

Regular Meeting of the
Board of TFD Fire Commissioners

DRAFT -- Meeting Minutes – April 17, 2019

Thompsonville Fire Station, 35 N. Main Street, Enfield, CT

1. Call to Order: by Comm. DuFour at 7:00 pm.

2. Roll Call: present were Comm. Perry, Comm. DuFour, Comm. Reidy, and Comm. Dodd. Absent was Comm. Crowley. Also present were Lindsey Allard, Jeff Bradanini, and Jean-Oliver Beirne from Beirne Wealth Consulting Services, Chief Deskis and Dept. Secretary Wawer.

3. Pension Update by Beirne Wealth Consulting Services, LLC:

Ms. Allard said all the assets will move to Beirne Wealth on May 13th. We held a conference call with Prudential's discontinuance team yesterday. Everything is in good order. The pension payments will be sent out by Prudential until June 1st, then Beirne Wealth will take over the payments with PenChecks. PenChecks can send out the June 1st payments if Prudential cannot for some reason.

Ms. Allard said Prudential agreed to provide us with their historical performance data during the conference call. Now they are saying there will be significant fees to do that. Beirne Wealth requested just the total overall market values for each year.

Ms. Allard said Beirne Wealth will initiate the pension payments for July 1st.

Mr. Beirne said we will incur any fees because we don't want the district to incur any costs. We can use the overall market values to calculate the historical data. At the next meeting, Beirne Wealth can go through a market overview, the portfolio, and an investment policy. Moving forward we can provide a monthly snapshot of how the portfolio is doing.

Mr. Beirne asked if the Board had any questions.

Comm. DuFour asked if the everything is all set with the discontinuance with Prudential. Ms. Allard said yes, everything is all set. Now Beirne Wealth will work directly with Prudential to transfer the assets over.

Comm. Dodd said I know that things were being done in pieces. So, everything will be moved over on May 13th? Ms. Allard said yes. Comm. Dodd said there are some monies from this year's budget that have not been put in yet because we were waiting until the switching of pension companies was complete. So, we will be ready to do that

in May. Ms. Allard said Beirne Wealth is ready to do that right now. We can transfer the additional contribution before May. Comm. Dodd said we would like to move it over now and have it ready.

Ms. Allard said she will provide the wire instructions to Dept. Secy. Wawer.

MOTION to transfer \$325,000 to Beirne Wealth Consulting Services LLC made by Comm. Reidy, seconded by Comm. Dodd. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 4-0.

The Board thanked Ms. Allard, Mr. Bradanini, and Mr. Beirne for attending the meeting and all the work they have done.

4. Chief's Report:

Chief Deskis said the department responded to a structure fire at 56 Elm Street which caused extensive damage throughout the structure. An individual was taken to an area hospital and then transported to the Bridgeport hospital for burns and smoke inhalation. The response time was within three minutes which helped prevent the spread of fire to other properties.

Chief Deskis provided the Board with a list of significant incidents that have occurred since he has been with the department. Some of those incidents were structure fires on Elm Street, Enfield Street, Hartford Avenue, Enfield Commons, and D'Annunzio Avenue. There were also some medical calls on the Pearl Street bridge and North Main Street. I believe if the total revenue lost for these calls would have been devastation if it hadn't been for the TFD's quick response times. These quick response times are due to having a full-time department.

Chief Deskis said as Chief, he believes that dissolution and bankruptcy is not an option. The Chief and the Commission will do everything possible to formulate a budget that will make sure the Thompsonville district has a safe and adequate fire department.

Chief Deskis said dissolution of the district would not save money. It would just pass the budget to another district or the Town of Enfield. Other volunteer fire district in town are having a hard time attracting members. Property tax incentives, part-time pay, and training is a trend that has been failing drastically in the last decade. I am a firm believer in that if a town has a full-time police and ambulance service, it should have a full-time fire department as well.

Chief Deskis said the capital improvements requested are due to the importance of the items needed. Our current air packs do not interchange with three fire departments in town. There are two different style bottles and some of those bottles cannot be filled with the air compressor we currently have. The cost of these items have increased over the last ten years, and it appears the cost will not decrease any time soon. Some of our

units have a manufacture date of 1993. This old piece of equipment is something a firefighter depends upon in a time of fire or rescue.

Chief Deskis said I am trying everything I can to save the taxpayers money but we need to keep our employees safe so they can provide sufficient fire service.

Chief Deskis said the members of B Group has done a great job waxing of the floors. This has been completed during the weekends due to less pedestrian traffic.

Chief Deskis said an Employees Only sign has been installed on the middle hallway door to prevent any unauthorized parties from entering the living areas of the firefighters. The shower area leads into the hallway instead of the locker room which could lead to an indecent exposure incident. This also provides security for employees' personal items and prevents the spread of sickness. A citizen will have to be escorted by a TFD employee if they want to enter that area.

Chief Deskis said recently some of our members were exposed to a flu-like bug during a medical call to Bigelow Commons. It sent those members and members of the following shift home sick. The station has been disinfected and all members have returned to work.

Chief Deskis said Firefighter Piacentini's grandfather passed away this week. Members of the TFD attended his wake and funeral.

Chief Deskis said the department received the grant check from FM Global to purchase a new iPad for fire inspections. There will be a formal presentation soon.

Chief Deskis said the department will offer free CPR training to Thompsonville residents. The dates and times will be posted on the department's website soon. The only cost will be for a certification card. Comm. DuFour suggested putting a sign out in front of the station.

Chief Deskis said he will put together a 5-year strategic plan for Thompsonville Fire department and present it to the Commission soon.

5. Treasurer's Report:

Comm. Dodd said the total of our checking and municipal investment accounts is \$2,571,480. Our budget balance at the end of March is \$1,481,812. I looked at our 3-month actuals and an average of 3 months over a 12-month period. The actuals for June, July, and August 2018 were a little over \$1.1 million. The average for 12 months was \$1.2 million. We will be just under what would be a 3-month cushion in case we don't receive our funds on time. I spoke with our accountant regarding that figure.

Because we have used money from our reserves for this year, it is a pretty good number. It may seem like a lot of money but we are trying to cover expenses.

6. Public Communications:

Jeff Cross, 1116 Enfield Street, congratulated Chief Deskis. This is the best Chief's report I have seen in a long time.

Mr. Cross said none of us want to dissolve this district. It was just a matter of how much money we are throwing away.

Mr. Cross said thank you for putting the financial statements online before tonight's meeting so the public can review them. There are a couple of issues that need to be addressed. There is an additional \$67,000 of workman's comp expenses between August and March that wasn't reflected in February's statements. Only \$24,000 had been spent so far. Was the money distributed in those earlier months? If so, how is the money distributed and not reflected appropriately in the bank statements? Is there a bank rec? The balance sheet shows there is \$86,000 in the operating account. Has that been reconciled to the bank balance as of the end of March? Have all of the outstanding items been accounted for? If that money had been distributed, there would be a lot less or a lot more money than what is reflected in the bank balance. Comm. Dodd asked Mr. Cross to provide her with a list of his questions.

Mr. Cross said there was \$58,000 in miscellaneous income and \$30,000 in tax revenue. Where did that money come from?

Mr. Cross said Comm. Dodd estimated that we will have \$1 million dollars at the end of the fiscal year. I estimate that we will have \$1.465 million. I am basing my figure on actuals through March and extrapolating out to June. I gave us a five percent cushion on expenses. I am showing the money in the operating account, the municipal investment account, and the contingency fund. The other funds are encumbered. I am deducting \$1.1 million from \$2.6 million which leaves \$1.5 million left. That tells me there is \$500 thousand available for tax relief. I will gladly give the Board my calculations.

Keith Pliszka, 33 St. Thomas St., said the Board did a very good job on the budget. There will be about nine new buildings being constructed in our district soon so we will have some more Fire Marshal fees coming in.

7. Commissioners' Communications:

Chief Deskis said he contacted the workers' compensation insurance company because only \$24,000 has been paid for the year so far. There was a glitch in their billing system

and we were never billed each month. Comm. Dodd said the money has been charged to the appropriate period. The bank reconciliation has been done.

Comm. Dodd. Said the additional funds coming in are from the Fire Marshal ordinance fees. We are hoping that the trend continues for next year.

Comm. Dodd said I will take a look at Mr. Cross's numbers.

Comm. Perry said one of the best things the Commission has done is institute the Fire Marshal Ordinance fees. I had fought to have this done but nobody wanted to do it. The fee is built into the building plans.

Comm. Perry said a woman came into her work and she highly praised this fire department. The department has responded several times to her residence. She cannot thank the members enough.

Comm. Dodd said according to the ordinance the Board can change the Fire Marshal fees. Comm. Reidy says it requires a public hearing. Comm. Dodd said it is something that the Board can do and it's not that difficult to do. Chief Deskis said the district receives one percent of the project cost. Comm. Dodd said the Chief has been looking into the changes we can make. That will help increase our revenues even more.

Comm. Reidy requested not to hold voting in bays. Last years employees were talking to voters about the candidates. We should hold our elections in the same manor as the Town. It dirties the election process. There is no campaigning within 75 feet. Comm. Dodd asked what do we do. Comm. DuFour suggested roping off an area in the bays for the election. Comm. Reidy said people can vote in the training room. It is inappropriate for employees to be talking to the voters. Dept. Secy. Wawer said we have held elections in the training room in the past. A lot of people have requested to have voting in the bays. It is easier access for people. Comm. Reidy said the voting has to be separate because employees were talking about the candidates. Comm. DuFour said we can section off one bay and people cannot cross the rope. Comm. Reidy said it really should be separate. The Board agreed to have people vote in the training room.

8. Old Business:

None.

9. New Business:

None.

10. Approval of Minutes from January 10 special meeting, January 16 regular meeting, February 26 special meeting, March 20 regular meeting, March 26 special meeting, and March 27 special meeting:

MOTION to approve the meeting minutes from the January 10 special meeting, the January 16 regular meeting, the February 26 special meeting, the March 20 regular meeting, the March 26 special meeting, and the March 27 special meeting made by Comm. DuFour, seconded by Comm. Perry. Discussion: none. Roll Call-Motion passed 3-0 with Comm. Reidy abstaining.

11. Discussion and Approval of Invoices/Bills:

Commissioners reviewed, discussed and approved checks for invoices/bills.

12. 2019-2020 FY Budget Workshop:

Comm. Dodd said in yellow are all the changes that were made from the original proposed budget. Some of the figures that we have been waiting on have come in. Chief Deskis did an in-depth study of the payroll. He decided it was better to pay for overtime than to hire someone. That reduces additional costs such as insurance and benefits, new hire expenses, and physical exams. The two retirements this year made a difference as well.

Comm. Dodd said we changed the motor vehicle mill rate from 3.2 to 5 mills. The new property mill rate will be 6.79. The grand list, interest and Fire Marshal fees have increased. The retiree health and dental insurance decreased significantly. Chief Deskis said that is because one of our retirees switched to Medicare supplemental insurance. Another retiree changed from a family to a single plan.

Comm. Dodd said changing the salaries changes the payroll taxes. Workers' comp changes with less employees. The pension contribution decreased by \$50 thousand. There was no change to the operating maintenance so that should not be in yellow. Office of the Fire Marshal, uniform allowance, training, physical exams, and new hire expenses all decreased.

Comm. Dodd said we were on the fence about the legal fees because you never know what's going to happen. Our accountant felt comfortable reducing the legal fees because currently legal expenses are low.

Comm. Dodd said the tax collector fees are based off of the amount of revenue collected. The communications center fee is a variable. The fee is \$19,500 but the Chief is fighting it. I am hoping that we win and if we don't, the Fire Marshal fees can cover it. The hydrant fees increase a little bit.

Comm. Dodd said the Board is not going to fund the contingency or the building and apparatus maintenance accounts. Those are savings accounts and there is money in them. We would like to put more money in them but let's see how this year goes. If next year goes well, maybe we can start funding those again.

Comm. Dodd said I tried to do my best with the air compressor. The \$90 thousand will cover the cost of the compressor and 4 air packs. These are air packs that will be compatible with other departments' air packs. We would like to buy twelve new air packs. The department has applied for a grant. That can be used to buy more air packs. Comm DuFour asked is the department buying any spare bottles. Chief Deskis said we would purchase the equipment during the fall. That is usually when there are specials. Comm. Dodd said all the equipment will cost only \$32 thousand if we receive the grant. If we don't get the grant then at least we can get started.

Comm. Perry said when she left the Commission, she had a problem with the motor vehicle taxes. I thought about all the places where people don't pay real estate taxes such as apartment complexes. There are a lot of people that live in those places that have cars. Having a mill rate of 6.79 instead of 8.34 is a bigger savings than increasing the motor vehicle mill rate by a little. The Thompsonville Fire District encompasses more than just downtown Thompsonville. Comm. Dodd said the cap for the motor vehicle mill rate is 45 mills. Currently the Town of Enfield's rate is at 33 mills but the Council hasn't determined this year's mill rate yet. A mill rate of 5 was comfortable enough so we wouldn't have any problems with the Town. Comm. DuFour said two years ago, the district didn't collect any motor vehicle taxes.

Comm. Reidy said her only concern is excess funds. Comm. Dodd said she couldn't find any excess funds. If you can find any, please show them to me. I cannot use someone else's figures. Comm. Reidy said every year there is money left over and it keeps going back into the bank accounts. The taxpayers keep paying an extra amount of about a mill. Comm. Dodd said there aren't any excess funds there. Comm. Reidy said it was there last year and it was there the year before. Comm. Dodd said the money was there last year but we used it. Comm. Perry said our auditors have reviewed our budget. I can't use the figures from a resident. I think Comm. Dodd did a great job.

MOTION to accept the proposed 2019-2020 budget as amended presented by Comm. Dodd made by Comm. Perry, seconded by Comm. DuFour. Discussion: Roll Call- Motion passed 3-1 with Comms. DuFour, Perry, and Dodd voting for and Comm. Reidy voting against.

13. Adjourn:

MOTION to adjourn made by Comm. DuFour, seconded by Comm. Reidy. All in favor by ayes at 7:56 pm.