

MOUNT LAUREL FIRE DISTRICT #1
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
November 21, 2016
Fire Department Headquarters Station
Meeting Minutes #15

IN ATTENDANCE:

1. Commissioner Ridenour
2. Commissioner Roura
3. Commissioner Shestack
4. Commissioner DiPietrantonio
5. Deputy Chief Burnett
6. Administrator Jones
7. Solicitor Braslow

NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

1. Chief of Department Colucci
2. Commissioner Hamilton

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Ridenour at 8:04 PM.

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

Public announcements were read by Commissioner DiPietrantonio.

ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS:

- Resolution #2016-43 "Appointment of Jeremy S. Weingardt as an Active Member of the Fellowship Fire Company #2 and the Mount Laurel Fire Department". Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the resolution that was seconded by Commissioner Shestack. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board. Commissioner Shestack administered the oath of office to the new member.
- Resolution #2016-44 "Appointment of Robert C. Risdorfer as an Active Member of the Fellowship Fire Company #2 and the Mount Laurel Fire Department". Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the resolution that was seconded by Commissioner Shestack. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.
- Resolution #2016-45 "Establishment of the Paid Position of Business Manager for the Mount Laurel Fire District #1" – Second Reading. Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the resolution that was seconded by Commissioner Shestack. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

FINANCIAL MATTERS:

Commissioner Roura reported that he had reviewed the monthly bills for November and everything was in order. He made a motion to approve payment of monthly bills totaling \$708,101.04 for November that was seconded by Commissioner Shestack. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

MONTHLY REPORT BY ADMINISTRATOR:

The Administrator had submitted his monthly report to the Board for their review prior to the meeting. He added that he had received a Facilities Usage Request this afternoon from the No Borders Church for the use of the Headquarters Station Meeting Room on Sundays for church services. Commissioner Roura stated that we have had a request similar to this one in the past and denied it based on concerns expressed by Solicitor Braslow. The Board unanimously agreed that there could be perceived conflicts with this and denied their request.

BOARD QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT:

Chief of Department Colucci had submitted his monthly report to the Board for their review prior to the meeting. He was not present tonight but Deputy Chief Burnett was available for questions. Deputy Chief Burnett noted a correction in the report regarding a Relief Association meeting date which is listed as 12/6/17 but should be 12/8/17. He noted that Mt. Laurel EMS member Marie Kritz passed away 11/17/16 and is survived by her husband, longtime Fellowship Fire Company and Fire Department member Charlie Kritz. Services will be held tomorrow, 11/22/16 from 9:15 AM to 10:45 AM at the Catholic Church of St. Mary on Springdale Road in Cherry Hill. He asked that everyone keep the Kritz family in their thoughts and prayers. Commissioner Ridenour noted that on behalf of the Board and Department, he posted the Department's condolences on the website that was set-up to publish the services information.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Personnel: Commissioner Roura reported that the final CBA's drafts have been reviewed by the Union representatives and are being printed out for signing by the parties and passage of adoption resolutions at the next meeting.

Finance: Commissioner Roura reported that Administrator Jones is finalizing the 2017 Budget documents.

COMMENTS OF FIRE DISTRICT PROFESSIONALS:

Solicitor Braslow had nothing to report.

Commissioner Ridenour asked him for a briefing on the meeting with Masonville Fire Company representatives that was held just before tonight's meeting. Solicitor Braslow reported that the meeting with Masonville Fire Company representatives was to address a number of issues including their tax exempt and charitable organization status, their active membership, whether they are able to satisfy the quorum requirements of their By-Laws and the outstanding financial obligation that they have incurred for repairs to their antique fire truck. They agreed to meet before the next Board Special Meeting on 12/5/16 where these discussions will continue and viable options will be discussed and evaluated. He sensed that they are not sure whether they can continue as a viable organization due to their dwindling membership and whether they have the ability to continue functioning as a fire company and volunteer organization. Masonville Fire Company President Tremper indicated that he would have this discussion with his membership and they will consider options such as dissolution or a possible merger with the Fellowship Fire Company. The 12/5/16 meeting would include the leadership of both fire companies. He felt that the meeting was productive and from what he could determine, they have lost their tax exempt and charitable organization status because they have not filed the annual paperwork required for some time. They are apparently trying to amend their By-laws to address the quorum issue but they openly admit that they probably still won't be able to get enough membership participation. Apparently their last election of officers was done 7 years ago, so based on that he wasn't even sure that their officers are actually authorized to make any of these decisions.

Commissioner Ridenour added that they were also under the impression that they still own their firehouse and the property around it, but Commissioner Shestack added that Vice-President Randy Johnson believed that the Fire District owns the building. Administrator Jones clarified that they do still own the property and the building but the Fire District has a 99 year lease to operate both. There was another agreement that was drafted and almost finalized to have them turn the over the building title to the Fire District, but there were a few things that they needed to do to make it actually happen that were never finished. Commissioner Shestack thought that the property had a deed restriction that required it to be used for a fire station or the property would revert back to the Haines family. Administrator Jones stated that the Fire District only owns the Headquarters/Birchfield Station.

Solicitor Braslow noted that based on the documentation they have provided and some recent State Attorney General opinions about property ownership, he does not feel that the current Masonville Fire Company operation is legal and it will need to be addressed. Administrator Jones felt that if we address the Masonville Station ownership issue, we should also address the Fellowship Station issue simultaneously so that the issue of property and building ownership can finally be put to rest. Solicitor Braslow added that another discussion in the meeting dealt with the Fire Company insistence that they wanted to maintain their historical significance, which is very easy to address and that there were methods to do that. Administrator Jones clarified that the Fire District owns the Fellowship Station but not the property because we knocked the old building down and built a new one. He added that we completely renovated the Masonville Station, so technically the Fire District owns all the interior and exterior improvements but not the property.

COMMENTS OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Roura reported that the Mt. Laurel Firefighters Foundation is finalizing a donation solicitation letter to raise funds for the completion and maintenance of the 911 Memorial and that it will hit the mail in the next couple of weeks. He has been assisting the Foundation on his own time to help put this all together as inexpensively as possible.

Commissioner Shestack reported that the MLFD Softball Team finished their fall season and came in 9th out of 30 teams.

Commissioner Ridenour stated that we need to reconstitute the Long Range Planning Committee next year to explore a schedule for orderly replacement of fire apparatus and other capital improvements that we know are on the horizon. He will contact Committee Chairman Hamilton and get things going with this project, which is long overdue and critical to our future financial planning.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

None.

Commissioner Roura asked if there was a need to go into Closed Session. Deputy Chief Burnett noted that we have a very qualified applicant interested in the vacant 2nd part-time Training Officer position and that Chief of Department Colucci wanted to get approval to offer him the position pending completion of his background checks. Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the Chief's recommendation for an offer of conditional employment to this applicant that was seconded by Commissioner DiPietrantonio. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

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

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:32 PM.