

Regular Meeting of the
Board of TFD Fire Commissioners

DRAFT -- Meeting Minutes – February 16, 2022
Thompsonville Fire Station, 35 N. Main Street, Enfield, CT

1. Call to Order: by Comm. Bouthiette at 7:03 pm.

2. Roll Call: present were Comm. Bouthiette, Comm. Pliszka, and Comm. Dodd.
Absent were Comm. Perry and Comm. Gillespie. Also, present were Chief Deskis.

3. Chief's Report:

Chief Deskis said the grand list has been delayed until the end of the month. I cannot do anything else with the budget until I receive that information.

Chief Deskis said I would like to schedule some budget meetings in the next couple of weeks.

Chief Deskis said the new town manager has stopped by the station two times since she has started. She seems like a real advocate for the fire department.

Chief Deskis said I have emailed the Commission the Hazardville and Shaker Pines Fire Depts. consolidation study. I wanted to thank Chief Jim Nolan for sending that to me right away.

Chief Deskis said two members of the department have been out due to Covid. They were in contact with family members that had it.

Chief Deskis said there isn't much money in the overtime budget. We have \$23,067 left to spend. People have been out and Covid.

Chief Deskis said the fire apparatus are rotated monthly. A tire valve had to be replaced on Engine 21.

Chief Deskis said the department applied for an AFG grant for radios. We won't hear anything until the summertime.

Chief Deskis said some of the Union members donated sick-time to Capt. Forsyth. They donated a total of 32 days.

Comm. Dodd asked who the new town manager is. Chief Deskis said Ellen Zoppa. She is from Bristol.

4. Treasurer's Report:

Comm. Dodd said our new accountant has been working on the financial reports. She has set it up in a nice and easy way to read.

Comm. Dodd read the balances of the bank accounts: operating account: \$107,091, apparatus/building fund: \$212,544, municipal investment account: \$2,736,592. The total of all the accounts is \$3,250,952.

Comm. Dodd said there hasn't been anything out of the ordinary except for, as we know, the payroll. Comm. Bouthiette said that is the overtime. Comm. Dodd said that is the only thing that is out of budget. Everything else has been on par with or under the budget. We are going to have to come up with a solution for the overtime.

5. Public Communications:

None.

6. Commissioners' Communications:

Comm. Dodd asked what happens if we run out of overtime money. Chief Deskis said I think we have the 3 month operating budgeted into that. Firefighter Duval has been out but he hasn't been getting paid. Capt. Forsyth is a different story. Capt. Pliszka is getting worker's compensation checks. It's going to be a fine line.

Comm. Dodd said the 3 months that we keep is for the time period of when the budget ends until we receive our next check from the Town. Comm. Pliszka said that's right. That is our 25 percent reserve. Comm. Dodd asked are we allowed to use that money for when we run out of payroll. Comm. Pliszka said yes. There is also the 1 percent that is in the budget. That money can be used anywhere within the budget. Two percent can be pulled from any line item and put into salaries. Chief Deskis said that will have to be voted on. Comm. Dodd asked what is the 1 percent. Comm. Pliszka said that is the 1 percent at our discretion. There is \$30,000 in there. Comm. Dodd said we can take that out of the 3 months' money. Comm. Pliszka said no, that is totally separate. We can use that for anything. Comm. Pliszka said it's the contingency fund. Comm. Dodd asked so we can use 1 percent of the contingency fund. Comm. Pliszka said it is all available to us to go into any line item that we want to. Comm. Dodd said okay.

Chief Deskis said I didn't want to set any alarm bells off. Comm. Dodd said but it's February. This has to carry us to the end of the fiscal year. You are going to blow through that money. I would like to be proactive. I would like the chief to look at the budget and see where we can move money. Let the Board know so it can be voted on at the next meeting.

Comm. Dodd asked do we use the contingency money first or do we move money from other line items. Comm. Bouthiette asked what does the Charter allow us to do. Comm. Dodd said I think the contingency needs to stay there in case of an emergency. Comm. Bouthiette agreed. Comm. Dodd said moving 2 percent out of another line item is the better option.

Comm. Pliszka said it seems like the Town of Enfield is making deals for the fire departments on taxes. Things like tax abatements. I think we should send a letter to the Town saying we do not grant them permission to do any deals for us. We don't do any deals. Our mill rate is our mill rate. Comm. Dodd asked what is the Town doing. Comm. Pliszka said they tried to do it to Hazardville. They would have gotten less money. We don't want that.

Comm. Pliszka said I'm pretty sure we will get all our money with the TIF district. That is a tax incentive program. But we have to make sure of that. We cannot afford any givebacks.

Comm. Pliszka said during the next meeting, the Board should meet in executive session to do the chief's review. That needs to be done. I would like that to go on the agenda just to get it done. Comm. Dodd said the chief is going to have to provide the Board with a list of goals for the future.

7. Old Business:

None.

8. New Business: a) Pension Fee Proposal:

Chief Deskis said I spoke with our CPA today. We are looking to go to the cloud with QuickBooks. Comm. Dodd said that is QuickBooks online. Chief Deskis said that will probably be in June. The problem is only one person has access to that. It's only on one computer. If something were to happen to that computer or our administrative assistant, we are out of luck. We are going to go to a cloud based bookkeeping system so the treasurer and I can look in whenever we want. Comm. Dodd said the CPA can be on it. I use it for all my clients. It's easy.

Chief Deskis said the Town Manager is very proactive. The Fire Marshal and I had a meeting with her. She understands what we are doing here. She has a fire department background from Bristol.

Chief Deskis said the members did a fantastic job rescuing the deer that was on the ice on the river. There was a fire the other night in North Thompsonville that they responded to. We were the first apparatus there.

Comm. Pliszka said I am worried that the District won't be able to tax cars. The State says that they are going to send us money. When? Comm. Dodd asked what this email about. Chief Deskis said that was presented by Representative Arnone to Chief Provencher. They are trying to push legislation through the State. It needs to be voted on. Mr. Arnone could not answer my questions about this. Is that a refund for the District or do we have to pay that back to people for being overtaxed? The response I got was it has to be voted on. Comm. Dodd said it says 2023. So, they are proposing that this is money that we would have to pay back based on a previous tax? Comm. Pliszka said no, this is what we would receive. They cannot tax over 29 mills. Comm. Dodd said we are at the top that we can be for motor vehicles. Comm. Pliszka said we won't be able to do anything. The Town's mill rate is in the 30s. We won't be able to tax motor vehicles. This happened a few years ago. Chief Deskis said the Town Manager told him those numbers are wrong. Comm. Dodd said she will talk to Rep. Arnone about this. Chief Deskis said no one is giving us a straight answer on those numbers. Comm. Pliszka said this needs to be figured out for the budget. A recession is coming. This will be one of the first things to get cut. Chief Deskis said just like the PILOT program. Chief Deskis said he will try to get more information at the Chiefs' meeting tomorrow. Comm. Dodd said we would adjust it in the mill rate. We raised the motor vehicle mill rate because there were a lot of cars we weren't getting money from. People who didn't own property but owned cars. If they pull the plug on this, we can still recover from it. Comm. Pliszka said I would hate to budget for this money and then we don't get it. Comm. Dodd said I would not budget for it. We have to base our mill rate on our budget. If we do get this money, then it gets rolled over into the next budget. Comm. Pliszka said we are going to have to readjust anyways because of re-evaluations.

Pension Fee Proposal: Comm. Dodd said I wanted 10 years. Comm. Pliszka had said 10 years as well.

MOTION to approve the 10-year proposal with Beirne Wealth pension planning made by Comm. Dodd, seconded by Comm. Bouthiette. Discussion: none. Roll Call-Motion passed 3-0.

Comm. Pliszka said we just have to tell the taxpayers during the budget presentation that we entered into a 10-year agreement. We are going to save money.

9. Adjourn:

MOTION to adjourn made by Comm. Dodd, seconded by Comm. Bouthiette. All in favor by ayes at 7:25 pm.