

**MOUNT LAUREL FIRE DISTRICT #1
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

April 18, 2016

Fire Department Headquarters Station
Meeting Minutes #5

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

1. Commissioner Hamilton
2. Commissioner Shestack

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Ridenour at 8:02 PM.

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

The public announcements were read by Commissioner DiPietrantonio.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the 3/21/16 Regular Meeting minutes that was seconded by Commissioner Ridenour. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved by the Board with Commissioner DiPietrantonio abstaining.

RESOLUTIONS:

None.

FINANCIAL MATTERS:

Commissioner Roura reported that he had reviewed the April 2016 monthly bills and noted 2 large expenditures this month for an insurance payment and a construction project progress payment. He made a motion to approve payment of monthly bills totaling \$577,064.54 that was seconded by Commissioner DiPietrantonio. 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 reported that Bowman & Company has completed the audit fieldwork and they have returned to their office to pull everything together. He added that the release of the final audit documents may be delayed this year because the State is responsible for providing them with pension liability information for each employee and it is taking them a long time to provide it. Commissioner Roura asked about the status of the construction project payments, noting that 92% appears to have been spent. Administrator Jones reported that 2 of the construction projects still have retainage left to pay out, which is usually 2% of the contract amount and the site work project contractor has only been paid about 25% of their contract value so far.

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 reported that we are having difficulty finding interested applicants for the open 2nd part-time Training Officer position, which he believes is because we are requiring applicants have a college Bachelor's degree. The Training Division is struggling to keep up day to day because we haven't been able to fill the position and he felt that we may need to consider increasing the salary, select a different job title from Civil Service or possibly consider making this a full-time position in order to fill the opening. Commissioner DiPietrantonio asked him how many applicants that we have had and he replied that there have been none. Our current part-time Training Officer has not had as much

availability as we had hoped and another potential candidate that we had recruited has decided not to retire from his full-time position. Commissioner Roura asked him about the grants that he had included in his monthly report and he replied that we were close to getting the work force solutions grant that we had applied for but our application was not in the top 15 that received awards, although if additional funding for that grant becomes available our application may be reconsidered. He felt that because we already provide new volunteers with quite a bit in incentives (uniforms, training, turnout gear, clothing, stipend, LOSAP, etc.) to join, we can't demonstrate the need that other less fortunate departments can. We have structured our grant requests to pursue funding for marketing materials so that we can market ourselves better and allow us to reach the demographics that we need to reach in attracting new volunteers.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Building & Grounds Committee: Commissioner Ridenour reported that we had a meeting with the Fellowship Emergency Generator Replacement contractor, our Architect and our construction managers today regarding the cost and responsibility for the additional leaking natural gas supply pipe replacement work that had to be done along with reimbursement of the expense that we incurred to repair the reversed wiring on the elevator hydraulic pump motor when the final hookup of equipment was done by the contractor last month. He thanked Administrator Jones for taking the lead in explaining our position and fighting to get the contractor to take responsibility for some of these costs. The contractor wanted us to pick up the full cost for the replacement of the leaking original natural gas supply pipe even though their plumbing subcontractor had done work on it and may have caused the leaks. After much discussion about who should be responsible for what and how much, the contractor agreed to cover our cost to repair the reversed wiring on the elevator hydraulic pump motor and we would pay \$1,000 of the actual costs that were incurred for the replacement of about 8' of original natural gas supply pipe at the new PSE&G meter with the contractor picking up the other \$800 in actual costs. Commissioner Ridenour felt that the compromise was a fair one for them and for us. Commissioner Roura asked him why we had agreed to pay anything if the contractor was responsible for the leaks and Commissioner Ridenour replied that there was no way to conclusively determine why the leaks had occurred and there was reasonable suspicion that the original threaded natural gas supply pipe could not handle the 900% increase in pressure that it was now exposed to. He added that the contractor originally wanted almost \$5,400 to replace the length of pipe in question, but Administrator Jones presented a good case for the contractor to take some of the responsibility and in the end we argued over the actual \$1,800 cost instead of the proposed cost. Commissioner Roura summarized that the costs to repair the elevator and replace the natural gas supply line was roughly \$3,200 together and that the contractor was going to absorb \$2,200 of it and we would absorb the remaining \$1,000.

OTHER MATTERS:

Annual Election Ballot Question format – Solicitor Braslow reported that he had spoken with the DCA Deputy Director about the changes that the Board wanted to make in the wording of the annual budget proposal question and she advised him that we have to include the total budget amount and the amount to be raised by taxation. She also felt that the “amount to be raised by taxation” wording was crucial and would not waiver from that requirement. Solicitor Braslow added that he did not disagree with the position she was taking because the Title 40:40A statute does talk about the form of the ballot for regular elections and capital elections and that they had to substantially meet this form. Capital Improvement questions can have an “interpretive statement” but he has never seen one included with the annual budget proposal question. He added that many Fire Districts do post something similar to an interpretive statement at polling locations to help voters understand ballot questions and he felt that these postings were not telling voters how to vote and therefore was not considered “electioneering”.

Firefighter Hiring Status – Chief of Department Colucci reported that we have been moving forward in processing the Civil Service “Firefighter” list that was released last month, certifying the 1st 12 applicants. They were scheduled to take the physical agility test on 5/10/16 and if they pass the test, we can finish the background check work and fill the 3 open slots that we have. He noted that 4 of the first 6 people on the list are members of the Wednesday night Duty Crew.

MUA Shared Services Agreement Ideas – Chief of Department Colucci reported that he met with MUA Executive Director Pam Carolan to discuss potential shared services. He approached them about using their staff electrician to perform electrical work that we occasionally need to have done. They were interested in possibly having our Apparatus Shop mechanics help them with maintenance on their fleet vehicles and possibly having our IT technician assist them in maintaining their computer network. He asked the Board if this was something that they would be interested in pursuing if we could work out the details and before he approaches the Union President for her thoughts. Commissioner Roura stated that he was in favor as long as it did not overburden our staff. Chief of Department Colucci agreed that this was always his first concern whenever shared services involving our staff is suggested and that the Shop mechanics would most likely be able to accommodate the light fleet preventative maintenance work that he believed the MUA was interested in, similar to what we currently do for Hainesport. He added that the MUA also has an employee dedicated to maintenance of their emergency generators, which could be something else that they could assist us with. He sensed that the Board was interested, so he will set up another meeting with the MUA to further discuss details about how we could help them and they could help us. In the meantime, we will reach out and use another electrician to get some of our more pressing needs taken care of.

COMMENTS OF FIRE DISTRICT PROFESSIONALS:

Solicitor Braslow reported on the latest developments in the Cherry Hill Burn Building replacement project. He provided background on what Cherry Hill was trying to do and why. He described the arguments that the DCA and Local Finance Board was using to try and block approval for the project, which he felt was partially due to the fact that the statutes governing Fire District capital improvements are very antiquated and did not reflect the modern fire service and the capital needs that Fire Districts have. The DCA is struggling to even define what a modern fire station is and how they are being designed to meet a variety of needs. Unfortunately, it is difficult to get these statutes amended because we are not able to generate a lot of legislative support for it. Commissioner Ridenour asked him whether a County would run into the same problems and he replied that Counties operate under a whole different set of statutes and the DCA rarely questions fire service related capital projects that they want to do. Commissioner Ridenour added that before he leaves the Board he would like to see if we could get voter approval to build a 4th station in the Springville area to better serve the public in that area of the Township and he hoped that we would not have the same difficulties that Cherry Hill is experiencing.

COMMENTS OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS:

None.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

None.

Resolution #2016-15 “Closing of Meeting Pursuant to Open Public Meetings Act”. Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the resolution that was seconded by Commissioner DiPietrantonio. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**THE OPEN SESSION ENDED AT 8:47 PM.
A CLOSED SESSION BEGAN AT 8:48 PM.
THE CLOSED SESSION ENDED AT 9:01 PM.**

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

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:02 PM.