

**MOUNT LAUREL FIRE DISTRICT #1
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING / WORK SESSION**

May 6, 2015

Fire Department Headquarters Station

Meeting Minutes #7

IN ATTENDANCE:

1. Commissioner Cornue
2. Commissioner Ridenour
3. Commissioner Roura
4. Commissioner Hamilton
5. Deputy Chief Burnett
6. Administrator Jones

NOT PRESENT:

1. Commissioner Shestack
2. Chief of Department Colucci

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Ridenour at 8:00 PM.

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

The Public Announcements were read by Commissioner Hamilton.

OTHER MATTERS:

Administrator Jones briefed the Board on the Phase 1 Building Envelope Renovation project 5/5/15 bid opening and provided them with a copy of the Architect's recommendation letter. In this 2nd round of bidding, there were 4 bidders for the project but unfortunately all of these bids substantially exceeded the budget that was available again, although the bid spread was good with 3 out of the 4 bids being within 10% of the bid average and the 2 low bidders being within \$16,000 of each other. This round the bids were about \$400,000 less than the single bid received at the 1st bid opening, but unfortunately none of them was low enough to award a contract for the project because there would not be sufficient funds left to do much of the remaining work. He added that he had e-mailed information on the Local Public Contract Law statute that permits us to now negotiate with any interested bidders to everyone for their review. If the Board rejects the bids received yesterday and approves the resolution required to negotiate terms with the bidders, we will get started on it immediately. Unfortunately, this setback will most likely mean that we will have to re-examine the current scope of work in the bid specifications and determine what we might be able to scale back on or remove in order to get the bid proposals closer to our budget estimate for this work. The Architect has already prepared a list of questions that we will be asking bidders that are interested in participating in the negotiation process.

Commissioner Hamilton asked him what the Architect's responsibility was on this project and Administrator Jones replied that the Architect designed the plans and bid specifications, manages the bidding process and addresses questions raised by potential bidders. Commissioner Hamilton asked him whether the Architect developed the budget figures we used to formulate the bond issue scope of work that was approved by the public. Administrator Jones replied that the Architect was not involved in that process and that it was a joint effort between our staff and our Construction Manager. Commissioner Hamilton asked him why our scope of work estimates were so low and now left the project underfunded. Administrator Jones replied that the scope of work that we outlined is almost 2 years old now and we did anticipate increases based on anticipated costs at the time. Commissioner Hamilton asked him why the bid proposals could be so much higher than what was anticipated and Administrator Jones stated that we still believe that the costs for the individual scope of work items are close to our budget estimates but until we sit down with the bidders and see the costs that they included in each of their bid proposals, we can't identify what the problem is. He added that the bid proposal packets require the bidders to provide lump sum amounts and weren't designed to break out every scope of work item, which makes it hard to identify where the excess is. He stated that the Architect and our Construction Manager felt that after the almost 5 year construction drought and the new glut of work hitting the market this summer because of the State grants, the New Jersey construction market has changed and there are not enough contractors to do all of the work, which creates a supply and demand issue that will end up costing public agencies more money than they anticipated. He added that in the bond issue cost analysis that he sent out yesterday, we have a contingency fund and leftover professional services funds that should be available to do some of the things that have outpaced our budget once we know what the major parts of the scope of work will cost. He noted that we haven't finished any of the other phases of construction specifications yet but once we get those bids back we will have a much better handle on where we stand. He reported that our budget for the roofing replacement is about \$1,000,000 for 50,000 square feet at \$20 / square foot and that the HVAC replacement costs should be between

\$200,000 and \$250,000 including installation. We figured that the replacement of windows at Station 362 should be between \$100,000 and \$150,000 and according to comments made by some of the bidders to our professionals, these are the costs of the work that they included in their bid proposals.

Commissioner Hamilton asked him how many of these contractors were local and Administrator Jones replied that 3 of the 4 are very local with one in Mount Laurel and another in Moorestown. He added that the Moorestown contractor performed the shower reconstruction work at Station 362 a few years ago and that they did a good job. Another bidder was from Pennsylvania and was the only bidder in the 1st round. The Architect felt that they will all be willing to participate in the negotiation process and work with us to come up with a negotiated bid proposal that we can accept. We hope to have a recommendation for the Board to review and act on at the 5/18 Regular Meeting.

Administrator Jones noted that the analysis shows a contingency budget of about \$178,000 that hopefully will not be needed and represents about 6% of the bond issue amount. He noted that the bond issue also included about \$555,000 for professional services, which includes the services of the architect and the civil engineer along with the costs associated with issuance of the bonds. Currently, he anticipated that the professional service costs should only be around \$267,000, leaving about \$288,000 of that portion of the bond issue budget available for contingencies. The availability of these funds will become important if we are forced to temporarily eliminate some of the scope of work in the Phase 1 contract in order to bring it in on budget. One item that we will be looking at closely is the replacement of HVAC units at Stations 361 and 363 because this is the kind of item that can be done after the roofs and the other building envelope work is done.

Commissioner Ridenour asked him whether the HVAC State Contract program that we used in the past is still available to us. Administrator Jones replied that we used the NJ Clean Energy program to replace a number of HVAC units over the past 4 years with the State picking up 70% of the cost but we have maxed out the energy savings that we need to demonstrate in order to do any more under that program. Altogether, we were able to replace about \$260,000 worth of our older HVAC units over 3 years. Commissioner Ridenour asked him about LED lighting and Administrator Jones replied that there is no State Contract for that but that we are replacing light fixtures and bulbs/ballasts with LED replacements as we move forward, which should save money in operating costs and periodic maintenance. Commissioner Ridenour asked whether we were primarily looking at replacing parking lot lighting with LED's and Administrator Jones replied that it is primarily parking lot lights, but also any of the fixtures located on the buildings as well. Commissioner Hamilton asked how removing all of the HVAC equipment from the project will affect the project cost and how will we get that work done if it has to be removed. Commissioner Roura explained that if that has to be done to get the Phase 1 costs down closer to the budgeted figure, we will revisit the issue at the end of the project when we know how much money we have left to spend. Commissioner Hamilton stated that we will still be spending the same amount of money if we do that and Commissioner Roura replied that we may be but by removing it from the 1st project now we can make sure that we can fund the most important items in the scope of work. Commissioner Hamilton asked why we would want to take out the HVAC replacement when we do the roofs because now we would have old HVAC units on new roofs. Commissioner Roura explained that on some of the roofs being replaced, the HVAC units will have to be disconnected and lifted up so that the roof curbs can be raised – if new HVAC units remain in the project, these old units will be removed and new ones installed when this is done, otherwise the old ones will just be reinstalled. At the end of the project this fall, we can make a decision on whether sufficient funding is available to replace them with new units. Administrator Jones added that Commissioner Roura is correct and that although it was our hope that we could replace the older HVAC units as the roofs were done, it is not difficult to do them later.

Commissioner Roura made a motion to reject the 2nd round of Phase 1 Building Envelope Renovation bids because they substantially exceeded the budget available. Commissioner Cornue seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution #2015-23 “Resolution of the Mt. Laurel Fire District #1 Board of Fire Commissioners to Authorize Contract Negotiations with Potential Bidders on the Building Envelope Renovations Project”. Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the resolution that was seconded by Commissioner Hamilton. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

Administrator Jones explained that the Hainesport Shared Services Agreement was up for approval by the Board tonight and concluded a lot of work done by Chief of Department Colucci over the last year or so. We initially sent a draft agreement to Hainesport Township for their review, but they didn't realize that it was only a draft, approved it by resolution and sent us a copy to sign. There were still a few changes that we wanted to make, which we have now done and it is ready to go. We included start and end dates for the agreement so that we could evaluate whether it was working or not before making a long term commitment to it. If approved, it takes effect on 6/1/15 and expires on 12/31/16.

Resolution #2015-24

“Resolution Authorizing Participation of Mount Laurel Fire District #1 to Enter into a Shared Services Agreement with Hainesport Township”. Commissioner Roura made a motion to approve the resolution that was seconded by Commissioner Cornue. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Commissioner Ridenour tabled the approval of the 4/20/15 Regular Meeting minutes until the next meeting so that Board members had more time to review them.

COMMENTS BY FIRE COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Ridenour apologized for not being able to attend Rosemarie Grabowski’s services because of an emergency at home. He understood that it went very well and wanted to see movement on the funeral policy that has been discussed and asked whether the Board should appoint a committee to get this done. Administrator Jones stated that the Chiefs had begun development of a policy some time ago that they wanted to eventually bring to the Board for review and approval. Deputy Chief Burnett added that he and Chief of Department Colucci have been working on a guideline and that they would like to see a committee consisting of career and volunteer members, Officers and firefighters, along with Commissioners and his office to work out the details.

Commissioner Roura asked Administrator Jones about the status of the Closed Session meeting minutes OPRA request and Administrator Jones stated that he had asked the requestor for a time extension until the end of this week. He added that Solicitor Braslow hadn’t been in the office over the last 2 weeks and that he had just received his input this morning. Solicitor Braslow agreed with the rationale for the redactions that he was proposing and thinks that we can make the case of why we are making the redactions. He was about 2/3’s completed with everything and would finish it up tomorrow. Commissioner Roura added that there were several 100 pages of Closed Session minutes that we are reviewing to satisfy this OPRA request and that we found that there were about 7 Closed Sessions where only the Board was present and no minutes had been provided. He was able to pull together enough information on each of these occasions to prepare minutes but it shows that we have to do a better job on this in the future. Administrator Jones thanked Commissioner Roura for all of his help with this and Commissioner Roura added that the Board needs to stay more on point when going into Closed Session in the future because there tends to be a lot of editorializing done that may not be eligible for discussion in a Closed Session. Administrator Jones reminded everyone that the audio tapes of our meetings are also considered public records and that everyone should be mindful of what they say when meetings are in session.

Administrator Jones noted that he had provided the Board members with a copy of an article from last Sunday’s Inquirer that profiled one of the individuals extensively using the OPRA statute to request public records and about whom Solicitor Braslow spoke about at the last meeting. He felt that it was an interesting article and wanted to share it with the Board.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

None.

Commissioner Ridenour asked the Board if anyone had anything that needed to be addressed in Closed Session and nobody did.

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

THE OPEN SESSION AND THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:52 PM.