

Regular Meeting of the
Board of TFD Fire Commissioners

DRAFT -- Meeting Minutes – February 17, 2021
Thompsonville Fire Station, 35 N. Main Street, Enfield, CT

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

2. Roll Call: present (via conference call) were Comm. Perry, Comm. Dodd, and Comm. Gillespie. Comm. Pliszka was absent. Also, present (via conference call) were Chief Deskis and Department Secretary Steneri.

3. June 30, 2020 Financial Statements Presentation by FML:

Brian Kelleher and Katie Collamore from Fiondella, Milone, & LaSaracina joined the conference call:

Mr. Kelleher introduced himself as the engagement partner for the audit this year. In January 2020, his firm FML merged with Viola, Chrabascz, Reynolds & Co. He has been with FML for 18 years and heads up the non-profit audit practices. Ms. Collamore introduced herself. She has been with VCR for several years and has assisted on past audits.

Mr. Kelleher said there are 3 documents that we will go over this evening: the financial statements which is accompanied by our independent auditors' report, the governance communication letter, and the internal control letter.

Mr. Kelleher explained the independent auditors' report. The report states that we audited the financial statements for June 30, 2020. The report includes management's responsibility, the auditor's responsibility, the auditors' opinion, and supplementary information.

Mr. Kelleher said the statements are currently in draft form. There are just a couple loose ends that we need to tie up.

Ms. Collamore gave an overview of the financial statements. The statements include management's discussion and analysis, statement of net position, statement of activities, governmental funds statements, fiduciary funds statements, notes to the financial statements, and additional required supplementary information.

Mr. Kelleher reviewed the governance communication letter and the internal control letter. Katie has already gone over most of what is disclosed in the communication

letter. The letter includes a new accounting policy, testaments, additional disclosures, adjustments, the unadjusted audit differences, and new pronouncements.

Mr. Kelleher reviewed the internal control letter. The letter shows internal controls are part of the audit. We don't express any opinions on internal controls. If we do identify any internal control matters, they are identified in the letter.

Mr. Kelleher said the goal is to issue the financial statements by the end of February. Mr. Kelleher thanked everyone for their cooperation.

4. Chief's Report:

Chief Deskis said the Ford Explorer has been prepared to be put up for auction with the Board's approval. It will be listed on the CT public surplus auction site. That is the same site we used to sell the compressor. Comm. Dodd asked how long is it up for bid. Chief Deskis said I could leave it up for 1-2 weeks. Comm. Bouthiette asked have you thought about selling it in house. Maybe somebody needs a vehicle. Comm. Dodd asked why we are selling it. Chief Deskis said we don't need it. Comm. Dodd asked who's was it. Chief Deskis said it was the assistant chief's vehicle. Comm. Dodd asked how old it is. Chief Deskis said it is a 2007. The Fire Marshal's vehicle is a 2006. When the Tahoe comes in, then that one will be put up for sale as well.

Chief Deskis said there has been some attention about the General Assembly Proposed Bill No. 6050 which addresses the PILOT program. It may be reinstated with some help from our political partners. This bill would ensure that monies received by the Town will be shared with the fire districts. Currently the Town keeps all the money. I have asked if we are going to receive any money from the Covid Relief bill. They didn't respond back to me. Same thing happened with the Pequot funds for public safety. Comm. Perry said I don't want to hear crying from the Town regarding the Covid relief money. I'm tired of the fire departments being cut out. That's not right. I am going to contact Congressman Courtney and Senator Murphy. We really need to get some of the money, and we need to know what the Town is doing with it. Most town budgets include the fire departments.

Chief Deskis said we have ordered 21 SCBA units. The units should be delivered in March. The new air packs will replace our expiring units.

Chief Deskis said Engine 21 was out of service this month due to an electrical issue. The issue has been corrected so now the apparatus fleet is at 100 percent capacity. Squad 21 had a seat bracket snap in the back of the apparatus. We have ordered the replacement parts.

Chief Deskis said there was a problem with the station's boiler. The boiler has been repaired. There were some plumbing problems as well which have been repaired.

Chief Deskis said he has been working on next year's budget. I am waiting on some estimates. The IT maintenance fee increased due to the new CAD system. I have reached out to the Town Manager and the Finance Director to see if there are any other increases. I have not received a response back. I assume they are busy dealing with the pandemic.

Chief Deskis said the water main issue has not been resolved. It will most likely continue until later in the year. I have heard talk that the Town Council might raise our tax collection and other fees.

Chief Deskis said the station's Firehouse software will no longer be available as of December 2021. We will have to move to another platform which could cost \$21,000. I am going to get the 3 quotes per the Charter. We need something that is going to work with the Town too.

Chief Deskis said he has been accepted into the Hartford County Coordinators Forum. It responds to disasters within Hartford County for any activation of the red plan emergency process. The position does not pay. It is another asset during emergencies. Such as the crash at Bradley Airport. I would help with filling out NIMS forms and communication issues. I would like to have the Commission's approval. In the event the Town needs assistance, I would have already formed relationships with key place holders. This would ensure a smooth transition during a major emergency.

Chief Deskis said some new businesses that will be coming into the District are a car wash on Elm Street and a used car sales business. Comm. Dodd asked what is going to happen with the mall. Chief Deskis said he hasn't heard anything. Comm. Gillespie said there might be a gym going in.

Chief Deskis said I would like to thank Dept. Secy. Steneri for working hard to assist with the completion of our audit. I would also like to thank Firefighter Piacentini for his help with programming our new portable radios and removing all the equipment out of the Asst. Chief's vehicle.

5. Treasurer's Report:

Comm. Dodd said there is around \$2.8 million in the municipal investment account to get us to the end of the year.

Comm. Dodd said she focuses more on the budget vs. actual report for the entire year instead of the budget vs. actual report for the month. We are already over our budget for the Fire Marshal ordinance fees revenue. That is good because we were a little under for the Grand List. We are at 99.8% of our revenues and we have 5 months left.

Comm. Dodd asked about the IT maintenance line item. Chief Deskis said we haven't gotten billed yet. Dept. Secy. Steneri said the bill usually comes in May or June.

Comm. Dodd said the report is showing that the District pension contribution has not been paid yet. Dept. Secy. Steneri said she will follow up with Beirne Wealth.

Comm. Dodd asked why the money for the apparatus replacement and building maintenance funds haven't been moved over yet. Dept. Secy. Steneri said the funds have been moved into the bank accounts. I haven't recorded it properly yet. Comm. Dodd said as we get closer to the end of the year I want to see that this money has been moved or spent.

Comm. Dodd asked about the Communications Center fee. Chief Deskis said we haven't been billed. Comm. Dodd asked didn't the Town increase the fee on us. Chief Deskis said yes, that is why we didn't pay it. Supposedly the Town Council has a memorandum about it. This is all about the water mains. Comm. Dodd asked can't we just pay the Town. Chief Deskis said the amount is always different. Comm. Dodd said this is something that the Board must discuss because this is money in our budget. Do we move this money into an accrual account that sitting there waiting to be paid? Comm. Perry said we can send in a check and the Town can sit on it. Comm. Dodd said if we don't spend it, I would like to put it somewhere for when we are going to have to spend it. We need to move it out of our expenses. Chief Deskis said last year the bill was \$10,000. Comm. Dodd said in the next couple of months let's get everything moved and in place. Chief Deskis said after the Tahoe arrives, maybe we can use the \$25,000 to buy radios and a command module for it. If you want to spend it, we'll spend it. Comm. Perry asked what the Charter says about the budget. Chief Deskis said I must give it to the Board on March 1. Comm. Dodd said the \$25,000 is put into the building and apparatus fund. So, use the money for anything that is building or apparatus. Capital Apparatus Replacement fund and Long Term Building Maintenance fund so like they funnel into the Apparatus/Building Maintenance fund. Dept. Secy. Steneri said they are two line items that go into one bank account.

6. Public Communications:

None.

7. Commissioners' Communications:

Comm. Perry said there is a meeting tomorrow night for the 5 fire districts' commissioners.

8. Old Business:

Comm. Gillespie said at the last meeting we talked about getting together with some of the members about the apparatus. Comm. Bouthiette and I would like to add Capt. Flanagan to that committee. Comm. Perry asked how many people did we say? Chief Deskis said there are 2 members and 2 commissioners. Comm. Bouthiette said

because he is the training officer, he meets with everyone in the department. He can get input from everybody, not just 2 people on the committee. He was on the truck committee for the ones we have now. He has the experience with it and he has the knowledge. Comm. Perry asked Chief Deskis for his opinion. Chief Deskis said these guys are in charge of it. Another member was asking about it. Comm. Perry said we don't want the committee to get too big. Chief Deskis said that is why he only chose 2 members to be on it. Comm. Gillespie said Capt. Flanagan would be a huge asset.

Chief Deskis, Comm. Gillespie, and Comm. Bouthiette discussed various places that can do parts of the refurbishment. Chief Deskis said the committee can figure all the details out and then present it. Comm. Perry said I know very little about the vehicles. I want to know what the bottom line is and that we are getting our money's worth. Comm. Bouthiette said if we refurb the truck, this puts us in a position to do it again with the next truck.

9. New Business: a) Fire Districts Training Facility, b) Fire Districts Consolidation Plan, c) Retiree Insurance:

Fire Districts Training Facility: Comm. Perry said the bottom line is that Thompsonville cannot go in. There is no way we can come up with that kind of money to pay for it every year. Comm. Dodd asked how much it is. Comm. Perry said \$25,000 a year. Comm. Dodd asked how many years. Chief Deskis said it would cost over a million dollars to build a facility. Each district would have to figure out their own mortgage payment. That can go for 10 or 20 years. The amount of the payments could vary depending on the interest rates. It is a beautiful facility. The land was donated by the State of CT.

Comm. Perry asked what the yearly payment would be. Chief Deskis said it would depend on where we finance. Comm. Dodd said the total cost to each district is \$362,600. Comm. Gillespie said the operating budget per year is \$19,000. Comm. Perry said that would be split 5 ways. That is on top of the mortgage payments. Chief Deskis said it would be great to have but there are other things that we must budget for. Comm. Dodd asked what happens if we don't opt in. Comm. Perry said we would have to pay if we wanted to use it. The facility will make money charging other departments to train there. Comm. Dodd asked is there a need for the facility. Comm. Gillespie said yes because it would be a state of the art facility. Chief Deskis said it is a big decision to make. Comm. Perry said I don't see how we can do it. If the rest of the Board can come up with the money, then I'm for it. Comm. Dodd said let's put it in our budget and see how it looks. Do we have to decide before our budget? Comm. Perry said we are meeting tomorrow night. Chief Deskis said I think the public would have to vote on it. Comm. Bouthiette said we would have to budget for principle and interest. Comm. Perry said we are tight on regular operating costs. We might be able to squeeze it in this year. But what about next year? If we get really tight on our budget, the only thing we can do is get rid of a member. That would be the only way we could pay our bills.

Comm. Dodd asked what's going on with the consolidation plan.

Fire Districts Consolidation Plan:

Comm. Perry said the fire districts are serious about consolidating. The first attorney they used was bad. The new firm will come up with what the exact cost is, how long it will take, what we are going to need for this town, and what to do. Once there is a plan, consolidation isn't going to happen right away. It may take 5 years. But we need to start some place and we would have to pay a portion of the legal fees. Comm. Dodd said I think that the consolidation would come before the training facility. Comm. Perry said that is my thought too. Comm. Dodd said the consolidation might offset the training facility. Comm. Perry said if we all become one department, everyone is going to own that place anyway. The whole town would contribute to it. Comm. Dodd said we should focus on the consolidation. Chief Deskis said I was looking at the budget and the only option I could think of is the Assistant Chief's salary. But we have used that money this year to pay for the overtime due to Covid-19. Comm. Gillespie said the coronavirus is a serious fluke. I don't see another virus coming out every year. Comm. Perry said it will become just like the flu. You will have to get a Covid shot every year. Comm. Gillespie said we could take the Asst. Chief's money and split it among the two. Chief Deskis said we can explain to the public what we are going to do. Comm. Perry said I don't think there is enough time to get it into this year's budget. We must have a public hearing. Comm. Gillespie said we can put it into our budget if we know what the figure is. We can get rid of the Asst. Chief's salary and budget for the other two. Comm. Dodd said if the public votes it down, we can put the position back in. We are not adding money. Chief Deskis said we could use money from the legal budget. Comm. Perry said contract negotiations are coming up. Where would you get the money to pay for that. Comm. Dodd asked when is the contract up. Chief Deskis said July of next year.

Retiree Insurance: Chief Deskis said one of our retirees did not take our insurance when he retired. He got insurance through another job. He no longer works there and want to come back on our dental insurance. The problem is that our dental insurance company would not bill him directly. The district would be billed and he would have to reimburse the district. We don't want to be chasing people down for money. Comm. Dodd asked do the employees sign off that they don't want the insurance when they retire. Chief Deskis said there is nothing in place for that. Comm. Dodd said that happens a lot with other companies, but the person must prepay. Comm. Perry said my problem is that he left and didn't take the insurance. You are saying that people can leave and then come back. Comm. Gillespie said it should be final when a person retires. But there is nothing in writing that says that. Chief Deskis said the only thing the contract says is that a retiree is entitled to the government trust. Comm. Dodd said I don't know if you must sign anything. Comm. Perry said you are retiring and these are your retirement benefits. You can take them or leave them. If we do it for this person, then we must do it for everybody. I don't think it is something we should do. The other Board members agreed.

The Board discussed the sale of the 2 vehicles.

MOTION to put both Ford Explorers up for sale made by Comm. Perry, seconded by Comm. Dodd. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 4-0.

MOTION to have Chief Deskis work with the Hartford Country Coordinators' Forum made by Comm. Dodd, seconded by Comm. Bouthiette. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 4-0.

10. Approval of Minutes from January 20 regular meeting:

MOTION to approve the minutes of the January 20 regular meeting made by Comm. Perry, seconded by Comm. Gillespie. Discussion: none. Roll Call- Motion passed 4-0.

11. Adjourn:

MOTION to adjourn made by Comm. Perry, seconded by Comm. Gillespie. All in favor by ayes at 8:39 pm.