vehicle accidents) has meant an increase in consumables such as speedy dry that come out of the technical line. Discussion took place. The hydrant line is at 98% because the second payment is encumbered for July. There is nothing to report for capital non-recurring.

Operating budget –

Chief has not yet reviewed the BOS recommendations. Regarding Information Technology, the town has contracted with the Amity Board of Education for IT support. We are operating under a contract with an IT firm through June 30. We have been asked to consider using Amity Board of Education for our IT support starting July 1. We have some questions. We are willing to meet with them, but no one has reached out to us. We are unsure of the kind of services they offer and if they can meet our needs. Chief reported the First Selectman said we can stay with our current provider if the Amity Board of Education does not meet our needs. We know what our current provider does and we are happy with it. Over the past 7 years we have built a robust and secure system and we do not want to jeopardize it by moving backwards. We use a proactive approach and from our reading of the Town of Woodbridge's contract with the Amity Board of Education it appears reactive.

Fire Chief's Report – Fire Chief Rowland

Receive Report

Chief Rowland reported on recent incidents. The department has been busy. There were serious motor vehicle accidents over the last week; a three car accident that required extrication and another extrication

on Route 15. During the first, there was a problem with a fuse on Rescue 1. Mike's Towing helped get the truck back to the firehouse and our engineers fixed it; saving the town a few thousand dollars in a tow expense and another thousand in repair cost. The extrication on Route 15 looked like it might take an hour, but we had the patient out 34 minutes after being dispatched. During that call, fuel ignited and caught the car and road on fire. We were able to extinguish it with no harm to the patient. We used everything we had at that call. The spreaders broke; we are using the spare in the meantime. We will know more about the repair tomorrow; it might be covered under warranty.

Engine 9 went out for routine maintenance last week. It is the last truck to go out this rotation. Engine 3 has to go out because the packing under the truck is leaking. This is related to the pump and the tube that froze and cracked at the Inwood fire. Chief met with the insurance adjuster on Friday. At the fire following the Inwood fire, Engine 2 backed out and ran over a snowbank, pulling the mud flap under the tire which pulled the plastic lining to the wheel well away. North Haven Autobody is working on it and trying to use the existing piece.

Dispatch –

Chief reports dispatching has gotten better. There have been a couple of issues recently with delays in dispatch and he hopes the new radio system with the dispatch software will fix that. The Fire Department needs update information and to be toned out at the right time.

Radio System Upgrade –

The Fire Chief and the Police Chief were placed on the committee by the First Selectman. The committee is in the process of making agreements at the tower sites and reviewing the Motorola contract for the equipment.

Structure Fire 1/5/18

Damaged apparatus/equipment/gear report

As discussed there is an estimated \$25,000 and \$30,000 in damage that night. The town is looking into charging for some of the items used in incident responses, particularly the consumables used at motor vehicle accidents.

New apparatus report

Still working on bid spec; there has not been time over the last month.

Discussion took place on the budgeting process. Chief stated the BOS and BOF are not sure what each line does and they go line by line making cuts to try and save the town money. It is not practical or responsible to cut some of those lines. We have 15 minutes to present our budget and then they just go down the list and cut. If there are questions, we should be given the opportunity to answer them before they cut things. We have added over 100 more calls and this impacts a line like Technical. Discussion continued on the process and needed improvements. Another line that gets criticized is Volunteer Incentives. It is a retirement program. Some do not think the older members should receive it, but they didn't get anything for the first 20 years of their service (it began in 1991). There are 40, 50, and 60 year members who are still a contributing part of the fire department. It is not realistic to end the program for retired members. The program should stay in effect and participants have to hit minimum eligibility requirements. A tax abatement benefit was discussed. The tax abatement is more of an incentive to respond to calls; eligibility would be 25% of calls, were the retirement program is 20%.

Discussion took place on the time commitment for firefighters. In addition to putting out fires, there are service and training requirements. Some of it is annual, to keep current. Firefighters give up every Tuesday evening on top of everything else, plus training on the weekends. A comprehensive plan is required to have an effective volunteer force. The town is not paying people hourly as in a career department. Baldwin-Kravetz suggested educating people on all of this. When people see volunteer incentives, they do not understand, but it becomes a non-issue when you understand what is required and asked of the volunteers. Volunteerism is dying throughout the country and requirements are increasing. Chief noted there is an impression that we come off as greedy or it is a ridiculous request. The criticism is not fair for the firefighters. The Fire Commission wanted it on the record that volunteer incentives are not a negative, but a positive. Discussion continued on promoting longevity, required physicals, and gear costs. Chief stated we do the best we can with what we have. The town is generous, but innuendo and comments don't sit well.

WFD Activity Report – Assistant Fire Chief Bahner

AC Bahner distributed and reviewed his report for January. Calls of note were discussed as were the number of hours on scene vs after an incident response.

Fire Marshal's Report - (See attached report)

FM Cappucci distributed and reviewed his report. He conducted 2 public fire education, consulted at Beecher Road School and the JCC, worked on the pre-fire plan for the fuel cell and the Inwood fire investigation report as well as conducted 47 inspections. New businesses coming in to town. Carbon monoxide detectors were purchased out of the budget (\$1,000). CO detectors need to be replaced every 5 years (or sooner if not functioning) and smoke detectors need to be replaced every 10 years (or sooner if not functioning). This applies even if they are hard-wired. The sensor is what goes.

Chairman's Report

None

Liaison Comments

First Selectman Heller discussed the Board of Selectmen's budget recommendations. The regular clerical request will go to Personnel. Chief mentioned using town personnel to do special cleaning projects at the fire department; other town departments do not have cleaning in their budgets and are cleaned once a day. We pay to have our building cleaned once a week. It may be possible to have one of the custodians do some of the special projects such as windows, gear room floor scrubbing, etc.

First Selectman Heller explained the BOS cuts to get the mill rate down to 40.37 – with the intention of getting it under 40. They hope to consolidate services, reduce postage costs, revisit all conferences, and look into self-insurance among other things. The CT Economic Resource Conference will look at all departments and the mill rate to find opportunities to reduce the tax increase. BOS is looking to consolidate in places, IT for instance. The BOF will work on this and everyone should attend or watch their meeting a week from Wednesday. First Selectman Heller stated if after reviewing IT with the Amity Board of Education the fire department does not want to change providers, it doesn't have to. She added the town wants to work out the kinks at town hall before coming over to the fire department. Amity Board of Education has not looked at the town hall equipment yet

The town has contracted with UI to install LEDs in all the street lights, saving \$17,000 in the electrical budget next year. (Will not cause road closures.)

Regarding our capital budget request, First Selectman Heller explained the BOS recommendation to spread out the funding of apparatus. Engine 7 would be funded for 3 more years, the air packs for 2 more. They recommend funding the breathing air compressor. Engine 3 would be funded for 5 years with the first payment in FY20. Then two years after that, Engine 9. The \$37,000 for technology was left in although there are some questions about the servers and if we might get a better deal doing them all at the same time with town hall.

Executive Session per section 1-200

None

Correspondence

None

Other Business that May be Voted to be Placed on the Agenda (if necessary)

None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION (ALEXIADES/SOUFRINE) to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting on 9/18/18 with one correction; **MOTION** approved unanimously.

MOTION (BALDWIN-KRAVETZ/HORTON) to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting on 12/18/18; **MOTION** approved unanimously.

Approval of the minutes from the Regular Meeting on 1/22/18 was deferred.

Next Meeting Date:

The next Regular Meeting will be March 19, 2018.

Regarding the upcoming Snowflake dance, the new venue is the JCC. The Woodbridge Club had a flood and the JCC is helping us out.

Adjournment

MOTION (HORTON/SOUFRINE) to adjourn. With unanimous approval, the meeting adjourned at 6:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary Michael Soufrine
Board of Fire Commissioners

Aimee Cotton Bogush, Clerk
Board of Fire Commissioners