

MOUNT LAUREL FIRE DISTRICT #1
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 17, 2018
Fire Department Headquarters Station
Meeting Minutes #10

IN ATTENDANCE:

1. Commissioner Cornue
2. Commissioner Ridenour
3. Commissioner Roura
4. Commissioner Shestack
5. Commissioner Hamilton
6. Chief of Department Colucci
7. Deputy Chief Evans (Operational)
8. Solicitor Braslow

NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

1. Deputy Chief Burnett (Administration)

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Ridenour at 7:05 PM.

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

Public announcements were read by Commissioner Hamilton.

ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution #2018-42 "Appointing a Qualified Purchasing Agent (QPA)" Commissioner Shestack made a motion to approve the resolution that was seconded by Commissioner Roura. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the August 20, 2018 Regular Meeting Minutes that was seconded by Commissioner Cornue. The motion was approved by the Board with Commissioner Shestack abstaining.

FINANCIAL MATTERS:

Commissioner Roura reported he reviewed the September 2018 monthly bills and found them all to be in order. He then made a motion to approve the monthly bills totaling \$760,270.99 that was seconded by Commissioner Shestack. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

MONTHLY REPORT BY DEPUTY CHIEF - ADMINISTRATION:

Absent

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 reminded everyone of the Fall Fest event this weekend (Saturday) starting at 11:00 A.M., and Fire Prevention Night will be held Wednesday, October 3rd. He added that there will be a walkthrough at TopGolf with the companies on Wednesday, September 26 at 13:00 hours and/or 14:30 hours. There were no further questions or comments.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Commissioner Shestack reported that the softball team came in third place, and for the Billy Walker Tournament we came in first against Cherry Hill. He stated this annual tournament raised close to \$10,000 which goes towards individuals wishing to become firefighters. He informed everyone present Fall ball is now in season with games being held on Sundays at 8:30 and 9:30 in Westampton. He will send out more information once he receives it.

OTHER MATTERS:

Commissioner Roura stated they've had two budget meetings since the last Board meeting, and at that meeting proper staffing levels was discussed and that we've been operating at a bare minimum. It was decided that we need to hire nine more guys, stating they recommended going with Commissioner Hamilton's suggestion of hiring three firefighters for the next three years. He said the 2019 budget proposal submitted to the Board will have three new hires in 2019 in addition to backfilling our current vacancies and/or positions currently budgeted for. All budget scenarios with the numbers we ran resulted in the tax revenue increase being the same. This scenario will include a 2% increase in taxes plus exhaust the rest of our tax cap bank, and no matter what the scenario it's an estimated 4.81% proposed tax increase. He then stated the committee ran numbers on hiring staffing out to 2037 which included adding staff, retirements we presume might happen, and movement of employees such as promoting and backfilling. He stated this could be managed and yet maintain a fund balance. Commissioner Shestack explained that no matter what retirement we have we save about \$50,000, and then commenced going through all scenarios the committee projected.

Commissioner Ridenour then suggested possibly leasing vehicles stating they can be replaced every three years then we wouldn't have to worry about pm, tires, etc., our costs would probably go down, and then we could do it with the fire trucks. Solicitor Braslow jumped in and referred to the meeting he had with DCA on leasing, of which he was told (and he disagrees) we have no right to lease and if we did it would be treated as a capital project. He said we could lease the command vehicles every three years and apparatus every ten years. Light discussion was held on leasing.

COMMENTS OF FIRE DISTRICT PROFESSIONALS:

Solicitor Braslow reported that the deeds have been drafted but a few spots needed clarification so between now and next meeting they should be ready to execute.

He referred to his attendance at the association meeting held this past weekend and the topics that he had discussed with legislatures and assemblymen/women. He said the change in the election date, which has to be made by resolution the beginning of November, must be done and if it isn't done by then you will not be changing your date. He said we are trying to resolve the issue but nothing seems to be coming to a head.

He referred to the bill on water bills (hydrants) and asked why are we paying for this. He stated we are under a 2% cap yet rates keep going up. He said he had recommended standardizing all waters bills so that each district is paying for the same use/rates. He then said the bill also states the district/fire departments should be doing flow test, but he will get a copy of this bill to the Board members.

COMMENTS OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Shestack thanked Commissioner Roura, the committee member, the Chiefs and Jennifer for their work on putting this budget together.

Commissioner Hamilton also thanked to committee on their preparation on the budget.

Commissioner Cornue dittoed with what Commissioner Hamilton said.

Commissioner Ridenour applauded everyone for their hard work.

Chief Colucci thanked the Board for taking the time to recognize the need to hire additional firefighters and by doing so we will increase firefighter safety, enhance fire operations, and efficiencies. Commissioner Ridenour stated the Board knows how critical this operation is and we don't want to put us in a position where we have to compromise. Commissioner Shestack stated hose, apparatus, facilities, computers, software, etc., are all working conditions but so is manpower (staffing), and if a firefighters are not able to take time off due to staffing shortages it impacts part of working conditions and mental wellness and if firefighters are not in the right frame of mind that could cost lives. We are here to save lives not cost lives, and it is the right thing to do.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

No one was in attendance.

There was no need to read Resolution #2018-43 as there were no items for discussion in Closed Session.

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

**THE OPEN SESSION ENDED AT 7:05 PM.
THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:20 PM.**